Huang, Yuhan (2026) *A case study on project-based language learning in Chinese high school English education: student experiences, teacher transformation, and pedagogical implications*. PhD thesis.

A Case Study on Project-based Language Learning in Chinese High School English Education: Student Experiences, Teacher Transformation, and Pedagogical Implications

Yuhan Huang

Thesis submitted to the University of Glasgow for the

degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education

January 2026

Abstract

This qualitative case study explored how Project-based Language Learning (PBLL) can coexist with the high-stakes, examination-oriented English curriculum of a state high school in Chongqing, China. Over a one-month summer-holiday period, forty-four Grade 10 students and their experienced English teacher engaged in online collaborative planning and preparing for a travel-themed video-making project, which culminated in face-to-face English-speaking presentations conducted on-campus after the semester commenced. Grounded in Sociocultural Theory, Global Englishes, Communicative Language Learning and principles of Project-based Learning, the teacher and I collaboratively structured the project framework, integrating students' input to dynamically refine weekly goals. Throughout, we encouraged flexible translanguaging between English and Chinese, documenting both the evolving learning process and the final publicly presented products and outcomes. Classroom observations, student artefacts, semi-structured interviews, and focus-group discussions were analysed thematically. PBLL produced more varied spoken and written language output, as iterative drafting and rehearsals, collaborative problem-solving, interactive translanguaging practices, and engaging content collectively supported students in prioritising meaning before form during the learning process. Brief switches to Chinese lowered anxiety and often prompted voluntary English use in subsequent turns. Many learners shifted from external compliance to self-endorsed motivation, reporting higher confidence in speaking and teamwork. Most interviewed learners reported an increase in intrinsic motivation over the course of the project, noting improved confidence in speaking and enhanced teamwork skills. The teacher evolved from textbook transmitter to co-designer and facilitator, uncovering learners' hidden strengths and integrating micro-projects into regular lessons. Challenges remained: heavier preparation, unfamiliar formative assessment, and misalignment with the National College Entrance Examination, which still omits speaking and collaboration. The study suggests that carefully scaffolded PBLL could create a complementary space alongside China's current examination-oriented education system by addressing gaps in fostering students' practical communication skills. The pedagogical insights gained from the project, particularly in enhancing students' speaking confidence and autonomy, were successfully integrated by the participating teacher into regular classroom instruction. Additionally, the co-constructive collaboration between the researcher and teacher highlights a replicable model for future research and pedagogical practice. This collaborative framework, which included joint curriculum development, reflective practice, and mutual professional growth, could inspire broader applications in diverse language teaching contexts, encouraging educators and researchers to optimise teaching strategies and enhance learning environments. Future work could consider lengthen project cycles, involve cross-subject teachers, and provide systematic professional development to sustain the motivational and communicative gains observed.

Acknowledgements

Author Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Yuhan Huang

Signature:

CONTENTS

List of Tables and Figures

Abbreviations

Audiolingual Method	ALM
China's National English Curriculum	CNEC
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages	CEFR
Communicative Language Teaching	CLT
Content and Language Integrated Learning	CLIL
Content-based Language Learning	CBLT
English as a Lingua Franca	ELF
First Language	L1
Global Englishes	GE
Grammar Translation Method	GTM
More Knowledgeable Other	MKO
National College Entrance Examination	NCEE or Gaokao
Problem-based Learning	ProbBL
Project-based Language Learning	PBLL
Project-based Learning	PBL
Second Language	L2
Self-Determination Theory	SDT
Sociocultural Theory	SCT
Task-based Language Teaching	TBLT
Thematic Analysis	TA
Zone of Proximal Development	ZPD

1. Chapter I: Introduction

1.1. Research Background

1.1.1.　English Learning from a Global Englishes Perspective

Driven by accelerating globalisation and the deepening of technological revolutions, the field of language education is undergoing a profound and comprehensive transformation (Rose et al., 2021). English is now taught with a greater emphasis on cultivating students' cross-cultural communication skills and their ability to use the language in real-life contexts, rather than merely on grammar rules and vocabulary memorisation (Akbar, 2018). In this context, Project-based Language Learning (PBLL) has emerged as one of the innovative methods receiving considerable attention in both educational theory and practice. By designing authentic, complex task scenarios, PBLL encourages learners to actively construct knowledge and strengthens the practical and integrative dimensions of language acquisition (Beckett & Slater, 2019; Brundiers & Wiek, 2013). However, its implementation in Chinese secondary school English teaching and learning remains at a preliminary stage, largely due to long-standing influences of the current Chinese secondary education system[1].

From an international perspective, language education philosophies have shifted from a predominantly instrumental view of language to a multicultural communicative view (Seidlhofer, 2013). Under the influence of Global Englishes (GE), the idea of English as a Lingua Franca has further advanced this transition by challenging the conventional native-speaker norms and stressing the diversity of English and its practical application in global contexts (Jenkins et al., 2018; Rose et al., 2021). PBLL aligns well with GE's philosophy, especially in nurturing

---

[1] China's secondary schooling is divided into junior (Grades 7–9) and senior (Grades 10–12) cycles; compulsory education finishes after Grade 9. In this study, the participating class consisted of Grade 10 students, who were in their fourth year of secondary education. They were referred to as "high school students" as well.

students' capacity to use English flexibly for solving real-world problems (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). At the same time, during COVID-19, the widespread adoption of online learning exposed shortcomings of traditional classroom models in terms of flexibility (Dhawan, 2020). In the post-pandemic era, the rapid rise of online education has opened new avenues for exploring diverse language learning approaches (Ju-Zaveroni & Lee, 2023). Concurrently, some researchers have shifted their attention toward online language learning environments, examining variations in student behaviours and differences in emotional states when employing identical language learning methods (Maican & Cocoradă, 2021).

In light of the trends in international English education, determining how to balance China's established language examination requirements with providing students a more diverse and authentic English learning experience has emerged as a key area of interest for my inquiry. The present study adopted PBLL as its focal method, examining the feasibility and potential impact of PBLL in Chinese senior-secondary English teaching and learning. Rather than seeking to replace the current English teaching and learning model immediately, this research drew on existing policies and contextual realities to investigate PBLL's possible influences on students' learning experiences, motivation, and teachers' instructional practices and role shifts. In doing so, it offers theoretical and practical insights into English teaching and learning reform in China's examination-oriented educational context.

1.1.2. China's "Double Reduction" Policy and Examination-Oriented English Instruction

To more clearly understand the background of this study, it is necessary to elaborate on the "Double Reduction" policy issued by the Chinese government in 2021, formally titled *Opinions on Further Easing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Tutoring for Students in Compulsory Education* (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2021). By restricting the volume of written

homework for students in compulsory education and imposing strict regulations on off-campus tutoring institutions, this policy aims to reduce students' extracurricular study load, alleviate learning pressure, and promote educational equity (Meiling, 2022; Zhixin & Yi, 2023).

While the policy primarily targets compulsory education in China (grades 1–9), its influence extends into senior-secondary school education. Senior-secondary school students and educators often continue pedagogical practices established during earlier schooling stages. Similar policies are in place at the senior-secondary level, designed to promote educational fairness, ease students' workload and prompt teachers to sharpen their practice (China Daily, 2025; Shuo, 2025). Because the "Double Reduction" policy is the best-known of these measures, in what follows, I used "Double Reduction" as a convenient label for these related measures.

Following the implementation of this policy, noticeable changes have taken place in both the teaching methods and resource allocation for English, one of the core subjects. As students' English learning now relies more heavily on in-class instruction, secondary school English teachers face increased pressure in the classroom. At the same time, teachers and schools have been experimenting with innovative language teaching methods or optimising existing instructional designs to help reduce teachers' workload while enhancing students' learning outcomes. For instance, Guo and Tuo (2023) applied a Unit Integral Teaching approach to improve students' homework design, while Gu (2021) advocated for a Participatory Teaching method combined with transformative teaching to foster deeper reflection for both teachers and students throughout the teaching and learning process.

Despite these positive explorations and their preliminary outcomes, China's traditional examination-oriented education system still dominates, largely because senior-secondary school students remain highly focused on preparing for

the National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao) (Deng, 2024), where English accounts for 150 out of a total of 750 possible marks and is assessed almost exclusively through written components. A typical provincial exam structure, as exemplified by the school in this case study, allocates 30 points to listening comprehension, 80 points to reading comprehension, and 40 points to writing, with speaking entirely excluded from the assessment. Unsurprisingly, many teachers channel preparation time into the three assessed skills and hesitate to adopt oral-communication activities that appear "off-syllabus".

Large-scale external data reveal the cost of this imbalance. IELTS statistics show that Mainland Chinese candidates consistently obtain higher mean scores (out of 9) in reading (≈ 6.2) than in speaking (≈ 5.4) and writing (≈ 5.5), where they rank near the bottom of the 40 major test-taker nationalities (Zhang & Hope, 2021). Researchers argued that this phenomenon stems from classroom practices prioritise linguistic accuracy at the expense of developing students' communicative competence (Meng et al., 2021). After completing their education and entering the workplace, individuals might find themselves struggling with even simple daily interactions in English with native speakers. While not everyone will need English extensively after overcoming the hurdle of the Gaokao, from the perspective of practical language acquisition, the current assessment approach does not appear fully comprehensive or scientifically robust. Therefore, this study sought to explore a pedagogical approach that might help strike balance between linguistic accuracy and communicative competence.

At the same time, some teachers continue to experience uncertainty and confusion regarding student-centred instructional approaches, differentiated teaching, and reflective practice. They feel that current training programs do not adequately prepare them for these new teaching roles and demands (Lei & Medwell, 2022). In addition, adopting innovative teaching methods typically requires significant investment of time and effort from both teachers and students. Given students' substantial academic workload, limited time, and the

insufficiency of teacher training, it remains challenging to implement curricular improvements and innovations in English teaching (Bai & Zhou, 2024). As a result, the use of new English teaching and learning methods is often confined to local pilot initiatives that serve as supplementary classroom techniques.

Despite the challenges of changing teaching methods, many teachers proactively explore innovative approaches to develop students' communicative competence. Among them is the participating teacher in this study, who had already initiated practices emphasising student communication prior to this project. Leveraging her experience and understanding of existing educational frameworks, this study involved a collaborative, co-constructive process between the teacher and me, instead of providing one-sided instructional recommendations from me. In view of the above realities, this study did not attempt to promptly and comprehensively supplant traditional English teaching models in China. Instead, building on policy support and existing research, it sought to provide more flexible, context-specific options for most Chinese secondary schools that still largely use conventional methods. Additionally, this study offers suggestions and insights into teachers' professional development, beyond just exploring student learning methods.

1.1.3. Personal Reflection and Motivation

Considering both domestic and international trends in English education, my own experience as a secondary school student in China's examination-oriented system revealed that despite considerable investment of time and effort, the effectiveness and outcomes of English learning frequently appeared limited.

It was in this context that I became interested in PBLL. I was first drawn to its emphasis on learning language through authentic situations while simultaneously developing other integrated skills (Shi et al., 2024). Although Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has fostered many related methods, such as Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL),

which also champion learning in real-world contexts (Coyle et al., 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Ellis, 2021), the developments in Project-based Learning have highlighted students' (or even teachers') collaboration in completing tangible project products (Bauler & Scalzo, 2016; Chimwayange, 2024). This emphasis on collaborative work has become a hallmark of PBLL, and it is not generally emphasised to the same extent in other methods.

I was interested in the group dynamics within PBLL, particularly whether collaboration can further enhance learners' motivation and their use of the target language. In PBLL, students frequently interact during different phases, for instance through dividing tasks, making collective decisions, and presenting their final products. I also aimed to explore the role of the teacher in guiding and managing group activities. These explorations could provide practical insights into refining project-based instructional design. In this study, the teacher and I adopted PBLL as the foundation, while remaining mindful of the participating students' practical needs and feedback. Through this endeavour, I aimed not only to offer references for innovating English teaching and learning through PBLL, but also to explore whether this collaborative approach itself represents a more sustainable model for implementing new instructional designs. Such a model, grounded in the joint expertise of both the teacher and the researcher and responsive to student realities, stood in contrast to pedagogical changes driven by either party in isolation.

1.1.4.　Context of the Participating Class

This study selected a Grade 10 class from a senior-secondary school in Chongqing, China as its research sample. The teaching conditions at this state secondary school could broadly represent the typical state of English education in most inland regions of China. A total of 56 students (aged between 16 and 18, most of them 16, and having generally studied English for around 7–8 years) participated in the study. They had just completed their first year of senior-secondary school

and were about to enter the second year. The main research activities took place during their summer holiday, when an online PBLL course was delivered, followed by a showcase of outcomes on campus once the autumn term commenced.

The class's original English teacher, Rachel (pseudonym), also participated in the study. She has over twenty years of English teaching experience and demonstrated a keen interest in innovative instructional methods such as PBLL. Preliminary interviews indicated that these students typically experienced a teacher-centred, examination-focused mode of instruction, with limited classroom interaction and scope for independent learning. To ensure both the suitability and efficacy of the research, Rachel and I had multiple in-depth discussions prior to launching the PBLL course, collaboratively formulating an initial implementation plan. We continued our communication and made adjustments throughout the teaching and learning process.

1.2. Research Rationale

1.2.1.   Research Questions

In the research process, the formulation of research questions typically relies on a thorough review of existing literature and may evolve as qualitative research proceeds (Agee, 2009). Nevertheless, it is still essential to clearly articulate the research questions in this chapter. Doing so provides readers with a general understanding of the rationale and value of the research, whether from theoretical or practical standpoints. A clear presentation of the research questions also helps readers form more precise expectations for what follows and better grasp the overall logic of the study, as they will be consistently revisited to frame the discussion in each chapter. The research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of the participating Chinese high school students in this Project-based Language Learning method?

RQ2: How does the participating teacher adapt to and cope with this student-

centred language learning approach?

1.2.2. Theoretical Rationale

This study focuses on two core issues (RQ1 and RQ2). Its theoretical rationale primarily stems from the integration and extension of existing theoretical frameworks, aiming to better explain Chinese senior-secondary school students' learning experiences in a PBLL environment and to explore how the teacher's role adapts in such a setting.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) provides the core analytical framework, offering principles that inform the exploration of both research questions. Building on this perspective, the study investigated how teacher–students interactions, peer collaboration in PBLL and teacher-researcher co-construction contribute to students' language development, emotional states (particularly learning motivation) and teacher's adaptation. The theoretical underpinning of Vygotskian theory highlights the significance of interaction in learning and was examined more thoroughly in Chapter II. It underscores the important role of interaction and collaboration in learning, positing that within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), students might acquire new language skills and developmental opportunities beyond their current level through scaffolding from peers and teachers (Vygotsky, 1978b). Unlike teacher-centred instruction, PBLL emphasises active collaboration and problem-solving among teachers and students, reflecting the fundamental idea of SCT that learning derives from social interaction.

Rather than rigidly applying a pre-existing PBLL model, this study embraced a co-constructive approach. This approach involved a dynamic process of dialogue and negotiation (primarily between the teacher and me but also incorporating students' suggestion) to collaboratively refine the course design and implementation. This process, where knowledge and practice were jointly built by all participants, is a practical application of Vygotskian principles. It

demonstrates a commitment to a collaborative dynamic that moves beyond isolated expertise.

In addition, for the first research question, Global Englishes (GE) offers an important theoretical dimension for examining intercultural communicative awareness and cultural sensitivity (Jenkins, 2014; Rose et al., 2021). Compared with the traditional notion of standard English as the only norm, GE emphasise the effectiveness and diversity of communication, recognising that minor deviations in language forms do not necessarily impede core understanding and can be seen as the normal phenomenon in intercultural interactions (Rose & Galloway, 2019a). Informed by this perspective, this study explored whether PBLL can better foreground comprehensible and effective communication in China's English language education. By conceptualising PBLL as a method within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), this study also helps expand the practice and research scope of CLT within the China's secondary school's context from a global standpoint.

Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) is suitable for this study as its core principles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness provide a framework for explaining how the collaborative, student-centred nature of PBLL changed learners' motivation. PBLL, which centres on authentic contexts, collaborative inquiry, and project showcases, may bolster students' intrinsic interest and sense of self-efficacy to varying degrees (Shin, 2018). From this perspective, the study explored how students internalise their motivation through project-based activities, investigating how PBLL tasks, teacher's feedback, and the overall learning environment influence students' active participation.

For the second research question, how the teacher adapts to and negotiates a student-centred language learning method such as PBLL, the study drew on Transformative Pedagogy and Postmethod Pedagogy. Transformative Pedagogy highlights that teachers may undergo a shift in their professional identity and

beliefs while implementing new teaching methods (Farren, 2020; Meyers, 2008). This shift involves challenging traditional notions of teacher authority and re-examining the value of student autonomy and inquiry-based activities. Specifically, this study examined how the teacher redefined her instructional perspectives during the rollout of PBLL and the professional growth and challenges that accompany these changes.

Meanwhile, Postmethod Pedagogy emphasises the need to teach according to local conditions, in other words, to deploy flexible teaching strategies that accommodate different instructional contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). By observing and analysing the teacher's classroom practices and reflective processes, this study revealed the concrete obstacles the teacher faces in PBLL, the coping strategies she adopted, and the subsequent effects on her professional development. In this study, the principles of Postmethod Pedagogy were also evident in the evolving partnership between the participating teacher and the researcher. This collaboration enabled us to tailor the PBLL process more closely to the students' actual needs; moreover, it influenced the teacher's subsequent classroom practice through reflections fostered in our discussions. In doing so, it extended the application of Postmethod Pedagogy in Chinese high school English education and provided practical insights and theoretical guidance for effectively supporting student-centred instruction.

1.2.3.　Practical Rationale

In the practical dimension of this study, I was primarily concerned with whether PBLL can, through collaboration and timely adjustments, be feasibly integrated into current Chinese educational contexts. Accordingly, the study's teaching and learning design relied on repeated deliberations and dynamic collaboration between teacher Rachel and me, seeking to modify the programme in line with existing classroom settings and resource constraints, whilst meeting students' specific needs and abilities. Our frequent discussions during the planning and

delivery stages aimed to address any concerns regarding students' progress promptly. Although the findings of this case inevitably carry contextual limitations, by outlining the collaboration and feedback mechanisms in detail, the study was able to provide useful insights for those exploring PBLL or learner-centred approaches under similar teaching and learning conditions.

Furthermore, this research examined the potential for teacher professional development. Did participating in the design and implementation of project-based instruction offer the teacher new experiences in course refinement and activity organisation? Did ongoing reflection and adjustment deepen her understanding of learner-centred pedagogy? As she addressed real issues and engage in collaborative inquiry during PBLL practice, did the teacher gain further opportunities to observe student needs and optimise teaching strategies? Building on these considerations, this study aimed not only to guide students towards a more flexible learning experience but also to shed light on the connection between teacher's exploration of project-based teaching and professional growth. Ultimately, it endeavoured to offer a reference point and insights for those seeking more diverse language teaching models in an examination-oriented context.

1.2.4.   Methodological Rationale

Methodologically, this research adopted qualitative data to conduct an in-depth exploration of how PBLL impacted both student learning experiences (RQ1) and teaching practice (RQ2) in the context of Chinese senior-secondary school's English instruction. To capture the complexity of PBLL in an authentic classroom setting, this study employed a case study design drawing on multiple data sources, including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, student-produced work, and focus group discussions. This diverse data collection strategy provided a holistic perspective on the research questions.

Case study emphasises a comprehensive understanding of phenomena within specific contexts (Duff, 2014), making it suited to capturing the dynamic processes and contextual dependencies inherent in PBLL. The case study approach allowed me to observe and document detailed, process-oriented facets of teaching and learning in real time. By triangulating data from multiple sources, it also enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

1.3. Chapters Overview

The structure of this thesis is designed to present the research context, theoretical framework, methodology, and key findings and discussions in a coherent manner, thus providing a comprehensive exploration of the potential and practical pathways of PBLL in Chinese secondary school education. The remaining chapters are arranged as follows:

Chapter II: Literature Review (Part One)—Theoretical and Pedagogical Foundation

Chapter II establishes the overarching theoretical foundation that informs the study. It begins by introducing the key concepts, including Sociocultural Theory, the ZPD, and scaffolding, laying the groundwork for subsequent discussions. It then examines the role of GE in pedagogy. Following this, the chapter draws on Transformative Pedagogy and Postmethod Pedagogy to highlight the diversity and flexibility of teaching and learning methods, providing a more open and dynamic perspective for language education. Finally, the chapter reviews Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), tracing its historical evolution, core principles, and its extension into contemporary approaches such as Project-based and Task-based Learning. This chapter serves as the theoretical bridge guiding the research design and data analysis that follow.

Chapter III: Literature Review (Part Two)—Project-based Language Learning

and Students' Motivation

Building upon the macro-level theoretical foundations presented in the previous chapter, Chapter III systematically examines Project-based Learning (PBL) and its application in language education from both theoretical and practical perspectives, whilst highlighting the pivotal role of learning motivation within the language learning process. First, by defining the concept of interdisciplinary learning and elucidating associated pedagogical methods, this chapter underscores the advantages of PBL in fostering multi-disciplinary integration and enhancing comprehensive competences. It then compares the core tenets of PBL with those of Problem-based Learning, clarifying their differing emphases with regard to goal setting, task design, and instructional strategies. Subsequently, the chapter explores the group dynamics involved in PBL implementation, examining mechanisms of group collaboration and task allocation, as well as the contribution of collaborative learning to the development of students' social skills. It further offers a workable framework for practice by synthesising PBL's design elements and implementation stages. Meanwhile, the chapter also reviews the principal concepts underpinning learning motivation and their underlying mechanisms. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory, it clarifies the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, together with the factors influencing both.

Chapter IV: Methodology and Research Design

Chapter IV presents the detailed research design and methodological rationale of the study. Working with qualitative data, this study adopted a case-study methodology to capture comprehensive, in-depth textual and experiential insights. Initially, the chapter outlines the study's ontological and epistemological positions, explicating the rationale for employing qualitative methods and justifying the selection of a case-study approach as most appropriate for addressing the research questions. It then describes the specific instruments used, including classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and document analysis, demonstrating how multiple forms of evidence were collected and triangulated to enhance credibility and dependability. Furthermore, the chapter

addresses the collaborative, professional, and ethical working relationship between the participating English teacher, Rachel, and me, clarifying our joint efforts in designing and conducting the study. The chapter also provides a clear account of how research participants were selected, the contextual background of the case, and the characteristics of both the teacher and the students, along with a detailed overview of the course design and implementation. Furthermore, ethical considerations are given particular attention; informed consent, data privacy, and anonymity measures were strictly observed to protect participants' rights and ensure procedural compliance.

Supported by the methodology, Chapters V to VII draw on diverse datasets to present and examine the PBLL implementation process and its influence, each from a distinct perspective. Guided by thematic analysis, the subsequent three data analysis chapters are structured into eight themes, collectively encompassing twenty-four sub-themes.

Chapter V: Student-centred Learning Experiences

Chapter V discusses the enhancement of learners' language production capabilities, focusing on two themes. The first examines students' progress in producing oral language, covering strategies such as emphasising fluency, preparing written drafts to support spoken work, improving expression by listening to others, and selecting reading materials relevant to project goals. Collectively, these methods aimed to strengthen students' language-use skills in authentic contexts. The second theme explores the role of plurilingual skills in PBLL, drawing on the topic of "travel" to nurture cultural understanding and combining Language Triptych with cross-linguistic practice to foster language competence.

Chapter VI: Students' Learning Motivations and Strategies

Chapter VI focuses on students' motivation and learning strategies, covering themes three to five. The third theme highlights the internalisation of motivation, discussing how external regulation initially functioned as a motivator, the

pressures of introjected regulation and competitive dynamics, the acceptance of perceived value within identified regulation, and the alignment of personal goals and learning motivation in integrated regulation. The fourth theme emphasises collaboration among students and between students and teachers, covering shared responsibility, skills of expression and attentive listening, the cultivation of critical thinking and negotiation, and conflict-resolution strategies. The fifth theme emphasises reflection in the learning process, including how to devise study plans and assess progress, paving the way for continuous improvement.

Chapter VII: Teacher's Perceptions, Experiences and Changes

Chapter VII analyses PBLL from the teacher's perspective, examining her motivation, challenges, professional growth, and our collaborative practices. The sixth theme explores the teacher's motivation for engaging with PBLL, highlighting personal and professional aspirations, the perceived impact on students, and the influence of educational policy on encouraging pedagogical innovation. The seventh theme analyses the challenges encountered during PBLL implementation, including issues specific to PBLL and tensions arising from the constraints of current English examination requirements. The eighth theme investigates the teacher's agency and adaptive practices, such as planning instructional schedules, adopting learner-centred practice, and refining scaffolding strategies in response to students' evolving needs. It also covers pedagogical changes in the daily classroom after the PBLL practice.

Importantly, another key aspect woven throughout these three themes in this chapter is the collaborative dimension, emphasising that the analysis extended beyond the individual teacher's experience. Through sustained collaboration, Rachel's extensive classroom teaching experience spanning over twenty years and my academic background in language education mutually influenced the instructional process and pedagogical insights.

Chapter VIII: Conclusion

The final chapter provides a systematic summary of the key findings, examining their theoretical and practical implications. Integrating the analyses of student learning experiences, learning motivation, and teacher practice presented in the previous chapters, this conclusion discusses the potential of PBLL to support and inform reform efforts in Chinese secondary-school English leaning and teaching. The chapter also acknowledges certain limitations in the research and offers suggestions for future improvements and directions.

2. Chapter II: Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

2.0. Introduction to This Chapter

This chapter offers a review of the core theories relevant to this study, providing theoretical support for the subsequent research design and implementation. Before addressing the core research questions of my study, namely (RQ1) the perceptions of participating Chinese secondary school students towards a Project-based Language Learning (PBLL) method, and (RQ2) how the participating teacher adapts to and copes with this student-centred pedagogy, it is essential to first establish a systematic understanding of the theoretical foundations of PBLL. This chapter provides this groundwork, clarifying how these theories inform both the student experience and the teacher's process of adaptation.

The chapter begin with a broad theoretical framework. Drawing upon Sociocultural Theory, I offer an analysis of the Zone of Proximal Development. This concept helped to explain how PBLL can effectively foster student development (RQ1), and it also defined the teacher's primary role: to provide precise scaffolding. An understanding of this principle is fundamental to how the teacher adapted to and implemented the PBLL pedagogy (RQ2).

Secondly, this chapter introduces the perspectives of Global Englishes. This framework legitimised students' flexible use of language (such as "Chinglish" or grammatically imperfect phrases) to achieve communicative goals, which directly impacted their learning experience and confidence (RQ1). Adopting this perspective also necessitated that the teacher adjusted traditional assessment criteria and error correction practices that fixate on "standard" grammar. This ideological shift was a key challenge and a central task for the teacher when adapting to a student-centred pedagogy (RQ2).

Building on this, insights from translanguaging offered valuable resources for the teacher and our collaborative design of learning progressions and scaffolding. It offered ways for us to think about how to optimise the learning path for students (RQ1) and provided guidance on how the teacher can dynamically and flexibly adjust instructional strategies (RQ2). By discussing Transformative Pedagogy and Postmethod Pedagogy, this chapter seeks to provide a deeper theoretical legitimacy for our collaborative model of practice. These theories highlight the teacher's agency as a reflective practitioner and validate our shared approach of moving beyond fixed methods to co-create context-specific strategies (RQ2). After establishing the theoretical background, the review situates PBLL as a significant pedagogical branch within the wider framework of Communicative Language Teaching. Finally, the chapter reviews key perspectives on second language learning motivation, including integrative and instrumental orientations and Self Determination Theory, which underpin the analysis of students' engagement and perceptions (RQ1).

This chapter constructs a multidimensional framework by reviewing key theories. This framework was used not only to explain the pedagogical rationale of PBLL but also to situate and understand the unique, collaborative partnership between the teacher and me. To begin this detailed discussion, the chapter first processes with an examination of Sociocultural Theory as the foundational element of this entire theoretical structure.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study drew on theories for Communicative Language Teaching, which have evolved over a long period, notably the Sociocultural Theory (SCT) developed by Vygotsky (1978a, 1986). Under the SCT, I further introduced Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the concept of scaffolding. They provided a solid theoretical basis for this study. These

theoretical frameworks are equally applicable when combined with online education and educational technology (Hung & Nguyen, 2022). The practical implementation of this study, which aimed to adhere to the general requirements of Project-based Language Learning (PBLL) and to gain a more precise understanding of students' actual experiences was largely guided by these theoretical frameworks.

2.1.1. Sociocultural Theory

SCT can be traced back to Vygotsky's seminal expositions in *Mind in Society* (1978b) and *Thought and Language* (1986). Its core proposition is that individuals' higher mental functions are essentially products of sociocultural construction, highlighting the critical role of social context and cultural tools in human thinking and learning. Vygotsky's foundational frameworks, which underscore the pivotal role of language in mediating cognitive development, have profoundly informed subsequent theories of language acquisition. Building on this Vygotskian perspective, scholars such as Lantolf have specifically applied and extended these concepts to the field of second language learning. According to Lantolf (2007), SCT is both a psychological theory of mind and cognition and a theory of learning and cognitive development; its epistemological orientation focuses keenly on how people's cognitive processes are shaped and reorganised through social participation.

Wertsch (1985) made the concept "sociocultural" explicit, further underscoring the dynamic interplay among social activities, historical-cultural contexts, and psychological functions. This perspective could be viewed as an extension of Vygotsky's theory of "mediation": by means of social interaction and semiotic tools (especially language), an individual's natural psychological mechanisms are transformed into more advanced cognitive functions, thereby achieving development and refinement in social activities. From this broad sociocultural standpoint, SCT emphasises the indivisible interplay between the individual and

the environment. Human learning and cognitive development are thus embedded in social practice. Accordingly, Vygotsky's SCT carries the overarching idea that the social is the cognitive: social activity is not merely an external precondition for learning and development, but a fundamental driver that nurtures and sustains higher psychological functions (Vygotsky, 1978b).

Human mental functioning and sociocultural practices are profoundly interdependent, with cultural artefacts, social activities, and conceptual frameworks mediating how individuals engage with and understand the world (Lantolf et al., 2020; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In line with the principles of SCT, lower-level psychological processes such as basic perception and memory are influenced by the immediate physical surroundings. By contrast, more advanced cognitive functions, including decision-making and learning, emerge through participation in sociocultural activities and by employing symbolic tools such as language, models, and various material instruments (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978a).

Within this theoretical framework, cultural tools encompass both tangible artefacts (e.g., technology, buildings, printed materials) and intangible symbolic resources (e.g., language, numerical systems, social norms) that communities generate and continually refine (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978b). These resources facilitate routine interactions and the development of higher mental functions. As they are transmitted and adapted across generations, they reshape individuals' perceptions, reasoning processes, and conceptualisations of the world (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). Over time, these evolving tools of culture become integral to human development, illustrating the core SCT premise that cognition is inseparable from the broader social and historical contexts in which it is nurtured.

Vygotsky's influential work on thought, language, and interaction has been widely adopted and applied by scholars in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

Lantolf conceptualised L2 learning as a dynamic process of internalisation, where learners absorb new knowledge from social interaction, and externalisation, where they use language to mediate their thinking and engagement with the external world (Lantolf, 2013; Lantolf et al., 2020). Central to this application of SCT in SLA is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, which, in conjunction with the notion of scaffolding, is explored in the following section.

2.1.2. Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding Theory

The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has profoundly impacted applied linguistics and, more specifically, the field of SLA (Lantolf, 2006; Lantolf et al., 2017). Here, I outline the ZPD as a general theory of learning, and then I discussed how this concept has been specifically applied to second language (L2) learning. From its original Vygotskian perspective, the ZPD refers to the metaphorical space between a learner's "actual developmental level" (what they can accomplish independently) and their "potential developmental level" (what they can achieve with guidance from a more knowledgeable other, such as a teacher or peer) (Vygotsky, 1978b). In essence, the ZPD is the zone where learning occurs.

The mediating aid learners rely on in reaching their potential developmental level is termed scaffolding. It is a teaching technique that provides temporary support to help students perform tasks or concepts beyond their current level of competence (Wood et al., 1976). The support provided by the teacher is gradually withdrawn, or the teacher builds new scaffolding according to students' learning progress, as the student becomes more proficient, until the student can perform the task or understand the concept independently. The term "scaffolding" comes from the idea that the teacher provides a structure or support for the student's learning, much like a scaffold provides support for a building under construction (ibid.). It can take many forms, such as breaking a task into smaller, more manageable parts, providing hints or prompts to help students solve problems,

and modelling how to solve a problem or complete a task (Richardson et al., 2022).

Scaffolding is fundamentally aimed at enabling students to gradually evolve into independent learners who can flexibly apply their acquired knowledge in novel contexts (Dabbagh, 2003). This approach is based on the premise that students are, to some extent, capable of solving problems independently, thereby embodying a student-centred model of teaching and learning. Moreover, effective scaffolding stresses the role of the "more knowledgeable other" (MKO), whether a teacher or a peer who provides directed guidance and engages in interactive dialogue. This collaborative support might facilitate immediate performance on complex tasks and encourage students to internalise and transfer effective learning strategies to new situations (Gallimore et al., 1993; Young, 1993).

Some scholars have critically examined the relationship between scaffolding and ZPD, suggesting that conflating the two may diminish the ZPD's emphasis on "learning leading development" and the reorganisation of higher-order psychological functions (Xi & Lantolf, 2021). In particular, scaffolding often denotes provisional external support for immediate skill acquisition, while the ZPD foregrounds the learner's multifaceted, ongoing interactions with sociocultural contexts, tools, and peers, which ultimately fostering deep-seated shifts in thinking and self-regulation. Hence, to fully harness the core principles of the ZPD, educational practice should balance short-term task assistance with a commitment to advancing learners' broader developmental trajectories, rather than simply substituting a simplified scaffolding approach for the ZPD's dynamic conception of development.

Wood et al. (1976) identified six roles for scaffolding in teaching and learning: arousing learner interest, simplifying tasks, maintaining set goals, marking key features and gaps, controlling frustration and demonstration. Research has shown that scaffolding can promote student learning and improve academic performance (Shao et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2025). Its efficacy has also been demonstrated in

online learning environments (Chang & Yang, 2023; Giacumo & Savenye, 2020; Richardson et al., 2022). Besides, it is crucial for teachers to carefully scaffold tasks and concepts, as there is a positive correlation between teachers' scaffolding strategies and students' academic achievement (Klapp & Jönsson, 2021). The important role of the teacher in providing scaffolding is to help students successfully transform their ZPD into their current developmental level.

The application of the ZPD and scaffolding has been highly influential in language education, structuring learning as an interactive process (Khaliliaqdam, 2014; Yildiz & Celik, 2020). A MKO scaffolds the language learning experience by providing learners with comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current independent abilities. Through dynamic interplay of receiving targeted input and attempting productive output, learners negotiate meaning and internalise new linguistic and communicative skills. Building on this perspective, the present study underscores the role of collaborative inquiry and interactive dialogue in fostering both linguistic development and cognitive growth.

Crucially, this focus on social and cultural collaboration is not confined to a local or monolingual educational setting. As globalisation accelerates, the use of English and the environments in which it is learned are evolving, challenging the once-dominant paradigm of "standard English". For the purposes of this study, SCT served not only as a theoretical anchor for examining language learning in a local classroom context but also as a springboard for exploring broader, cross-cultural dimensions of English education. Building on these insights, the next section shifts attention to Global Englishes, examining how increasingly diverse English-speaking contexts shape learners' linguistic development and cultural awareness. It extends the sociocultural perspective to encompass a more nuanced understanding of how learners navigate multiple varieties of English in an interconnected world.

2.2. Global Englishes for Language Teaching and Learning

2.2.1. Background of Global Englishes and its Reception in the Chinese Educational Context

The theoretical foundation of Global Englishes (GE) lies in acknowledging and exploring the diversity of English usage worldwide. Murata and Jenkins (2009) pointed out that the concept of GE breaks away from the traditional notion of a singular "standard English", emphasising that English is no longer a language dominated by native-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Instead, it is a diverse system that adapts flexibly across different cultural and regional contexts. GE focuses on the dynamic use of English and cross-cultural communication on a global scale, rather than solely studying the English variants of specific countries or regions (Rose et al., 2021). Furthermore, GE underscores that the spread of English is not a unidirectional linguistic flow; global users of English play significant roles in linguistic change, fostering innovation and development within the language (Galloway & Rose, 2015). This perspective aligns with critical pedagogies in language education, which question the historical dominance of native-speaker norms and address the inherent power dynamics in the global spread of English (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a). These critical insights in language education, specifically Transformative and Postmethod Pedagogies, are explored in greater detail in a subsequent section.

In China, Fang & Ren (2018) introduced a GE introduction course at a university and discovered that students' attitudes towards English underwent positive changes after the course. They began to recognise the diversity of English and no longer confined themselves to pursuing "standard pronunciation" or "native-speaker English". Lu (2020), through empirical analysis, confirmed the impact of GE awareness courses on Chinese university students. Following a 12-week intervention with a GE course, it was found that students' understanding of English diversity had improved, and they started to view different varieties of English and

their cultural backgrounds more openly. Research into the growing number of GE courses in China indicates that with explicit cultivation of GE awareness, students can adopt a GE perspective and potentially alter their previous English learning approaches. However, GE perspective seems less applicable at the secondary level, suggesting a distinct disconnect in the philosophy of English language learning between Chinese universities and secondary schools.

Liu and Fang (2022), in their analysis of China's National English Curriculum (CNEC) for secondary schools, found that although the curriculum acknowledges the concept of GE to some extent, its overall design remains strongly influenced by the traditional notion of "standard English". Their research indicates that the current curriculum's statements on phonetics and cultural teaching still focus predominantly on British and American English, failing to fully reflect the diversity of GE. This curricular stance reflects what Kumaravadivelu (2012) critiqued as the enduring "native-speaker episteme". He defined this as a centre-based knowledge system with a "colonial coloration" that underpins much of English language teaching. By prioritising British and American norms, such a curriculum perpetuates an "epistemic dependency" on Western models. From this perspective, embracing a GE approach is a step towards the decolonisation of English pedagogy.

Specifically, China's English curriculum in secondary school requires teachers to prioritise helping students master a standard accent and teaches under the standards of "correct pronunciation", which implicitly refer to the pronunciation norms of British and American English. Additionally, in cultural teaching, the CNEC mainly emphasises the cultural knowledge of native English-speaking countries, such as the UK and the USA, requiring students to understand these countries' history, geography, climate, and dietary habits, while offering limited coverage of other English users' cultures. This emphasis on British and American English and their cultures reflects a "native-speaker English" consciousness in curriculum design, neglecting the widespread application of GE across diverse cultural

contexts.

In this study, unlike CNEC, the inclusion of numerous student-driven learning activities and sessions in the PBLL curriculum design explicitly altered the teaching format, reducing the teacher's time investment in standard English instruction. Moreover, since the project's chosen theme of "travel" did not require students to focus on cities in native English-speaking countries, many students selected geographical locations within China or other countries they had visited, such as Japan or Southeast Asian nations. Online research for their product preparation provided these students with increased exposure to authentic English from a variety of international users. Even when searching in English, they frequently encountered expressions from speakers of different linguistic origins, such as Japanese or Chinese.

Students had the opportunity to realise that language use is influenced by cultural, social, and regional contexts, prompting reflection on their own language use. Different regional varieties of English are also effective means of communication, including "Chinglish", which might have been rejected or considered incorrect in previous English learning experiences among Chinese students. A classic example is the English expression "long time no see", a direct translation of the Chinese phrase "好久不见" (means "It has been a long time since we last met"). Although this phrase is not strictly correct according to English grammar, it has been adopted by many non-native Chinese speakers in English communication and is understood. In this practice, such expressions did not impede other students' and the participating teacher's comprehension of their English content. These phenomena are further elaborated in detail in Chapter V.

2.2.2. Translingualism and Translanguaging

2.2.2.1. Translingualism

Translingualism offers an important perspective for the study of GE. Canagarajah

(2012) suggested that translingual practices emphasise the fluidity and interactivity of language, positing that language users dynamically adjust and reconstruct linguistic forms in cross-cultural communication. This attention to fluid, context-specific meaning-making mirrors Kumaravadivelu's (2001) call for a "pedagogy of particularity", which argues that effective language use emerges from locally situated practices rather than universal norms. Furthermore, understanding translingual literacy requires a shift from viewing literacy as independent and fixed to seeing it as negotiated and dynamic. This negotiated view of literacy regards readers and writers as equal participants, suggesting that the meaning and form of texts are co-constructed rather than predetermined (Canagarajah, 2013). Framing literacy as negotiated aligns with the Postmethod premise that teachers and learners are co-theorisers who generate "practical" knowledge in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b).This perspective has potential relevance to the PBLL framework of this study, offering insights into how students can flexibly utilise linguistic resources in multilingual environments, while also laying a foundation for understanding cross-cultural communication phenomena in language learning.

Specifically, Canagarajah (2013) proposed four key negotiation strategies: envoicing, recontextualisation, interaction, and entextualisation. These strategies reveal learners' collaborative efforts in multilingual texts. First, envoicing refers to scholars expressing personal identities and intentions through multimodal symbolic resources (such as language and visual elements), showcasing their unique linguistic choices and cultural backgrounds. Second, the recontextualisation strategy provides scholars with frameworks for understanding through text structures, stylistic markers, and symbolic cues, helping them decode texts in different contexts. Third, the interaction strategy emphasises the collaborative generation of textual meaning, where scholars actively negotiate with others' multilingual expressions during interpretation, participating in the co-construction of the text. Lastly, the entextualisation strategy focuses on the dynamic organisation of texts across time and space, guiding scholars to gradually

adapt to and interpret textual complexities by progressively introducing multilingual elements. These four strategies collectively constitute the core mechanisms of translingual literacy, showcasing the unique features of negotiation, creativity, and interactivity in multilingual texts (Canagarajah & Matsumoto, 2017). Seen through a Postmethod lens, such negotiation realises the "pedagogy of possibility" by enabling participants to question hegemonic language hierarchies and imagine more equitable communicative relations (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2016).

Gevers (2018) reviewed the theoretical background of translingualism and criticised its uncritical application in educational practice. Gevers argued that although translingualism, as a strategy, aims to blur linguistic boundaries and encourage students to use multiple linguistic resources in writing, its theoretical foundation is not robust. Moreover, he pointed out that translingualism's overemphasis on the visibility of code-meshing may obscure the processes of linguistic and cultural negotiation. Unlike the separative nature of code-switching, code-meshing emphasises the integration rather than the switching of languages. Code-switching describes the behaviour of multilingual individuals switching between different languages according to different contexts (Gumperz, 1977). In contrast, code-meshing advocates integrating multiple languages within a single context, treating them as equal modes of communication (Canagarajah, 2006). Young (2010) believed that code-meshing can create more inclusive spaces in academic and educational settings, enabling students to maintain their linguistic diversity and cultural identities.

Schreiber and Watson (2018) further clarified the relationship between translingualism and code-meshing. They argued that translingual education should not be limited to encouraging students to mix different languages or dialects during language learning but should help students understand the formation of language. The two scholars pointed out that code-meshing should be a purposeful rhetorical strategy rather than an unconditional requirement. While learning

language, students should have the ability to decide whether and how to construct translingual identities (ibid.). Their views reflect Canagarajah's (2013) discussion, where he emphasised that the success of code-meshing depends on the specific rhetorical environment and the student's proficiency in the target language. Both code-switching and code-meshing were evident in this study. Students typically code-switched to Chinese for technical discussions about video production. However, for formal classroom output, such as their final project presentations, they predominantly employed code-meshing. A more detailed analysis of these findings is presented in Chapter V.

Other research has noted that students often face limitations from monolingual ideologies when engaging in translingual literacy practices (Arnold, 2020). Many students and teachers subconsciously regard the target language as the sole standard language, a notion that hinders the widespread application of translingual practices (ibid.). Monolingual ideologies reinforce this mindset by emphasising standard English as the only legitimate form of academic communication, leading to difficulties for students when learning and using translingual strategies. In the practical process of this study, both students and the participating teacher still exhibited some monolingual consciousness in the classroom. This awareness influenced their language use behaviours, rooted in the deep-seated monolingualism in their learning environment due to long-term language norm education. Chapter V further reveals how this monolingual consciousness affected their translingual practices in the PBLL classroom.

It is worth noting that in Canagarajah's (2013) discussion, he primarily focused on the writing processes of language learning. Gevers (2018) also suggested that strategies for developing students' writing abilities in specific learning contexts should not be conflated with those for oral language learning. Therefore, when discussing language as a tool for cognition and learning, "translanguaging" has more frequently entered scholars' perspectives. In the field of language education, translanguaging is not limited to written or spoken language but encompasses the

comprehensive utilisation of linguistic resources. It involves how learners unconsciously integrate their linguistic knowledge in daily life to facilitate learning and expression (García & Li, 2014).

2.2.2.2. Translanguaging

Despite ongoing debates and challenges, translanguaging has increasingly been recognised as a pedagogical approach aimed at enhancing language learners' ability to flexibly utilise their entire linguistic repertoire to improve cross-cultural communication skills (Conteh, 2018). Unlike traditional monolingual teaching models, translanguaging allows learners to use multiple languages simultaneously in the classroom. Particularly in English language teaching, this method breaks the constraint that students can only use the target language, thereby embodying linguistic fluidity and diversity in teaching practice (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). It can be said that the previously mentioned code-meshing and code-switching are manifestations of translanguaging. Moreover, translanguaging practices include providing students with bilingual reading materials and promoting multilingual group discussions, allowing students to take notes in multiple languages, and teachers using bilingual instruction during classroom guidance to help students connect new and prior knowledge, thus facilitating interlingual transfer (García et al., 2017). Researchers have also emphasised the importance of methods such as Project-based Learning and Task-based Learning when adopting translanguaging strategies in instructional design and classroom structure (García & Li, 2014).

Translanguaging involves far more than mere linguistic conversion between named languages, which represents a fluid and dynamic use of linguistic and multimodal resources that transcends socially constructed language boundaries (Li, 2018; Li & García, 2022). Rather than regarding bilinguals as individuals navigating between two separate linguistic systems, translanguaging recognises that bilinguals possess a singular, integrated linguistic and semiotic repertoire, which they strategically mobilise in context-specific ways for effective communication, meaning-making,

and identity construction (Li & García, 2022; Lu et al., 2025).

This study highlights its timeliness by addressing the integration of translanguaging practices with PBLL in classroom settings, offering a relevant contribution to understanding how the flexible use of multilingual resources might enhance students' cross-cultural communication skills.

In the context of GE, the application of translanguaging is mainly reflected in the following aspects. Firstly, it supports linguistic diversity by encouraging students to combine their mother tongue with English, helping them better understand English variants in different cultural contexts and adapt to the complexity of global language use (Li, 2018). Secondly, translanguaging is considered capable of cultivating students' cross-cultural awareness, enabling them to mesh freely and communicate effectively in different cultural and linguistic environments (García & Kleyn, 2016). Additionally, translanguaging has been empirically proven to enhance the cognitive outcomes of language learning (Rajendram, 2023). By allowing students to use familiar linguistic resources to interpret new knowledge, they reduce cognitive load when understanding new concepts, thereby lowering learning anxiety and enhancing motivation (Yamagami, 2023).

Moreover, translanguaging is inherently a decolonising endeavour, aiming to dismantle raciolinguistic hierarchies that have historically marginalised multilingual learners by essentialising and dividing their linguistic practices into discrete languages (Li & García, 2022). This perspective challenges entrenched monoglossic ideologies in education, fostering a pedagogical space where multilingual learners' identities and knowledge bases are validated rather than pathologised. Translanguaging thus moves beyond conventional multilingual education by reframing learners not as deficient users of a dominant language, but as competent multilingual communicators capable of leveraging their full linguistic and multimodal repertoire in meaningful learning contexts (Li & García, 2022; Lu et al., 2025). In Chapter V & VI, I further discuss the participants'

practice and perception of translanguaging strategies.

2.2.3. Summary of Global Englishes for Language Teaching and Learning

At present, the concepts discussed above remain contentious globally, particularly within state schools in China, where traditional English teaching models continue to prioritise standard English as the definitive benchmark of language proficiency. This pedagogical approach emphasises the mastery of standard English while paying relatively little attention to translingual phenomena or multilingualism. In such a context, attempting to disrupt the existing teaching framework poses challenges. For instance, the project in this study was conducted during students' holidays because, within the conventional classroom setting, students face heavy workloads that make it difficult to allocate sufficient time for experimental pedagogical explorations.

This study sought to provide students with a potential GE environment through PBLL, enabling them to recognise that certain "Chinglish" expressions are acceptable if they do not impede communication. It also explored whether such an environment could encourage students to express themselves without anxiety about non-standard pronunciation or grammatical inaccuracies. Rather than attempting to immediately transform English language teaching practices, this study aimed to introduce pedagogical concepts, such as translanguaging, into China's secondary education discourse, exploring their potential for localised implementation. Much of the research cited in the forthcoming discussion in Sections 2.3 also adopted GE as its research background.

2.3. Transformative and Postmethod Pedagogy

2.3.1. Transformative Pedagogy

Transformative Pedagogy in language learning integrates innovative strategies that empower learners and promote critical thinking (García & Li, 2015; Rajendram, 2023). It employs translanguaging to reshape educational structures and practices, fostering new student identities, deepening cognitive and knowledge development, and advancing social justice by interrogating linguistic inequality (García & Li, 2015). Critical pedagogy, a fundamental component of Transformative Pedagogy, focuses on dismantling oppressive power structures within language education that hinder students' learning potential (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017). As highlighted earlier in the discussion of Global Englishes, this critical stance also demands that educators interrogate native-speaker norms and legitimate the diverse Englishes learners already use, thereby further aligning Transformative Pedagogy with the pluricentric reality of English as a global lingua franca (Boonsuk & Karakaş, 2025; Jenkins et al., 2018; Rose & Galloway, 2019b). Transformative Pedagogy underscores the importance of transforming teaching practices to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for language learners.

The concept of transformative teaching design highlights a shift towards student-centred teaching approaches, moving away from traditional teacher-directed content delivery (Blackie et al., 2010). In the field of language teaching, Cummins (2000b) emphasised that Transformative Pedagogy should focus on three key aspects: message, language, and use (see Figure 2.1). Cummins (2000a) stressed the importance of understanding message and cultivating students' critical thinking skills, enabling them to conduct in-depth analysis and reflection within complex contexts. Teachers should guide students in exploring language across different social contexts, enhancing their critical language awareness and social responsibility. The focus on "use" highlights that language learning should be

embedded in authentic language use situations, encouraging students to express their identities and intellectual capabilities within meaningful contexts. In PBLL, a similar emphasis is placed on enabling students to apply their knowledge in real-world situations through practical projects and tasks, thereby enhancing their language application skills and problem-solving abilities (Gras-Velázquez, 2019).

> **A. FOCUS ON MESSAGE**
>
> - **Making Input Comprehensible**
> - **Developing Critical Literacy**
>
> **B. FOCUS ON LANGUAGE**
>
> - **Awareness of Language Forms and Uses**
> - **Critical Analysis of Language Forms and Uses**
>
> **C. FOCUS ON USE**
>
> **Using Language to:**
>
> - **Generate New Knowledge**
> - **Create Literature and Art**
> - **Act on Social Realities**
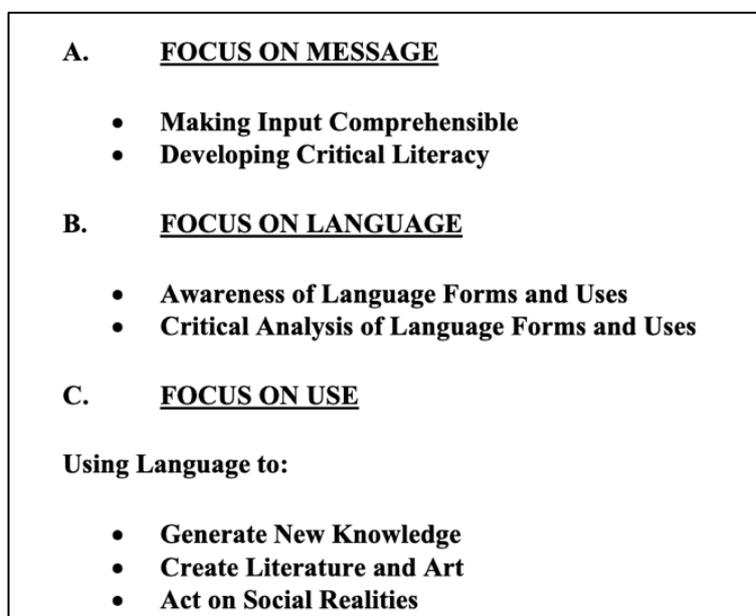
Figure 2.1. Instruction for Language Learning and Academic Achievement (Cummins, 2000b, p. 15)

2.3.2. Postmethod Pedagogy

Although the main focus of this study is on students' learning experiences and perceptions in PBLL, it was still necessary to communicate and prepare with the teacher. Therefore, the review of relevant literature on teacher education is essential. The Postmethod viewpoint provides guidance for teacher education in the teaching mode that may incorporate different language teaching and learning methods (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2003b). Postmethod critiques traditional language teaching methods and proposes an alternative approach to language teaching. While Communicative Language Teaching is a specific approach to language teaching that emphasises communication and the development of communicative competence, Postmethod argues that language teaching should not be based on a single method or approach and encourages teachers to adopt a

critical stance towards language teaching and to be adaptable in their teaching practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

The limitations of conventional language teaching methods, often critiqued for their colonial underpinnings and one-size-fits-all approach, have led to a significant pedagogical shift. This shift is encapsulated in what Kumaravadivelu terms the "Postmethod condition", which signifies a departure from the search for a singular, superior method (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). As Kumaravadivelu (1994, p. 29) posited, Postmethod Pedagogy "signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method". Fundamentally, this perspective seeks to decolonise English language teaching by moving beyond centre-based, top-down methodologies and empowering teachers to construct their own classroom-oriented theories of practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2003a). It is guided by the parameters of "particularity, practicality, and possibility", which prioritise a pedagogy sensitive to local contexts and committed to empowering learners (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a). To facilitate this, Kumaravadivelu (2003b) proposed a macrostrategic framework designed to provide teachers with guiding principles from which they can generate situation-specific microstrategies. The ten macrostrategies are: "maximise learning opportunities, facilitate negotiated interaction, minimise perceptual mismatches, activate intuitive heuristics, foster language awareness, contextualise linguistic input, integrate language skills, promote learner autonomy, raise cultural consciousness, and ensure social relevance" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2003b).

Macrostrategies are used as guiding principles to assist teachers in designing their own microstrategies or classroom activities (Kumaravadivelu, 2006b). Thus, instead of preparing teachers to cope with numerous unpredictable needs and situations, we should help them cultivate the ability to generate a variety of context-specific ideas within a general framework that appears meaningful in current educational practices and theoretical knowledge. In line with this Postmethod spirit, the present study, while founded upon the principles of PBLL,

did not adhere to this specific method in a rigid or restrictive manner. Although a comprehensive discussion of each macrostrategy was beyond the scope of this literature review, the framework's influence was evident in this study. Chapter IV and Chapter VII demonstrated how Postmethod was referenced in the implementation of the PBLL method and in the analysis of the teacher's pedagogical adjustments, revealing a process guided by strategic, context-sensitive decision-making rather than pedagogical dogma.

Moreover, it is essential for second language teacher education to prioritise the pre-understandings or prior knowledge of teaching and learning that teachers possess (Borg, 2003, 2011). Such previous understanding can serve as a double-edged sword, as suggested by Le Fevre (2014), as it can aid the acquisition of new understandings, while simultaneously hindering cognitive development. Hence, teacher educators face the challenging task of "overcoming the inertia of teachers' everyday concepts" (Johnson, 2015, p. 517) in order to ensure effective teacher training. There was a greater discussion of the education of the teacher in Chapter IV where the methodology of the study was elucidated.

2.3.3. Summary of Transformative and Postmethod Pedagogy

In the preceding discussion of various concepts and teaching pedagogies, it was noted that these approaches did not originate from a single group of scholars but are the result of continuous global advancements, discussions, and practices in language teaching. However, directly applying these within the context of China's educational system is impractical. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, Chinese students face the significant pressure of the National College Entrance Examination, and their learning tasks cannot be easily altered in the short term. In this context, integrating the advantages of emerging language learning methods into the daily English teaching of Chinese secondary schools becomes a more critical issue than merely attempting to implement these methods directly.

In such an environment, Transformative Pedagogy and Postmethod Pedagogy become particularly pertinent. These pedagogies advocate for a critical acceptance of existing teaching methods and provide opportunities to consider the specificity, practicality, and possibilities of the Chinese educational environment (Sun, 2021). This study focused on PBLL and included the long-established Communicative Language Teaching approach. Moreover, by incorporating perspectives on Transformative Pedagogy, Postmethod Pedagogy and Global Englishes (GE), the significance of these educational approaches within a globalised context can be further explored. Transformative Pedagogy and Postmethod Pedagogy emphasises a critical engagement with existing methods and addresses the deconstruction of power relations and the promotion of cultural diversity in language education (Li, 2024). Similarly, the theory of GE provides a valuable framework for re-evaluating linguistic diversity and cross-cultural communicative competence in English language teaching and learning (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Within the Chinese educational context, these perspectives contribute to the localisation of teaching and learning methods while encouraging students to critically reflect on the social functions and cultural implications of language in a globalised world.

The PBLL implemented in this study drew upon a certain amount of teaching and learning methods, integrating other strategies into its original framework while considering the practical circumstances and needs of the participating students, thus forming a unique learning practice. Although only one teacher participated, I observed her reflections and changes during the process of experimenting with new teaching method. This approach aimed to provide references for future scholars or educators, demonstrating how an experienced Chinese secondary school teacher can adjust her classroom, thereby offering valuable insights for Chinese English teachers in similar contexts. The significance of Transformative Pedagogy and Postmethod Pedagogy in this study was embodied here. In the data analysis section Chapter VII, the teacher's specific thoughts and practical experiences were further elaborated and discussed in detail.

2.4. Communicative Language Teaching and Learning

Building on the theoretical foundations outlined earlier, this section positions Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its derivative, Project-based Language Learning (PBLL), within a wider historical and conceptual frame. I begin by revisiting the Grammar Translation and Audiolingual Method to foreground the pedagogical shifts that led to the emergence of CLT. The discussion then traces CLT's evolution, detailing its core principles and the subsequent proliferation of methods such as Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content-based Language Teaching (CBLT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). By reviewing these methods, this section identifies key principles that were selectively adapted for the PBLL learning module designed for this study, operationalising the Postmethod perspective that urges context-responsive and critical appropriation of diverse pedagogical options (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a). Finally, I clarify how the distilled insights from each method inform the design of the PBLL component in this study.

2.4.1. Traditional Methods of Language Teaching

In this study, traditional English language teaching methods refers to approaches that once dominated the classroom but have been increasingly supplanted by communicatively oriented frameworks. The Audiolingual Method (ALM) and the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) typify this category: both shaped pedagogical practice for decades and still retain certain context-specific merits (Akramy et al., 2022; Chang, 2011; Ebrahimi & Elahifar, 2021). A concise review of ALM and GTM preceded the discussion of CLT so that the ensuing analysis can foreground the conceptual shift from form-centred instruction to meaning-focused interaction and clarify the distinctive advantages that CLT is said to offer.

2.4.1.1. Audiolingual Method

ALM is a behaviourist-inspired language teaching approach that emerged in the United States during the mid-20th century. Rooted in structural linguistics (Fries, 1947) and behaviourist psychology (Skinner, 1957), ALM posits that language learning is a process of habit formation. Through systematic repetition, drills, and carefully sequenced dialogues, learners are trained to internalise grammatical and phonological patterns, often before being introduced to reading or writing skills. By reinforcing correct responses and minimising errors, ALM aims to cultivate accurate oral production and pronunciation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

In practice, ALM helps learners retain the target language through mechanical repetition and immediate error correction. Studies underscore the importance of repetition in language learning, especially in children's first language (L1) acquisition, where discourse is inherently repetitive in the early stages (Richards & Renandya, 2002; Tomasello, 2003). Although ALM is no longer the dominant instructional method, certain schools still selectively implement drills—particularly at the initial stage of foreign language instruction, such as vocabulary learning (Kakunta & Kamanga, 2020). In a quantitative study with secondary school students, Ali et al. (2023) found that adopting ALM techniques enhanced learners' vocabulary performance. When some aspects of the target language differ substantially from learners' L1, teachers may also rely on ALM-oriented memorisation strategies to facilitate comprehension.

While research indicates that ALM can foster grammar and vocabulary improvement (Bidenko & Bespalova, 2017), other findings suggest that repetition plays a limited role in language development (Duff, 2000; Ellis & Wulff, 2019). Moreover, ALM is not widely regarded as equipping learners with communicative skills that endure over time (Richards, 2005). Brown (2008) likewise posited that second language acquisition may not emerge solely from habit formation and overlearning, questioning the necessity of avoiding errors and relying heavily on mechanical drills. Another drawback is the potential lack of learner engagement,

which can lead to relatively slow and minimal knowledge uptake (Harmer, 2015). Referring to Krashen's (1984) Five Hypotheses, some scholars further note that ALM lacks a process for providing comprehensible input without pressuring early production, thereby hindering the development of communicative competence (Tehrani et al., 2013).

2.4.1.2. Grammar Translation Method

In addition to traditional language teaching methods that emphasise speaking and listening skills such as ALM, GTM was historically regarded as an effective way of learning vocabulary and grammatical structures. As noted by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), the GTM concentrates on the grammatical rules of the target language and centres on translating back and forth between learners' L1 and the target language. Generally, its focus is on reading, translation, and grammar rules, often neglecting pronunciation and oral skills (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Specifically, reading and writing skills are prioritised, thereby helping students enhance their accuracy in the target language (Howatt, 1984).

Reflecting GTM's reliance on learners' L1, the method posits that translation from the native language can help learners better understand the target language. According to Vermes (2010), such translation activities might heighten learners' awareness of both the mother tongue and the foreign language, and deepen their understanding of cultural conflicts arising from two different linguistic contexts. In a study of university-level English teaching in Afghanistan, teachers reported a preference for GTM: they viewed it as a fundamental approach that supports correct mastery of grammar rules and emphasise the indispensable role of the L1 in fostering target-language learning (Akramy et al., 2022). The effectiveness and drawbacks of GTM may vary across regions; in settings where the native grammar closely parallels that of English, the disadvantages may be less apparent.

However, many scholars agree that GTM does not fulfil the needs of students in

diverse contexts (Chang, 2011; Nisha, 2024). In an increasingly interconnected world, oral fluency in English is considered crucial for effective spoken communication (Derakhshan et al., 2016), and GTM has been shown to have limited impact on improving students' fluency (Chang, 2011; Vireak & Bunrosy, 2024). Similar to ALM, GTM does not adequately foster the development of communicative competence, a skill regarded as vital for 21st-century learners in a globalised environment. As a result, there has been a shift towards a more practical orientation in English language learning, aimed at authentic communication across global contexts. This trend underpins the rise of the CLT approach, which was discussed in detail later. It bears noting that traditional methods like GTM and ALM continue to dominate many secondary schools' English classrooms in China, despite growing academic recognition within the country of the importance of communicative competence in language instruction.

2.4.1.3. The Disconnect between Theory and Practice in China

In the Chinese context, an increasing number of scholars highlight the potential benefits of more communicative, and student-centred approaches (Liang, 2024; Lou, 2021). At the same time, it is widely acknowledged that traditional methods such as GTM continue to be prevalent in secondary schools (Yi, 2021). This is partly because the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) still prioritises discrete vocabulary and grammar knowledge, a focus that aligns well with the core features of GTM and ALM. Indeed, while some teachers are considering ways to integrate communicative tasks within traditional approaches (Chang, 2011), the lack of oral testing components in the current NCEE hinders a full transition to methods under CLT. Consequently, although educators are growing more aware of the limitations of GTM and ALM, practical constraints make it challenging to abandon these methods outright.

Existing literature also suggests that many teachers value the test-oriented efficiency of GTM and ALM, believing these methods can yield higher examination

scores (Li & Xu, 2023). For instance, intensive grammar drills and pattern practice, key elements of GTM and ALM, are perceived to reinforce the linguistic accuracy needed in reading and writing tests (Deng, 2023). Meanwhile, because oral fluency is largely omitted from formal assessments, the advantages of communicative approaches remain underexploited (Zhang, 2024). As a result, current discourse in China often revolves around how to balance the perceived benefits of traditional methods with the added value of more interactive or communicative techniques, rather than calling for a wholesale replacement.

In light of the above discussion, the present study did not advocate abandoning GTM or ALM altogether in China. Instead, it focused on identifying feasible ways to introduce new methods within the existing examination-oriented context. Scholars have noted that, in a global environment, English language learning increasingly involves more than just communicative competence, extending to the cultivation of critical thinking, cultural awareness, and interdisciplinary skill sets (Coyle et al., 2010; Murata & Jenkins, 2009). Acknowledging these broader requirements encourages an incremental approach rather than a complete overhaul of traditional practices. Next section turns to an examination of CLT, its definitions and pedagogical applications, to explore how it might address these evolving needs within Chinese secondary classrooms.

2.4.2. An Integrated Overview of Communicative Language Teaching

2.4.2.1. The Historical Evolution of Communicative Language Teaching

The PBLL method employed in this study was based on the CLT approach. CLT emerged in the 1970s as a response to the limitations of more traditional, form-focused language teaching methods such as ALM and GTM (Richards & Renandya, 2002). CLT emphasises meaning negotiation, authentic interaction, and the development of learners' communicative competence, marking a paradigm shift

in the field of second language acquisition and foreign language teaching (Widdowson, 1990). The primary goal of CLT is to help learners use the target language effectively in real-life situations, rather than merely mastering discrete grammatical structures (Savignon & Sysoyev, 2002).

CLT was introduced by Hymes (1972) in his theory of communicative competence as a critical development of Chomsky's proposal of language competence (Chomsky, 1965). The universal grammar (UG) proposed by Chomsky advocates language competence as the basis for generative grammar. UG states that language is intrinsic to the human brain and provides individuals with the ability to communicate (ibid.). This statement implies that humans possess a genetic mechanism: intrinsic grammar is innate, and individual comprehension and communication are inherent abilities (Chomsky, 1986). UG was initially widely accepted as a theory of native language acquisition (Yang, 2004), and scholars have debated the actual effects of UG when relating it to foreign language learning (Schachter, 1988). Evans and Levinson (2009) criticised Chomsky's UG as a dichotomy that ignores communication's sociolinguistic and pragmatic elements. Hymes (1972) brought a sociolinguistic perspective to Chomsky's view of language competence by including grammatical competence in various communicative contexts.

A core concept in CLT is communicative competence, originally articulated by Hymes (1972) and later adapted by Canale and Swain (1980). According to Canale and Swain, communicative competence encompasses grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence. The goal is not merely the acquisition of linguistic forms but also the ability to use these forms appropriately and effectively in a range of social contexts (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995).

In addition, CLT draws on the idea that language is both a social and cognitive process (Widdowson, 1990). Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the importance of interaction and scaffolding in learning, also provides support for

CLT's focus on meaningful communication (Lantolf et al., 2020). Instead of merely simulating real-world scenarios, the communicative activities are authentic instances of communication themselves, requiring learners to use language for a genuine purpose in the moment.

Bachman (1990) stated that communicative language competence includes both grammatical knowledge and how grammatical knowledge is used appropriately in communicative contexts. CLT aims to make communicative competence the primary goal of language teaching and recognise the interdependence between language and communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Furthermore, CLT does not ignore the help that the learner's mother tongue, the L1, brings to the process of learning the target language (Spada, 2007).

In sum, the theoretical foundations outlined above underscore the pivotal role of meaningful interaction, sociocultural mediation, and cognitive processing in second language acquisition. By foregrounding communicative competence as a central objective, CLT departs from form-focused pedagogies and emphasises authentic language use in socially and contextually rich settings. Crucially for this thesis, these guiding principles provided the core pedagogical rationale for employing a PBLL framework, which was designed to create such a setting for students to develop and deploy their communicative competence in practice.

2.4.2.2. Key Principles of Communicative Language Teaching

Building on these theoretical insights, the following section introduces the key principles that underpin CLT in practice. Specifically, it elaborates how CLT's emphasis on meaningful communication, authenticity, and learner engagement translates into pedagogical guidelines for classroom instruction.

Focus on Meaning and Use: CLT prioritises the meaningful use of language through tasks, simulations, and discussions, allowing learners to negotiate

meaning, form, and function in authentic contexts (Ellis, 2018).

Authentic Materials and Tasks: Authentic materials (such as newspaper articles, videos, emails, or conversations) are favoured in CLT to reflect the complexities of language in real-life communication (Nunan, 2004). Task-based Language Teaching and Content-based Language Learning are often seen as extensions or specific methodological realisations of CLT (Richards, 2005).

Learner-Centeredness: In CLT classrooms, teachers assume the role of facilitators or "co-communicators" rather than knowledge transmitters, promoting learner autonomy and active engagement in the learning process (Brown, 2008).

Integration of Skills: While grammar and vocabulary are not neglected, these elements are integrated with the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in communicative activities to develop balanced communicative competence (Harmer, 2015).

Fluency before Accuracy: CLT methodology often privileges fluency over strict accuracy at the early stages of learning, where fluency refers to how smoothly a speaker can communicate in the target language (Brown, 2008). Errors are treated as part of the language learning process and are selectively corrected (Savignon, 1991). It is important to note that teachers still need to focus on students' basic accuracy in the target language to help learners convey and understand the target language without causing severe deviations from the meaning of the target language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

2.4.2.3. Critiques and Limitations of Communicative Language Teaching

Critics argue that CLT is unbalanced in the development of students' skills in the

target language, and that this imbalance is particularly evident in students' reading and writing skills: as CLT's emphasis on students' communication skills reinforces students' listening and speaking skills, the development of reading and writing skills is relatively weak (Qasserras, 2023). A further problem is that although richly designed activities may enhance students' interest in learning the target language, teachers do not design all activities in such a way that they are effective for language enhancement (Dos Santos, 2020). CLT's instructional design often prioritises the development of learners' communicative competence in the target language, utilising various engaging classroom activities to facilitate language practice. However, such contextualised dialogues or role plays can be time-consuming to both prepare and conduct, resulting in students completing only one or two complete communicative exchanges within the limited classroom time (Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021). For middle school students with predetermined term goals, this type of activity design may cause language teachers to be unable to fully implement all teaching plans within the prescribed curriculum.

Connecting to the principles of Postmethod Pedagogy, it is pertinent to consider Kumaravadivelu's (2006a) critical analysis of CLT and its place within the evolution of English education pedagogies. He highlighted that while CLT became a dominant force, its core claims were subsequently challenged by critics who questioned its practical authenticity in the classroom, its acceptability as a revolutionary approach, and its adaptability across diverse sociocultural contexts. Kumaravadivelu identified a significant subsequent trend as the shift from CLT towards Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT). It should be noted, however, that the present study conceptualises TBLT not as a replacement for, but rather as a specific branch and development within the broader CLT paradigm, a position that was elaborated upon later.

Consequently, while Kumaravadivelu (ibid.) framed the evolution of methods as a trajectory moving from CLT, through TBLT, and towards a Postmethod Pedagogy,

this study adopted a non-oppositional stance. This study posited that various methods popularised in different eras contain valuable principles and have seen successful applications. The central tenet of this study is that the efficacy of any pedagogical approach is not inherent but is contingent upon its thoughtful adaptation to the specific context, taking into account the particularities of the learning environment, the learners, and the teachers involved.

In China, there is potential decrease in student engagement when learners recognise that CLT-oriented instructional content does not fully equip them for impending high-stakes examinations (Yung, 2023). In such instances, it is insufficient to scrutinise only the pedagogical method; rather, we should also question whether current testing practices are at fault. If CLT is recognised as an evolving approach to language instruction, then it stands to reason that assessment strategies should likewise be re-examined and updated.

These criticisms are indeed grounded in practical realities, particularly in Chinese secondary schools, where examination-oriented instruction remains the primary focus, arguably as part of broader efforts to ensure educational equity (Deng, 2024). Recognising the enduring importance of standardised assessments, this study did not aim to overturn existing language teaching and learning systems. Rather, it explored how a project-based, communicatively driven method can serve as a valuable supplement to current practices, potentially addressing students' observed deficits in oral proficiency and communicative skills.

2.4.2.4. Relevance of Communicative Language Teaching to the Present Study

In this study, PBLL largely followed the CLT framework. The course practice focused on developing students' fluency rather than accuracy in communicating in English. In addition to language skills related to the target language, the teacher and I made "travel" a central topic of the course, with the aim of developing cultural awareness. The group communication and collaboration promoted by

PBLL was intended to help students enhance their communicative strategies in the learning process. As this project intended to facilitate the skill of making a video production, the students' knowledge of the target language required to discuss production-making methods was well beyond their current target language level, so L1 was used in the process to support the successful completion of the students' project.

This study did not claim to exhaustively address the development of all four language skills. While participants might receive training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the emphasis was placed primarily on speaking. As Gan (2013) noted, speaking skills are often the most neglected and weakest performance area among Chinese secondary school students. Therefore, one of the objectives of this project was to investigate whether the planned activities could foster greater students' confidence in expressing their opinions in the target language. In designing the curriculum, I also drew upon insights from other CLT-based methods to ensure that the PBLL method remained communicatively oriented. The following section expands on these methods under the CLT umbrella, illustrating how they informed and refined the design of this study.

2.4.3. The Development and Extension of Communicative Language Teaching

In the present study, CLT is conceptualised as an overarching approach rather than a single method, drawing on the framework proposed by Richards and Rodgers (2014): An approach generally signifies foundational assumptions about the nature of language learning and use, and CLT aligns with such a conceptual level by emphasising communicative competence and sociolinguistic perspectives.

Under this umbrella, I identified various "methods" that put CLT's principles into practice in different ways. By positioning CLT at the approach level and its offshoots as methods, the study clarified how each pedagogical choice aligned

with the fundamental tenets of CLT while retaining methodological flexibility.

The present study's PBLL method is considered as a branch of CLT and is discussed first in this section. Following this, other CLT methods are introduced and compared to PBLL. The reason for presenting these other CLT methods is that in this research project, the feasibility of combining PBLL with other CLT methods was considered. This section further clarifies why this study was confirmed to fall under the category of PBLL rather than other CLT methods.

2.4.3.1. Project-based Language Learning

Although PBLL centres on developing language proficiency, it extends beyond purely linguistic objectives to foster a range of additional competencies, including cultural awareness, collaborative problem-solving, and even the production of high-quality, publicly oriented project outcomes (Beckett, 2002; Zhang & Ma, 2023). With its emphasis on group work and interaction within the community (Pitura & Berlińska-Kopeć, 2018; Sun & Zhu, 2023), PBLL is a learning-by-doing method: communicating and presenting results using the target language while students participate together in solving real-world problems (Stoller, 2002). Aside from the language learning aspect, Project-based Learning could belong to an interdisciplinary category, which was specifically reviewed in the next chapter with a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis. It can be argued that the integration of other CLT methods into PBLL, such as Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), Content-based Language Teaching (CBLT), or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) can provide more specific language learning guidance when language teaching is involved in different projects. PBLL has been combined with other language teaching and learning methods with some success (Rodríguez-Peñarroja, 2022; Sánchez-García & Pavón-Vázquez, 2021). When discussing each of the other CLT methods in detail, I elaborated on how they might be integrated in this research project.

To analyse the differences between PBLL and other CLT methods, here I divided these differences into the process and the content of the lessons. In terms of the course process, PBLL emphasises a collection of lessons, which may last for a month or a semester, in which there is a variety of course content to make up the whole (Tsiplakides & Fragoulis, 2009), whereas TBLT or CBLT can be delivered in a single class period. Regarding class content, PBLL structures a "class cycle" around a single theme and project product, which could be chosen in consultation with students and culminates in a collaborative group presentation. In contrast, TBLT/CBLT allows for different topics to be explored in each lesson, all contributing to a broader theme area. Although there is also content that encourages group work in TBLT/CBLT/CLIL, this is not a required format for these types of courses and may be based on the flexibility of different teachers and course content arrangements. In looking at the feasibility of combining PBLL with other CLT methods, I was careful not to deviate from the core steps of PBLL. Next, starting with TBLT, I consider the differences between other CLT methods and PBLL in detail, as well as their potential contributions to this research.

2.4.3.2. Task-based Language Teaching

TBLT has evolved as an influential strand of CLT, emphasising meaningful interaction and goal-oriented activities (Ellis, 2017; Littlewood, 2014). Central to TBLT is the notion that tasks should be structured around the completion of real-world communicative goals, rather than the mere rehearsal of linguistic forms (Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 2018). In designing such tasks, instructors typically delineate clear objectives that can be assessed by how successfully learners accomplish them (Long, 2015). This conceptualisation aligns with Ellis and Shintani's (2014) criteria: maintaining a focus on meaning while ensuring outcomes are both achievable and authentic.

Despite shared roots with CLT, TBLT differs from PBLL in its emphasis on the process of carrying out tasks rather than creating a tangible final product.

Nevertheless, TBLT's pursuit of authenticity resonates with PBLL's advocacy for meaningful, context-embedded learning. Recent research has noted that the use of tasks in the classroom can enhance communicative competence by providing learners with purposes that transcend mere linguistic practice (Alasal, 2025). However, studies highlighted the discrepancy between teachers' support for TBLT principles and their actual classroom implementation, especially when dealing with novice learners (Chen & Wright, 2017; Moore, 2018). One reported obstacle is the tendency to reduce tasks to simple verbal exchanges or group discussions, overshadowing the broader communicative objectives that TBLT aims to achieve (Carless, 2009).

A key element in TBLT is task authenticity, often tied to materials and cultural practices resembling those in target language speaking environments (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014; Widdowson, 1990). In contexts where English is primarily taught as a foreign language, authenticity poses unique challenges, as learners and even instructors may have limited exposure to genuine communicative environments (Gilmore, 2007). Yet, research suggests that with increased training and contextual adaptation, teachers can orchestrate meaningful tasks that simulate real-world language use (Zheng & Borg, 2014). Indeed, localised tasks, those that resonate with students' own cultural and linguistic contexts, can still uphold authenticity if rooted in realistic communicative objectives (Ellis, 2024; Hu, 2005; Jung, 2024).

Similar to other CLT methods, TBLT in China grapples with the powerful washback effect of its examination-oriented culture. As discussed in Section 1.1.2, the high-stakes national examinations have traditionally undervalued oracy, creating systemic pressure on teachers and students to focus on other testable written skills. At the same time, educators continue to explore hybrid methods tailored to local needs: methods that neither completely disregard grammatical instruction nor compromise the overall goal of fostering communicative competence (Ji & Pham, 2020).

Unlike many short-term tasks typically associated with TBLT, the video production project in this study necessitated extended engagement beyond a single class session. To address this complexity, learners met with their instructor on a weekly basis, progressively completing a series of smaller, interrelated tasks (such as locating relevant multimedia resources or drafting oral presentations), so that each stage contributed meaningfully to the final product. Although there was no rigid schedule dictating what must be completed each week, ongoing comparisons among groups and focused guidance from the instructor allowed students to gauge their progress and anticipate upcoming objectives. In this way, the larger project task was decomposed into manageable subtasks that reflect typical TBLT principles (Nunan, 2004) while also integrating elements of a project-based framework, thereby encouraging both the iterative development of language skills and the practical application of newly acquired competencies in an authentic communicative context.

2.4.3.3. Content-based Language Teaching

CBLT is frequently compared with other communicative methods such as TBLT. Although some scholars conflate CBLT with Content-based Instruction (CBI) (Brown & Lee, 2015), others maintain that CBI emphasises the use of subject-area content primarily as a vehicle for language practice (Stoller, 2002), whereas CBLT seeks a more balanced integration of language and content goals (Lyster et al., 2017). In other words, while CBI typically focuses on authentic content to facilitate second language acquisition, CBLT highlights the synergy between subject knowledge and communicative competence, ensuring that students simultaneously develop language proficiency and disciplinary understanding.

Similar to CBLT, most projects in PBLL practice extend learning content beyond language (Kelsen, 2018), and Project-based Learning could be one of the categories of interdisciplinary learning (MacLeod & Van Der Veen, 2020), which

was explained in more detail in the next chapter. The difference is that CBLT and TBLT do not require students to necessarily produce project outputs, and although sometimes group learning is advocated, the emphasis on group activities is not as prominent as in PBLL. The project in this study involved students' learning of video production, which extended the content beyond language learning. Following CBLT, scholars have further extended the concept to Content and Language Integrated Learning, which is discussed in the following section. Given that this study drew on CBLT predominantly through its extension into CLIL, this chapter refrains from an in-depth exploration of CBLT and instead devoted subsequent sections to detailing CLIL and its relevance to the present research.

2.4.3.4. Content and Language Integrated Learning

CLIL, which is describing and designing teaching and learning in a target language in different types of learning content emerged in the 1990s in the context of Europe's call for plurilingualism and linked to rapidly developing globalisation (Coyle et al., 2010). The category to which CLIL belongs remains controversial, with some scholars suggesting that CLIL is a synonym for CBLT, as they share similar philosophical and theoretical foundations (Cenoz, 2015). I distinguished CLIL from CBLT and presented it separately here because the concept of Language Triptych and the 4C's framework offered by CLIL (Coyle et al., 2010), which were explained below, were used as supporting strategies and rationales for PBLL in this study to guide and analyse the pedagogical practice.

CLIL educators are concerned about creating more language exposure for students while they are studying other subjects/content (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2014). CLIL seeks to enhance learners' subject knowledge and their linguistic–communicative competence by situating language use within meaningful, discipline-based activities; by ensuring abundant authentic input and purposeful output, this method might promote deeper cognition and intercultural understanding (Coyle, 2007). Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010) have identified two essential language

learning frameworks in the CLIL model: Language Triptych and the 4C's framework, which were briefly summarised here.

Language Triptych

The Language Triptych is an umbrella term for "language of learning, language for learning and language through learning" (Coyle, 2007). "Language of learning" comprises the key vocabulary of a subject, the specific grammatical structures and functional phrases required to accurately comprehend and articulate its concepts. Subject specialists are often comfortable with this linguistic domain, as it is intrinsically linked to their own area of expertise. However, just as subject knowledge itself is progressively structured, so too is the language required to access it. It is therefore crucial for educators to carefully grade the linguistic demands placed upon students, selecting vocabulary and structures appropriate for their particular age and proficiency level. Introducing overly complex language might act as a significant barrier, potentially undermining learners' motivation to engage with the content itself. For this study, students focused on the specific topic of "travel", which necessitated an understanding of relevant vocabulary and expressions to facilitate peer discussion in the target language. The teacher involved in the study did not predetermine a rigid set of lexical items for students to master. Rather, she adopted a responsive approach during classroom activities, guiding learners towards linguistic resources that were appropriate for their collective proficiency level and consistently using oral language that was comprehensible to them.

"Language for learning" is designed to enable students to link topic-related vocabulary and phrases logically and appropriately in specific classroom activities and tasks (Meyer et al., 2015). It functions as the linguistic scaffolding necessary for learners to articulate their understanding and engage in the learning process (Coyle et al., 2018). The project for this study, which was structured around the creation of a short video and a subsequent group presentation, created a genuine need for students to employ such functional language. This involved using

discourse markers to structure their ideas, collaborative language to negotiate meaning during production, and more formal presentation phrases to explain their video's concepts to the class. The effective use of this language was essential for them to connect discrete pieces of content knowledge into a coherent narrative that was comprehensible to their peers.

"Language through learning" refers to the acquisition of the target foreign language that takes place through the process of learning the content subject (Coyle, 2007). Unlike the other two language types, it arises spontaneously and unpredictably from classroom interaction. In this project, such learning was most likely to occur during the unscripted exchanges of the video production phase, as students collaboratively solved problems and refined their ideas. Furthermore, it could emerge when they responded to unanticipated questions from peers following their final presentation. These moments of genuine communicative need can lead to significant, unplanned linguistic development, contributing to the students' overall communicative competence beyond the planned curriculum.

4C's Framework

In the CLIL system, learning components can be condensed into four crucial areas: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture (Coyle et al., 2010). The 4C's framework helps to explain how CLIL can be conceptualised. Although a later iteration of the framework expands the original 4C model into a revised 5C version by replacing the "culture" component with "competencies" (language knowledge, planning, cooperation, learner needs, interaction, cultural awareness, evaluation, development, subject knowledge) and "community" (local, national and global community) (Attard Montalto et al., 2015; Díaz Pérez et al., 2018, p. 179), most recent CLIL literature still primarily employs the earlier 4C model (such as Khoiriyah et al., 2024; Xin et al., 2025). Given that the present research focused on a travel-related project closely tied to the cultural dimension, the 4C framework remained the predominant reference here.

In CLIL, the "content" of learning is not necessarily just language learning but should be meaningfully integrated with other curricula (e.g., mathematics, history, etc.) (Meyer & Coyle, 2024). To delineate how this integration is applied, a distinction between "hard" and "soft" CLIL is useful (Ball et al., 2016): Hard CLIL is content-driven, where the primary objective is the mastery of subject matter, with the target language serving as the medium of instruction. This model is often delivered by subject specialists. In contrast, soft CLIL is language-driven. Here, content provides a thematic context to make language learning more engaging and purposeful, a model typically implemented by language teachers to reinforce language learning itself. This distinction is relevant to the present study, as its inherent flexibility aligns with the study's primary goal of language reinforcement while also embracing the authentic linguistic practices observed, such as students' strategic use of translanguaging between English and Chinese. Considering the context of PBLL and given that the teacher participating in this study was language teacher, it could be said that this research was informed by soft CLIL.

Within 4C's framework, while content acts as the primary driver, "cognition" and "communication" are the key processes through which learning is achieved. Cognition moves beyond rote memorisation, emphasising the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analysing and evaluating (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Marsh & Frigols Martín, 2012). The goal is for learners to actively process knowledge related to the content. Communication, in turn, is conceived as interactive and purposeful. Its application is guided by the principles of the Language Triptych (Coyle et al., 2010), as has been detailed previously in this review. Through these integrated processes, learners are enabled to actively think, construct meaning from the content, and use language in authentic contexts. There is the possibility of absorbing implicit knowledge unconsciously. Language as a channel of communication and learning goes beyond the traditional high requirements for mastery of the grammatical system of the language.

The final component of the 4C framework is "culture", a concept which itself has

evolved in subsequent CLIL discourse. In some later adaptations towards a 5C framework, it is broadened to encompass notions like "community" and "competences". In its original conception within the 4Cs, culture focuses on fostering intercultural awareness and understanding diverse perspectives (Coyle, 2007). The evolution towards community builds upon this, emphasising the application of such awareness by encouraging learners to become active members of local and global learning groups (Attard Montalto et al., 2015). The present study operationalised cultural dimension in its project design. The project's pedagogical approach facilitated a learning process that moved beyond surface-level content comprehension towards a deeper, reflective engagement. This process involved an engagement with information from diverse cultural viewpoints, which in turn fostered a continuous cycle of self-reflection on how these perspectives influenced personal understanding. This journey of reflection was designed to culminate in students' final presentation. The act of communicating an integrated understanding to peers was structured to provide a practical opportunity for the principles of both intercultural awareness and participation in a collaborative learning community to be enacted.

CLIL has received both praise and criticism from language educators and researchers. Criticism of CLIL has mainly focused on the following aspects. Some critics argue that CLIL can lead to a lack of language proficiency, as students may prioritise content over language acquisition (Villabona & Cenoz, 2022). Without sufficient attention to language learning, students may not develop the necessary language skills to communicate effectively in the target language. Another consequence is that CLIL may lead to curriculum overload, as teachers attempt to teach both content and language skills in the same lesson (Banegas & Hemmi, 2021). It may result in students being overwhelmed and may lead to superficial learning. Other critics argue that CLIL requires teachers to be proficient in both the subject matter and the target language, and finding teachers who meet both requirements can be a challenge (Alvira & González Doria, 2018). Moreover, the absence of L1 in some hard CLIL has raised concerns and criticisms among scholars,

despite some scholars proposing the possibility of using L1 in CLIL (Lasabaster, 2013; Lin, 2015; Liu, 2020; Nikula & Moore, 2019). Proponents of CLIL argue that some issues can be mitigated through appropriate teacher training and support, as well as careful curriculum design (Meyer et al., 2015). Ultimately, the success of CLIL depends on a range of factors, including the specific context in which it is implemented and the skills and expertise of the teachers involved.

In this section, PBLL is discussed as a branch of CLT, and is compared with other language learning methods derived from CLT. In addition, although Postmethod is not within the scope of CLT, it provided guidance for language teacher education in this project. In the next chapter, Project-based Learning is further discussed and reflected upon in the interdisciplinary learning field, while the design and steps of PBLL are also reviewed in detail.

2.5. Students' Learning Motivation

In this study, I focused on the experiences students exhibited during PBLL, with regard to whether they found this approach enjoyable and were inclined to adopt it. Understanding the sources of this motivation is crucial, as such insights might help educators refine the PBLL model to better sustain student engagement and ultimately improve their learning outcomes. A discussion of learning motivation is included in this literature review to help exploring the factors that influence students' willingness or reluctance to embrace this approach, as well as the complexity and diversity of students' motivation.

In this study, students' motivation was a crucial focus, especially during interviews where their perspectives and feelings towards PBLL could be said to be closely related to their motivation. According to various motivational theories, motivation encompasses multiple dimensions (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Gardner & Lambert, 1959). This part of the literature review discusses definitions and classifications of motivation in detail. By comparing

scholarly classifications of motivation, this study identifies the motivational classification system adopted in the subsequent data analysis.

2.5.1. Concepts of Motivation

Several scholars assert that learning motivation is a vital component of foreign language teaching and learning research, starting with Gardner and Lambert's (1959) study of second language learners' motivation from a social psychological perspective (Dörnyei, 2001). According to Gardner (1985), the motivation to learn a foreign language consists of a desire to achieve one's language-learning goals, the effort invested in pursuit of those goals, and a positive attitude toward the language itself. Gardner (1991) further emphasised that such motivation is marked by a strong urge and curiosity to learn and master the language. From a social constructivist perspective, Williams and Burden (1997) viewed (second language) L2 motivation as a cognitive and emotional state that triggers a conscious decision to act, followed by sustained mental or physical effort to reach established objectives. They suggest that motivation is a pivotal predictor of success in second language acquisition. In addition, Dörnyei (2001) proposed that L2 motivation encompasses various instincts, needs, desires, expectations, value orientations, and goals.

Based on the perspectives of these scholars, it can be concluded that in the process of language learning, learning motivation refers to the sustained effort and positive attitude of learners to achieve their language learning goals, driven by cognitive, emotional, and other factors. In this study, most students indeed demonstrated sustained effort and a positive attitude during the PBLL process, reflecting their motivation in this learning experience. Despite the presence of some students exhibiting a lack of motivation during the learning process, this phenomenon can be elucidated and supported by findings from relevant academic research. Students' motivations can be further categorised into different types, which is explained and discussed based on the existing classifications proposed by

scholars.

2.5.2. Classification and Role of Motivation

2.5.2.1. Integrative and Instrumental Motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1959) proposed that L2 learners' learning orientations, or motivational orientations, determine their level of effort in learning. The classifications of integrative and instrumental motivation they introduced continue to influence modern research on foreign language learning motivation (Rahadianto et al., 2022; Yu & Downing, 2012).

Integrative motivation refers to the learner's desire to learn a language to integrate and become part of the language's culture and society, showing a strong interest and identification with the target language's culture, people, and way of life (Gardner, 1968, 1991). It can be seen that integrative motivation is characterised by three key features: cultural interest, social interaction, and identity recognition. This type of motivation encourages long-term perseverance, fosters positive learning behaviours, and facilitates deep language processing (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Based on Gardner and Lambert's research, subsequent scholars have elaborated on the importance of integrative motivation in language learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). It can stimulate learners' intrinsic motivation, enhance the enjoyment and sense of accomplishment in the learning experience, and further lead to higher proficiency levels in language learning compared to learners without such motivation (Dörnyei, 1990, 1994, 2009). The following diagram from Gardner (2000) illustrates the linear relationship between integrative motivation and learning achievement:
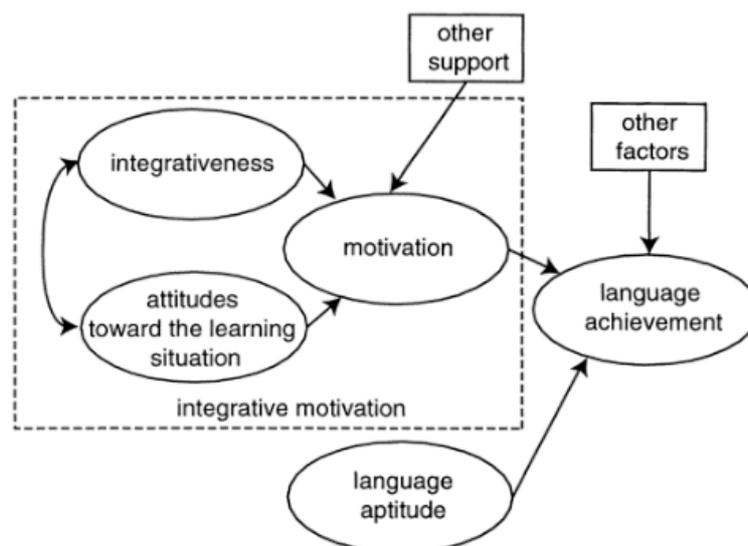
Figure 2.2. Basic Model of the Role of Aptitude and Motivation in Second Language Acquisition (Gardner, 2000, p. 17)

This image presents a foundational model illustrating the relationship between integrative motivation and language achievement. The model demonstrates that integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation collectively constitute integrative motivation, which, as part of overall student motivation, subsequently influences language achievement. Additionally, language aptitude directly impacts language achievement, while external support and other factors also play supportive roles. Integrative motivation is emphasised here as a crucial component of motivation, playing a key role in the success of language learning. For instance, a study on pre-service teachers in Malaysia found that integrative motivation was a key factor influencing their language learning efforts (Ter et al., 2019). This finding underscores the importance of integrative motivation in fostering a deeper connection with the target language and culture.

Instrumental motivation refers to the learner's pursuit of practical benefits from learning a language, such as passing examinations, securing employment opportunities, or enhancing career prospects (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). This type of motivation is primarily driven by external rewards and needs, rather than intrinsic interest in the language culture (ibid.). Hence, the three characteristics of instrumental motivation can be summarised as practical goals, short-term

outcomes, and external rewards. While instrumental motivation can effectively promote language learning in specific contexts, its effects are generally less enduring compared to integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985; Yu & Downing, 2012). Nevertheless, instrumental motivation plays an indispensable role in the language learning process (Rahadianto et al., 2022). Studies indicate that instrumental motivation can enhance specific language skills, such as writing ability (Sabarun et al., 2024). Additionally, research on Saudi EFL students highlights the importance of instrumental motivation in improving speaking skills, emphasising the practical benefits related to language proficiency (Alshamrany, 2019). This suggests that instrumental motivation can drive learners to acquire specific language competencies for practical purposes.

In the learning process, integrative and instrumental motivations are not mutually exclusive; they often coexist in the language learning journey of students. Integrative motivation, however, tends to have a more lasting impact (Dewaele & Meftah, 2024; Henry & Liu, 2024; Warden & Lin, 2000). Gardner (2000) discussed in his research that motivation should not be separated from learning outcomes but rather examined in terms of the linear relationship between motivation and learning outcomes. The motivation of students might influence their language learning achievements, which explains why student motivation remains a focal point in discussions about different language learning methods (Suryasa et al., 2017). Exploration of the nature and function of student motivation might help elucidate the potential correlation between students' motivation and their learning achievements. Although the present study did not directly examine changes in students' actual academic grades, considering the observed influence of PBLL on students' motivation, learning behaviours, and attitudes, as well as evidence from prior research, it is reasonable to hypothesise a potential impact of PBLL on students' long term language achievement.

Research indicated that integrative motivation is associated with personal growth, cultural enrichment, and long-term success in language acquisition (Fitriani, 2017),

whereas instrumental motivation helps satisfy practical needs and achieve external goals (Punplub, 2019). The balance between these two types of motivation varies among learners, influencing their engagement and progress in language learning (Sabarun et al., 2024). Integrating the literature, it can be inferred that by acknowledging and leveraging the interaction between integrative and instrumental motivations, language educators have the opportunity to create a more engaging and effective learning environment for language learners. In this study, I was also curious about whether these two types of motivation were evident; to further clarify the potential motivational shifts experienced by students in PBLL, I introduce Self-Determination Theory, which is discussed in the following section.

2.5.2.2. Self-Determination Theory

In the context of PBLL examined in this study, students' motivation may have a certain degree of influence on their level of engagement and academic achievement. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a crucial theoretical framework for explaining motivation, extensively utilised in research focusing on promoting learners' autonomy and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2017). As a theory concerning individual motivation, emotion, and personality traits, SDT is primarily concerned with the causal attributions of behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to this theory, motivation can be categorised into intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation, depending on the perceived level of autonomy (ibid.). Specifically, intrinsic motivation arises from an individual's inherent interest and enjoyment in the activity, extrinsic motivation involves external rewards or pressures, and amotivation is characterised by a complete lack of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The following sections provide a detailed discussion.

Intrinsic Motivation

When the perceived level of autonomy is high, individuals engage in learning

activities that are self-determined and reflect their values and interests (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In such instances, individuals initiate their actions, and their behaviour is attributed internally, driven by intrinsic motivation.

According to SDT, fulfilling the three primary psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness is crucial for nurturing intrinsic motivation and fostering self-determined behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of language learning, autonomy is considered the most critical of these elements, referring to learners' perception of volition and self-determination in their actions (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Within SDT, motivation is closely linked to autonomy, as motivated learners are more likely to take control of their learning process (Lee, 2017). Learner autonomy is particularly significant in encouraging independent learning outside the classroom, with learners driving their learning without teacher intervention (Stefanou et al., 2004). Project-based Learning supports this independent learning approach, enabling learners to take charge of their learning journey (Meisani & Rambet, 2017). Additionally, collaborative language learning strategies have been found to positively impact language learning beliefs and learner autonomy (Darounkola et al., 2024). Teachers might enhance learners' autonomy by providing diverse choices and encouraging self-directed decision-making, a practice that was well evidenced in this study.

Competence refers to the sense of efficacy learners experience when they believe they can effectively accomplish tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Clear guidance and positive feedback have been shown to significantly predict students' sense of competence (Boer et al., 2025). Teachers can foster this sense of competence by setting appropriate challenges and providing timely feedback, enabling students to feel capable of handling learning tasks (Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992; Wang et al., 2024). Recent research further confirm that adaptive support enhances students' academic achievement through improving their sense of competence (Essen et al., 2025).

Relatedness pertains to learners' need to feel connected to others and a sense of belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In a language learning environment, creating a supportive and collaborative atmosphere is believed to satisfy learners' need for relatedness, thereby promoting their motivation and engagement (ibid.). Learners' perceived acceptance and emotional connection contribute to relatedness satisfaction, leading to positive outcomes in their learning processes (Shelton-Strong, 2025). Additionally, relatedness has been shown to positively correlate with behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement among language learners, ultimately facilitating academic achievement (Eerdemutu et al., 2024).

Research has also shown a close connection between students' intrinsic motivation and interest in learning (Schiefele, 1991). Deci and Ryan (1985) emphasised the significance of interest in stimulating intrinsic motivation. According to Dewey, external attempts to create interest only result in temporary efforts and do not lead to genuine engagement with learning materials (Dewey, 1913; Schiefele, 1991). Dewey (1913) criticised teaching methods that overlook the content of learning, arguing that learning based on interest differs qualitatively from effort-driven learning, which he deemed mechanical. Based on Dewey (1913) and Schiefele (1991), the following three aspects of interest can be summarised: It is an active and propulsive state; It focuses on real objects; It is highly personally meaningful. Moreover, interest is divided into personal interest and situational interest (Anderson et al., 2021; Hidi, 1990). The former refers to a lasting preference for certain topics or subjects, while the latter is a temporary emotional state triggered by situational stimuli (Schiefele, 1991). These perspectives underscore the importance of interest as a component of intrinsic motivation.

In PBLL, the learning environment does not specifically cater to the personalised needs of individual learners, making it challenging to fully meet everyone's personal interests. Consequently, this study initially provided motivation support primarily by creating general interest for students, which informed by prior

research, considered the potential to enhance students' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the current PBLL context. Firstly, the novelty of the learning context, wherein most students had not previously encountered such learning methods, presented a new approach differing from their routine English learning activities. Secondly, the collaborative learning format allowed students to form teams freely, choosing partners they trusted and were familiar with, thus fostering mutual support. These unfamiliar forms of learning might stimulate students' curiosity and further arouse interest. Admittedly, some students might initially choose to participate simply to avoid completing the original holiday written assignment. However, this did not imply that students did not develop personal interests during this PBLL. In interviews, students expressed their changes on motivation, including interest-related content, which is elaborated upon in Chapter VI.

Extrinsic Motivation

When students perceive a low level of autonomy, their learning behaviour is influenced by external factors such as tangible rewards or the actions of influential individuals (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In these circumstances, individuals are not the initiators of their own actions, and the attribution of their behaviour is external, driven by extrinsic motivation (Nikoopour et al., 2012). SDT posits that individuals can exhibit intrinsically oriented behaviours under the influence of external factors, a process referred to as internalisation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2018; Vitai & Benke, 2021). This internalisation process underscores the dynamic nature of motivation and the potential for individuals to develop greater autonomy and self-determination over time (Vitai & Benke, 2021).

Within the framework of SDT, extrinsic motivation is further categorised into four types: external motivation, introjected motivation, identified motivation, and integrated motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These distinctions highlight the varying degrees of autonomy and internalisation associated with different forms of extrinsic motivation. Specifically, when tangible rewards are important, external

motivation drives a person's behaviour; When individuals act to meet outside expectations or avoid guilt and anxiety, their behaviour is governed by introjected motivation; Identified motivation arises when people understand and endorse the worth of a task; Finally, integrated motivation occurs when this recognised value aligns with a person's core values, needs, and sense of identity. Facilitating the transformation of external motivation into more integrated forms requires conditions that satisfy the inherent psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan, 1995).

SDT asserts that extrinsic and intrinsic motivations form a continuum, where the trajectory moves from completely external motivation towards fully internal motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Figure 3.2. depicts a continuum that arranges motivation in a progression from nonself-determined forms to fully self-determined forms:

Behavior	Nonself-Determined					Self-Determined
Motivation	Amotivation		Extrinsic Motivation			Intrinsic Motivation
Regulatory Styles	Non-Regulation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	Intrinsic Regulation
Perceived Locus of Causality	Impersonal	External	Somewhat External	Somewhat Internal	Internal	Internal
Relevant Regulatory Processes	Nonintentional, Nonvaluing, Incompetence, Lack of Control	Compliance, External Rewards and Punishments	Self-control, Ego-Involvement, Internal Rewards and Punishments	Personal Importance, Conscious Valuing	Congruence, Awareness, Synthesis With Self	Interest, Enjoyment, Inherent Satisfaction

Figure 2.3. The Self-Determination Continuum Showing Types of Motivation with Their Regulatory Styles, Loci of Causality and Corresponding Processes (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 72)

The four distinct levels in extrinsic motivation differ in terms of the degree of internalisation and self-integration within the motivational structure. Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested that the weakest form of extrinsic regulation exhibits minimal internalisation, with behaviour primarily controlled by external factors; introjected regulation shows some internalisation through self-regulation during actions, but self-integration is incomplete, and the learning process remains an

act of self-control; identified regulation demonstrates higher internalisation, as learners recognise the importance of certain behaviours before engaging in them; integrated motivation represents the highest level of internalisation, where identified motivation is harmonised with other aspects of the self, marking an advanced stage in the internalisation process.

Figure 3.2. begins with amotivation, where individuals experience no clear intention to act, and moves through several levels of extrinsic motivation, demonstrating how external reasons for behaviour can become increasingly internalised. By the final stage of the continuum, intrinsic motivation, individuals engage in activities purely because they find them personally interesting or satisfying. The figure underscores that motivation is not simply categorised as external or internal; rather, it lies on a gradient reflecting how much an individual perceives the source of action as originating within themselves. As one transitions from left to right, the perceived locus of causality shifts from impersonal or external factors toward a deeply internal sense of personal endorsement. This process highlights that even when behaviour is initially shaped by external rewards or pressures, it can become more aligned with one's values and identity over time, ultimately leading to greater autonomy and personal investment.

SDT concludes that intrinsic motivation is propelled by self-determined behaviour. In the present study, I recognise that multiple motivational orientations can coexist within an individual, even including the simultaneous presence of intrinsic motivation and amotivation. Additionally, while previous studies have already established that extrinsic motivation can be internalised progressively, this study further examined how such motivational processes might unfold specifically within the context of PBLL. In Chapter VI, I employed graphical representations and accompanying explanations to illustrate the changes in students' motivational states observed throughout the study.

SDT's concept of integrated motivation differs from the integrative motivation

proposed by Gardner and Lambert (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Within SDT, integrated motivation remains a subset of extrinsic motivation. However, when students achieve integrated motivation, their external motivation has been significantly internalised, positioning it closest to intrinsic motivation within the SDT continuum. Integrative motivation, on the other hand, refers to the desire to integrate into the target community and adopt its cultural values, transcending purely utilitarian purposes (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Although the two frameworks may overlap in scope, the SDT framework was adopted in the present study to facilitate a more detailed analysis of the sources and types of students' motivation.

Amotivation

Amotivation is a concept deeply rooted in SDT, representing a state where individuals lack the intention to engage in specific behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This state may result from the frustration of fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Banerjee & Halder, 2021). Factors such as lack of confidence, ineffective strategies, difficult task demands, helplessness, and non-supportive contexts might contribute to this frustration (Pourfeiz, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Moreover, anticipated negative outcomes can also diminish behavioural intention (Dong et al., 2022). Amotivation may lead to lower levels of psychological well-being and poorer academic or job performance (Deci et al., 2017; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992).

By recognising the factors leading to amotivation, educators can implement targeted interventions to create a supportive and motivating learning environment, enabling language learners to reach their full potential. In the realm of language learning, amotivation manifests as a lack of drive to engage in language learning activities, resulting in disinterest and disengagement from the learning process (Y. Li et al., 2025; Noels et al., 2000). Gonzales (2021) identified several factors contributing to amotivation in online language learning environments, including limited interaction, poor internet connectivity, and a lack of comprehensive

discussions, all of which can demotivate students. Addressing factors that cause boredom and disinterest is crucial for fostering an engaging and successful learning environment (Camacho-Morles et al., 2021). Research indicates that social support and self-efficacy are significant factors in reducing amotivation (Legault et al., 2006), and a supportive teaching style can effectively lower students' levels of amotivation (Cheon & Reeve, 2015).

The SDT continuum of motivation, ranging from intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation and ultimately to amotivation, has been widely acknowledged across various contexts (Howard et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2024). This continuum emphasises the varying degrees of self-determination that individuals may experience in their motivational processes. By describing different forms of motivation along the self-determination continuum, SDT provides valuable insights into how individuals' psychological needs drive their behaviours and decisions. This perspective provided a useful lens through which to explore the first research question, concerning the underlying reasons behind students' experiences in PBLL. In subsequent data analysis in Chapter VI, I elucidate motivation experienced by students during the PBLL process and whether they progressively internalised extrinsic motivation to become intrinsic motivation.

2.6. Summary of This Chapter

This chapter constructs a multidimensional, integrated theoretical framework centred on the principle of co-construction, drawing upon a systematic review of Sociocultural Theory, Global Englishes, Postmethod Pedagogy and Communicative Language Teaching. This framework did not treat these theories as isolated explanatory tools, but rather synthesised them into a unified analytical lens, providing the theoretical grounding and an interpretive pathway for investigating the core questions of this study. Through the discussions herein, the understanding of the research questions was deepened.

Firstly, concerning student perceptions (RQ1), PBLL is no longer viewed as a mere pedagogical activity. The established theoretical framework positioned it as an ecosystem capable of fostering the synergistic development of students' cognitive, social, and linguistic competencies. Sociocultural Theory elucidated the effectiveness of its learning mechanisms, while the perspectives of Global Englishes offered a more inclusive and pragmatic lens through which to understand and evaluate students' authentic (albeit imperfect) communicative performances. This provided a theoretical basis for analysing students' perceptions of PBLL that moved beyond superficial judgements of preference. The chapter also reviews key constructs in second language learning motivation to support the interpretation of students' engagement and perceptions in PBLL.

Secondly, regarding the teacher's adaptation process (RQ2), the discussion in this chapter reframes this phenomenon as more than an individual's unilateral acceptance of or resistance to a new method. Our collaborative framework recast this process as that of a reflective practitioner engaged in professional identity negotiation and the co-creation of pedagogical strategies through continuous dialogue with the researcher. Transformative and Postmethod Pedagogy provided strong theoretical evidence for the flexibility and autonomy of her instructional adjustments, allowing me to interpret her practical decisions and actions as manifestations of her professional agency.

However, this pedagogical and theoretical foundation alone is insufficient to fully contextualise the present study. The vitality of these theories should be examined within a specific practical context. Therefore, the subsequent literature review chapter focuses on more specific macro- and micro-level contexts to ensure that the forthcoming analysis was firmly rooted in both theoretical and real-world soil.

3. Chapter III: Operationalising Project-based Language Learning in Context

3.0. Introduction to This Chapter

Building upon the macro-level theoretical framework established in the preceding chapter, this chapter delves into the specific mechanisms, practical elements, and related contexts of the pedagogy at the heart of this research: Project-based Language Learning (PBLL). The aim is to move from broad theory to practice, constructing a more specific and operational conceptual bridge for the subsequent data collection and analysis.

This review of the literature first establishes the theoretical and practical foundations of Project-based Learning (PBL), providing the necessary context for the study's research questions. A critical examination of PBL's core principles and established implementation models is essential to frame the analysis of student perceptions (RQ1). Simultaneously, this grounding served as a benchmark for exploring how the participating teacher adapted and localised the student-centred approach in practice (RQ2).

Given that multi-faceted collaboration served as the primary vehicle through which learning was facilitated in this PBLL study, a substantial section of this chapter was dedicated to analysing this key element. The discussion explored the requisite skills for effective collaboration and the patterns of classroom interaction. Crucially, this perspective on collaboration was extended beyond student-to-student dynamics to encompass the interactions between students and the teacher, as well as the ongoing partnership between myself, as the researcher, and the teacher, thus examining the entire multi-party collaborative ecosystem.

If collaboration is the vehicle of PBLL, then motivation could be its engine. Building on the theoretical perspectives on learning motivation established in

Chapter II, the latter part of this chapter reviews applied literature on motivation in language learning contexts, with a focus on practical strategies and classroom conditions that may foster, sustain, or undermine engagement during project work. This discussion helps connect the literature review more directly to the research design and to the analytic focus adopted in the findings' chapters.

3.1. Project-based Learning

3.1.1. Interdisciplinary Learning

Interdisciplinary learning is an approach to education that integrates knowledge, skills, and perspectives from different subject areas or disciplines to create a more holistic understanding of a topic or issue (Woods, 2007). It involves the combination of two or more disciplines to create a new field of study that draws on the strengths of each discipline. Interdisciplinary learning recognises that real-world problems are complex and require solutions that cannot be addressed by a single discipline or perspective (MacLeod & Van Der Veen, 2020). By combining the knowledge, skills, and perspectives from different disciplines, students may develop comprehensive understanding of a topic and prepare themselves for the challenges they will face in their personal and professional lives. Interdisciplinary learning can take place at any level of education, from elementary school to graduate school, and can involve a wide range of disciplines, from the sciences to the humanities (Lattuca, 2001; Wang, 2024). Examples of interdisciplinary learning include Project-based learning, where students work together to address a real-world problem or issue (Brassler & Dettmers, 2017; Warr & West, 2020). In this project, the topic was centred around travel, and while language instruction remained the primary focus, interdisciplinary elements (such as integrating video production techniques) were introduced to enrich learners' competencies and foster intercultural awareness beyond linguistic proficiency.

While interdisciplinary learning can offer many benefits, there are also some

potential drawbacks that should be considered. Interdisciplinary learning can be challenging for students because it requires them to understand concepts and perspectives from multiple disciplines, which can be overwhelming and confusing (Stentoft, 2017). It can also be difficult for teachers to design effective interdisciplinary lessons that are both comprehensive and manageable (Ivanitskaya et al., 2002; Wu et al., 2024). When teachers integrate multiple subjects, it is challenging to maintain a balance between depth and breadth of coverage. This can result in some subjects receiving more attention than others, which can create gaps in students' knowledge and skills. Teachers who integrate multiple subjects may not have expertise in all areas, which can limit the depth and accuracy of the content they teach. Moreover, integrating multiple subjects requires more time and effort on the part of teachers, which can limit the amount of content they can cover in a given period (Borrego & Newswander, 2010; Warkentien et al., 2022). Besides, standardised tests are often discipline-specific, so interdisciplinary learning may not align well with the demands of standardised testing, making it more difficult to assess student learning (Dubek et al., 2021; Humes, 2013). In addition, interdisciplinary learning can require changes in institutional structures, including scheduling, resource allocation, and collaboration, which can be difficult to implement in traditional educational settings (Cai & Lönnqvist, 2022; Holley, 2009).

Initially, PBLL was chosen partly for its interdisciplinary potential in this study; however, students quickly mastered technological skills, whereas language proficiency developed more gradually. Consequently, the focus naturally shifted towards language learning. Translanguaging practice emerged organically as students blended English and Chinese to sustain effective communication during video production activities. Given this context, it is essential to clarify the core features and practical applications of Project-based Learning itself.

3.1.2. Definition and Application of Project-based Learning

The history of Project-based Learning (PBL) can be traced back to the early 20th century when Kilpatrick (1918) described the project method that organises curriculum and classroom activities around a central theme of a subject, encouraging students to freely decide on their pursuit of goals and thereby fostering their motivation to learn. Kilpatrick's definition suggested that PBL attempted to give students the right to autonomous choice and learning from the outset, and the student-centred concept has been a constant theme in the subsequent development of PBL. Blumenfeld et al. (2000) suggested that PBL is context-specific, with learners actively involved in the learning process and achieving their objectives through social interaction and knowledge sharing. The learning context of PBL is provided through real-world practice with authentic problems, resulting in meaningful learning experiences (Helle et al., 2006). PBL is distinguished from many other learning approaches by its unique emphasis not only on student learning processes but also on the construction of a final product that represents students' new understanding, knowledge, and attitudes toward the investigated problem, usually presented using artificial artefacts such as videos, photos, sketches, reports, or models (Holubova, 2008). During the project completion process, collaboration are conducted (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006). Until now, the kernel of the PBL definition has remained unchanged.

The Buck Institute of Education (BIE), based in the United States, is dedicated to researching PBL instruction (www.pblworks.org). BIE has revised its original eight essential elements of PBL, widely considered the "gold standard" of PBL (Condliffe et al., 2017). In describing the essential features of PBL, researchers commonly highlight the following interconnected components: (1) Teaching core knowledge and understanding provides a solid foundation for deeper inquiry; (2) Focusing on a challenging question or problem encourages students to tackle complex, open-ended tasks; (3) Sustaining inquiry over time maintains momentum beyond a single activity; (4) Providing authenticity underscores the real-world relevance of the

project; (5) Allowing student voice and choice fosters agency and engagement; (6) Promoting reflection supports metacognition, prompting students to evaluate their own learning progress; (7) Facilitating critique and revision helps refine ideas based on feedback; Finally, (8) requiring a public product not only showcases what students have learned but also encourages accountability and pride in their work (Larmer et al., 2015). These elements should be grounded in a meaningful problem or question and are designed to develop critical thinking, collaboration, and self-management skills. BIE has conducted research and implemented practices on PBL at various levels, including individual scholars, schools, institutions, regions, and nations (Kingston, 2018).

PBL has been shown to have varying degrees of effectiveness across different subject areas (Surji & Ulker, 2021). Spikol et al. (2018) used multimodal learning analytics to show the importance of collaboration in PBL. MacMath et al. (2017) successfully implemented PBL in Canadian high schools (14-15 years old) across English language arts, mathematics, science, and digital literacy courses, and teacher focus group interviews revealed positive attitudes towards this approach. In one of the few quasi-experimental studies on PBL, an Indonesian junior high school tested the effectiveness of PBL on students' statistics learning, and the results showed that students were enthusiastic about the given projects and achieved better scores compared to traditional learning methods based on the results of covariance analysis (Sıswono et al., 2018). In a case study in China, Project-based Language Teaching (PBLT) was explored for its impact on cultivating key abilities among high school students, with two English teachers and 75 tenth-grade students in a middle school as the research subjects (Sun & Zhu, 2023). The results indicate that PBLT positively impacted students' understanding abilities, practical abilities, critical thinking, and creativity.

However, the practical implementation of PBL presents many challenges due to its openness and multifaceted nature, particularly in its design, implementation, and evaluation (Spikol et al., 2018). Kirschner and Van Merriënboer (2013) argued

that students do not necessarily become effective learners in student-driven learning environments. Despite PBL being conducted under a collaborative learning model, appropriate supervision and guidance of students are necessary. However, the challenge for teachers is the lack of sufficient time and resources to focus on and support each student group or individual student within a group in their real-time progress on the project (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006; Spikol et al., 2018). Learning outcomes for each student group may differ significantly due to differences in the learning levels or collaboration, making it challenging for teachers to ensure student success in planned learning outcomes (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Wijnia et al., 2024).

While reviewing the literature on PBL, other terms, such as Problem-based Learning, are often mentioned or compared to it. In the following analysis, I examine PBL and Problem-based Learning, exploring their similarities and differences, and then explain why this study was more closely aligned with the scope of Project-based Learning.

3.1.3. Comparing Project-based Learning and Problem-based Learning

PBL is related to Problem-based Learning (ProbBL) (Brassler & Dettmers, 2017). In some literature, the two may share the same abbreviation and be discussed together, making them easily confused concepts (Wiek et al., 2014). However, they are not exactly the same. ProbBL is defined as inquiry-based, focused, experiential learning organised around meaningful problems (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). To better understand PBL and where it fills in the gaps of ProbBL, a comparison and distinction between the two was made here.

There are some similarities between the two. First, the focus of both is to achieve a common goal through collaboration, reflecting the collaborative and communicative nature of the learning process in both (Brassler & Dettmers, 2017).

Second, in participating in PBL projects, students may encounter problems that need to be solved in order to construct and present a final product, which is similar to the process in ProbBL of finding solutions by looking for problems, and these problems should be real-world problems that exist (English & Kitsantas, 2013; Shin et al., 2021). Third, both have been shown to improve students' interdisciplinary skills (Brassler & Dettmers, 2017), critical thinking skills, and creativity (Anazifa & Djukri, 2017), which are important for students' future employment and personal sustainable development. The conclusion of the empirical study conducted by Brassler & Dettmers (2017) in a university is that ProbBL is more effective in improving students' interdisciplinary skills, but this conclusion has not been validated in secondary schools. Fourth, after the main learning stage, both methods include evaluating and reviewing students' learning experiences and processes (Amini et al., 2019). The evaluation and review are not only for teachers regarding students but also for students to critically learn from their peers' experiences and reflect on their own learning process.

One difference between ProbBL and PBL is that although both emphasise collaborative learning, PBL often requires and fosters more collaboration skills (Anazifa & Djukri, 2017). PBL emphasises discussions among students through knowledge and information sharing, increasing each student's participation through group activities. Through peer-to-peer assistance, students may acquire more knowledge and compress the time required to learn a particular skill to some extent, and the teacher's guidance pressure may be relatively reduced, achieving better results with less effort. In this study, students were provided with opportunities to engage in group activities, exchange information with their peers, and collaboratively prepare for the final product and presentation. However, to facilitate effective communication and collaboration within groups, a reasonable grouping of students in the classroom before the PBL stage requires careful consideration from various perspectives to ensure each group can benefit. The later literature review analyses specific considerations during the grouping process.

When compared to ProbBL, some potential limitations of PBL may become more evident. In ProbBL, students mainly focus on the learning process, while PBL requires producing a final product (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). This means that completing a project in PBL requires a certain period and cannot be accomplished in just one independent class session. Since the time required to complete a project is extended, and students have other courses and tasks to occupy their time during the project, they need to review their progress before each project discussion (Mihić & Završki, 2017). If a project lasts for a semester, teachers should also regularly assess students' progress to help them stay on track with the core content of the project. Additionally, PBL emphasises projects related to real-life or daily activities, and requires students to learn skills related to product production, which could be an additional task for students in addition to their subject learning (Goyal et al., 2022). Although this enriches students' learning content, it may cause them to be confused about the focus of their learning, or spend much time mastering the relevant knowledge and skills. In addition to adding to students' tasks, teachers' tasks may become more demanding, as they may be required to master more skills beyond their professional knowledge. Hardware and software support is also more demanding for the successful completion of a project (Chiang & Lee, 2016).

These drawbacks mentioned above are difficult to avoid in the PBL process, as they are inherent characteristics of PBL, such as the authenticity and diversity of the learning content, which can demonstrate advantages in specific situations. Although ProbBL and PBL have differences, they have similarities in many situations. In the actual teaching process, teachers need not focus on the differences in definition between the two, but should choose reasonable teaching methods based on students' actual learning needs. In the following section, I focus on the concept of group work, which may be pertinent to both PBL and ProbBL. Within this research, this issue constituted one of my key focal points. Drawing on current scholarly literature, the coming section further examines group

collaboration in the context of PBLL and provided a more detailed discussion of its potential roles in the language learning process.

3.2. Group Work in Project-based Language Learning

3.2.1. Collaborative Completion in Project-based Language Learning

In PBLL, there has been an increasing emphasis on the collaborative completion of tasks by groups (Thomas, 2017; Zaafour & Ramiro, 2022). Although some broader definitions of PBL, such as the one from Blumenfeld et al. (1991), do not always highlight group components, collaboration is a key feature when the approach is applied to language learning (Gibbes & Carson, 2014). This tendency towards collective completion may stem from the complexity and breadth inherent in PBL processes. Students simultaneously learn and practise: they acquire language skills through project completion, and some project products often require students to master new skills and knowledge from scratch, extending beyond the scope of typical language classroom learning. In this study, participants learned English through the completion of their project, such as writing video scripts, discussing storyboards, and recording narrations. At the same time, they had to master new technical skills in video production. Since the PBLL process usually spans an extended period and cannot be accomplished within a single lesson (Thomas, 2017), team collaboration naturally appears more feasible and prevalent.

Despite the widespread adoption of group work in PBLL, existing research has highlighted several challenges associated with working in a group. Students may encounter difficulties due to a lack of experience in group learning, such as uneven task distribution or members working independently on their assigned sections without effective collaboration (Crichton et al., 2022; Gibbes & Carson, 2014). These issues can result in project outcomes that fall short of expectations

and may even diminish the learning benefits that students could gain from PBLL. Existing PBLL mentions the concepts of "cooperation" and "collaboration", two key concepts that are distinct when discussing group work. While some studies use these terms interchangeably, there is a distinction between them. Therefore, when examining group work in PBLL, it is necessary to clearly differentiate between "cooperation" and "collaboration" in the context of language learning. It helps to provide a clear framework for analysing the specific challenges students encounter in collective tasks.

3.2.2. Group Cooperation

Johnson and Johnson's (1999) definition of cooperative learning remains widely utilised today. They proposed that cooperative learning comprises five basic elements: "positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing" (pp. 70–71). Positive interdependence means that the success of group members depends on one another's efforts; collective cooperation is required to achieve the goal. Individual accountability necessitates that each member is responsible for the group's overall outcomes, ensuring that their contribution is indispensable. Promotive interaction involves members supporting each other's learning through communication or group discussion. Social skills, including communication, leadership, trust, and conflict resolution, are considered foundational for effective cooperation. Finally, group processing entails that members regularly reflect on the cooperative process and seek ways to improve.

Based on their definitions, cooperative learning involves collective efforts among group members; however, each member's task is often clearly divided. Although achieving overall success relies on every individual's contribution, their interdependence is primarily associated with assembling these individual contributions into a cohesive whole. During the working process, members can often complete their assigned tasks independently, though they may seek

assistance, support, or progress updates from each other. The interactive step may sometimes not be essential, allowing group members ample opportunity to concentrate fully on their own tasks.

In cooperative learning, the teacher's role is typically involving the careful design of tasks, the assignment of group members, and the setting of clear learning objectives (Panitz, 1999). Kato et al. (2015) indicated that the success of cooperative learning largely depends on the teacher's design and guidance; teachers need to thoughtfully arrange group composition and task difficulty to ensure that all members can participate and benefit. However, while this highly structured arrangement can ensure task completion, it may also limit students' autonomy and creativity to some extent. This limitation is an important reason why this study ultimately preferred to define students' joint work as group collaboration when discussing group work. Since PBLL advocates a student-centred learning approach (Tsiplakides & Fragoulis, 2009), the core principles of group collaboration align more closely with this philosophy.

3.2.3. Group Collaboration

Compared to cooperative learning, collaborative learning seems to be more flexible. Collaborative learning primarily originates from social constructivist theory, with Vygotsky's (1978b) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development being one of its core ideas (Kato et al., 2015). Learners could obtain necessary assistance and guidance through interaction with more experienced others, such as teachers or more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978b). In language learning contexts, collaboration could include peer assistance with linguistic forms or pronunciation; similarly, technological learning may involve mutual support with technical skills (e.g., software use).

In collaborative learning, knowledge construction is a collective process; students share their perspectives and experiences through interaction, thereby jointly

creating new knowledge (Dillenbourg, 1999). In this approach, group members are considered equal participants in terms of their rights to contribute, express opinions, and make decisions. Unlike traditional hierarchical relationships, each student is expected to engage actively and share responsibilities, thus jointly influencing the group's direction. Collaborative learning places greater emphasis on the interaction and cognitive development occurring throughout the learning process, rather than solely focusing on the final outcome (Baker, 2015).

Although emphasis is placed on the collaborative process, this process is not predetermined. In collaborative learning, the teacher's role is more akin to that of a guide or facilitator, encouraging students to explore independently rather than prescribing specific task steps (Dillenbourg, 1999). Therefore, collaborative learning is less structured, providing students with greater freedom and space for exploration. From this perspective, collaborative learning can be regarded as a more student-centred learning method.

3.2.4. Group Collaboration in Project-based Language Learning

Although literature exists that specifically discusses the differences between group cooperation and group collaboration (Kato et al., 2015; Oxford, 1997; Panitz, 1999), in some PBLL-related studies, the distinction between these two terms is not always clear, and they may even be used interchangeably (Musa et al., 2011). In Beckett's (2002) definition of PBL, the term "cooperative" is directly mentioned (p. 54), yet the text of Beckett's paper does not seem to strictly differentiate between cooperation and collaboration. In most PBLL research, more attention is focused on the discussion of collaboration (Beckett et al., 2025; Dooly & Sadler, 2016; Liu et al., 2025). As previously discussed, collaboration better reflects a student-centred perspective, which aligns with the core principles of PBLL. Collaborative learning is more suited to PBLL because the completion of projects requires students' creative thinking and autonomous exploration, elements that

teachers cannot predetermine or control.

The decision to adopt "collaborative learning" as the primary analytical framework in this thesis is not intended to diminish the value of cooperative learning. Rather, it reflects the observation that within this specific project, the collaborative dynamics were more instrumental to the students' knowledge construction and language development. Teachers determine many specific implementation plans and details within cooperative settings. In certain contexts, the structured arrangement of cooperative learning may be more effective for students who are new to group tasks, as they require clear task allocation and teacher guidance (Gillies, 2016).

Against the backdrop of potential overlap between cooperation and collaboration, this study focused specifically on collaborative learning within the context of PBLL. To facilitate a clearer discussion of group work, particular attention was given to previous researchers' definitions of collaborative learning, while acknowledging that some skills and elements may intersect with those associated with cooperation.

3.2.5. Collaborative Skills in Project-based Language Learning

This study integrated various perspectives from scholars on collaborative skills, combining them with observations from the practical process of this study. This section outlines the possible development of students' skills in group collaboration. The development of these collaborative abilities in this study is inseparable from their use of both English and Chinese. The six main skills identified and analysed in this context are: expressive ability, listening and comprehension ability, negotiation ability, conflict resolution ability, responsibility-sharing ability, and critical thinking ability.

Expressive Ability

Expressive ability in group collaboration is one of the core skills involved in promoting effective team interaction and task completion. It refers to participants' capacity to convey information, express opinions, and share ideas in a clear, accurate, and context-appropriate manner, while ensuring linguistic logic and coherence (Elleuch, 2024; Sheth, 2016). In a collaborative environment, strong expressive ability helps individuals articulate their viewpoints and guides the team towards forming a common understanding and goals (Llaban & Protacio, 2025; Suter et al., 2009). Additionally, expressive ability is manifested in the use of appropriate tone, non-verbal cues (such as gestures and facial expressions), and the ability to adjust communication styles flexibly to meet the audience's needs (Vanamali, 2023).

Listening and Comprehension Ability

Listening and comprehension are foundational skills that underpin effective collaboration. Specifically, attentive listening involves not only hearing others' viewpoints but actively engaging with them to ensure accurate understanding of their ideas (Paramole et al., 2024). Research highlighted that listening, as a deliberate and active process, is essential for effective team collaboration (Cross, 2018; Shamsi & Bozorgian, 2024). By focusing on attentive listening, team members might grasp each other's thoughts and intentions more clearly, which in turn enhances communication and supports better decision-making during collaborative discussions.

Negotiation Ability

Negotiation is a process undertaken to achieve common understanding and construct meaning (Branden, 2008). When group members hold differing viewpoints, negotiation can reduce disagreements and ultimately lead to consensus (Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2011). This process may require the coordination and guidance of teachers to assist students in learning effective communication and resolving differences (Howe & Mercer, 2010; Mercer & Howe,

2012). Negotiation might aid students in problem-solving and cultivate their communication skills and team spirit.

Conflict Resolution Ability

Resolving conflicts is a significant challenge in team collaboration. Given that group members may have diverse backgrounds, interests, and viewpoints, conflicts are inevitable. Learning how to manage conflicts reasonably within a team environment is highly challenging, especially for students lacking cooperative experience (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). In this process, teacher support is also indispensable; teachers can provide students with strategies and methods for conflict resolution, helping them approach differences with a positive attitude (Parker & Bickmore, 2012).

Responsibility-Sharing Ability

Although the final project deliverable is a collective output, the completion process itself involves each group member undertaking certain sub-tasks to jointly share the responsibility of completing the project. In the PBLL process of this study, although different group members might be responsible for different sub-tasks, these sub-tasks were logically connected and should ultimately be completed through communication and coordination. This interdependent relationship may develop collaboration among group members and motivate members to strive towards a common goal (Wageman, 1995).

Critical Thinking Ability

In the context of group collaboration, critical thinking does not merely entail maintaining a sceptical stance toward others' views or avoiding uncritical acceptance. More importantly, it involves the integrative analysis and evaluation of diverse information and arguments grounded in rationality and logic (Paul & Elder, 2006). This cognitive process is reflected in the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference of information (Facione, 2011), and represents a form of reasonable reflective thinking aimed at determining what to believe or what

actions to take (Ennis, 2018). In team settings, where members' varied backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences often yield a wide range of perspectives, the value of critical thinking becomes pronounced. It might assist in examining and discerning the feasibility and potential value of different viewpoints, and, through rational comparison and integration, provides more forward-looking and innovative insights for team decision-making (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

These skills might collectively support team members in achieving the co-construction of meaning and thereby fulfilling the requirements of project deliverables. In a later section, this review of the literature provides a more detailed discussion of the notion of co-construction, focusing primarily on the context of teacher–researcher collaboration. Nonetheless, in the student team context examined here, this concept does not fundamentally conflict with its later treatment in the teacher collaboration setting. In both cases, it refers to a process whereby diverse perspectives are exchanged and integrated, trying to get a deeper shared understanding of the issue at hand, and enabling collective innovation.

3.2.6. Classroom Interaction

Whether discussing cooperation or collaboration, the term "interaction" frequently appears in explanations of both concepts. However, it differs from cooperation and collaboration and is generally considered a broader definition (Oxford, 1997). In language learning research, interaction, as a dynamic process occurring inside and outside the classroom, can be reflected in task design and is profoundly influenced by learners' personal traits and group environments (ibid.). Studies have shown that tasks demanding highly interactive language such as role-plays and drama activities, can provide learners with authentic language use scenarios, which enhance cultural and contextual understanding (Hu & Shu, 2025; Liu et al., 2024; Oxford et al., 1990; Zuo, 2024).

Extroverted learners are more inclined to participate in group activities and gain energy through interacting with others, while introverted learners may prefer independent learning modes (Ghorbani Asl, 2024; Murphy et al., 2017). Although these differences may lead to conflicts in the classroom, teachers can regulate the interactive atmosphere through flexible task design and classroom organisation, encouraging more learners to participate actively (Jang et al., 2010; Shawaqfeh et al., 2023).

To better contrast the concepts of interaction with those of cooperation and collaboration, I include Oxford's (1997) table explaining and comparing these three concepts, allowing readers to more intuitively distinguish the differences among these terms:

Table 3.1. Conceptual Comparisons among Cooperative Learning, Collaborative Learning, and Interaction (Oxford, 1997, p. 444)

Aspects	Strand 1: Cooperative Learning	Strand 2: Collaborative Learning	Strand 3: Interaction
Purpose	Enhances cognitive and social skills via a set of known techniques	Acculturates learners into knowledge communities	Allows learners to communicate with others in numerous ways
Degree of Structure	High	Variable	Variable
Relationships	Individual is accountable to the group and vice versa; teacher facilitates, but group is primary	Learner engages with "more capable others" (teachers, advanced peers, etc.), who provide assistance and guidance	Learners, teachers, and others engage with each other in meaningful ways
Prescriptiveness of Activities	High	Low	Variable
Key Terms	Positive interdependence, accountability, teamwork, roles, cooperative learning structures	Zone of Proximal Development, cognitive apprenticeship, acculturation, scaffolding, situated cognition, reflective inquiry, epistemology	Interaction-producing tasks, willingness to interact, learning styles, group dynamics, stages of group life, physical environments

In general, PBLL is fundamentally aligned with collaborative learning, which

emphasises interactions among learners as well as between learners and teachers. These interactions, including peer discussions, mutual support, and guidance from the teacher, were also central to the collaborative dynamics in this study.

3.2.7. Collaboration Between the Teacher and the Researcher

In this study, although only one teacher was responsible for teaching the participating students, as a researcher, I also formed a collaborative relationship with the teacher during our communication process. Throughout this process, we jointly constructed and clarified our understanding of PBLL, further promoting the integration of research and teaching practice.

Collaboration is not limited to taking place between students or between students and teachers. Collaboration among teachers can help educators and researchers explore ways to solve problems encountered in pedagogical practice. Recent studies in language education have highlighted successful examples of teacher collaboration, such as the cross-linguistic collaboration initiative implemented in a Norwegian upper secondary school, where language teachers worked collaboratively to enhance students' multilingual awareness and language learning (Haukås, 2025). In the context of Project-based Learning, exemplified by Green (2024), who explored teacher collaboration in developing student-centred PBL curricula, emphasising teachers' needs for structured planning time and continuous professional development. Specifically, within Project-based Language Learning, collaboration among teachers has also received attention; Hossain and Younus (2025) investigated secondary-level English teachers' perceptions of collaborative roles, revealing its significance for teacher professional growth. However, research addressing collaboration specifically between researchers and teachers within PBLL contexts appear relatively scarce, highlighting a potential gap in the existing literature.

The collaboration between researchers and teachers is highly related to co-construction. The core of co-construction lies in promoting knowledge sharing and re-creation through interaction and negotiation (Jarvis et al., 2016). This process emphasises coordination among participants and the integration of cross-boundary perspectives, not only involving questioning and reflecting on existing teaching practices but also jointly exploring and designing new solutions (Parsons, 2021).

Engeström's (2004) concept of "co-configuration" illustrates that these collaborative processes are not always based on consistent viewpoints; differences and debates often become catalysts for innovation. By untangling key "knots" in complex problems, knowledge is ultimately shared and understood, and teaching practices are improved (ibid.). In this process, teachers might break the limitations of traditional practices through open dialogue spaces to explore new teaching methods; researchers can extract theoretical bases from practice and refine education models.

This dynamic construction based on collaboration helps teachers develop teaching strategies that fit their contexts and allows researchers to deeply understand the application challenges of educational theories from a practical perspective, thereby having the opportunity to achieve a two-way transformation between theory and practice. In the subsequent methodological and data analysis chapters, I provided detailed explanation of how this collaborative relationship with the teacher was specifically established and maintained within this study.

3.3. Designs and Stages of Project-based Language Learning

Although PBLL does not follow a single universally recognised process, scholars have proposed frameworks that highlight key design considerations and sequential steps still referenced or adapted today. Drawing on these foundational studies, the present research identified nine main stages to guide PBLL implementation:

Table 3.2. Integrated 9-Stage Framework for Project-based Language Learning

Stage	Core Action	Elaboration
0: Motivation & Contextualisation	Frame an authentic, challenging driving context to spark interest.	Motivation flourishes when students tackle a novel, authentic, and challenging problem that grants them choice, encourages collaboration, and culminates in a tangible product they value. (Blumenfeld et al., 1991)
1: Negotiating Driving Question (Topic) & Product	Teacher–students co-formulate a driving question/topic and a public product.	The question/topic should be challenging and authentic; the product should matter to a real audience. (Larmer et al., 2015; Stoller & Myers, 2019)
2: Project Structuring & Timeline	Map milestones, roles, assessment checkpoints.	Visual planning charts plus project logs foster metacognitive monitoring. (Stoller, 2002)
3: Linguistic Scaffolding I – Information Gathering	Pre-teach linguistic resources for search, interviewing, surveys.	Combines lexical chunks with information-literacy mini-lessons to prevent fluency bottlenecks. (Papandreou, 1993; Stoller, 2002)
4: Inquiry & Fieldwork	Conduct investigations or field research in teams.	The teacher's role shifts from designer to facilitator, offering tools and real-time feedback while carefully managing time. (Kurt & Akoglu, 2023; Larmer et al., 2015)
5: Linguistic Scaffolding II – Data Processing	Teach classification, comparison, visualisation and critique language.	Graphic organisers reduce cognitive load; academic phrase-banks make discourse moves explicit. (Beckett & Slater, 2019; Stoller, 2002)
6: Drafting & Peer Revision	Produce prototypes/drafts and conduct structured peer review.	Use rubrics so the feedback is easy to act on, and encourage giving feedback in different ways (including spoken, written, and video). (Alan & Stoller, 2005; Larmer et al., 2015)
7: Linguistic Scaffolding III – Presentation	Train audience-appropri-ate spoken, written and multimodal communication.	Formats include poster sessions, podcasts, social-media threads and so forth, attention to pragmatics, stance and visual rhetoric. (Beckett & Slater, 2018; Stoller, 2002)
8: Public Exhibition	Share products with an authentic or semi-authentic community.	A genuine (authentic) audience can boost learners' engagement and sense of responsibility. (Larmer et al., 2015; Stoller, 2002)
9: Reflection & Assessment	Combine self-, peer- and teacher assessment; harvest language-content gains.	Blend formative rubrics with peer dialogue journals to promote metacognitive transfer. (Larmer et al., 2015; Stoller, 2002)

The implementation plan in this study, which was informed by Table 3.2 is discussed in the methodology chapter. Before these nine steps formally begin, this study underscored a "stage zero", which focuses on student motivation and project feasibility. This preliminary phase takes place prior to the official start of the project and is typically carried out by teachers or instructional designers seeking to ensure that learners are meaningfully engaged from the outset.

While this nine-stage framework is primarily based on existing literature, it does not account for every aspect noted in the relevant literature. For example, some scholars advocated for aligning PBL with local curriculum standards or incorporating extended teacher reflection following the project (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006; Thomas, 2000). Curriculum-standard alignment and teacher self-reflection are deliberately left out of these stages. This table is primarily summarised for presenting the framework to function as an implementation-oriented guide that foregrounds the learning structure students could engage with. Indeed, teacher reflection remains essential. Throughout the project, the teacher should play the role of a guide, leading students in project research and production. At the same time, the teacher should also pay attention to students' language training and improvement, guiding students to use the language skills and knowledge they have learned in the project. In addition, the teacher should evaluate students' performance, providing appropriate feedback and grades based on their performance in the project.

In line with a perspective of Postmethod Pedagogy, this framework is intended to be flexible rather than prescriptive, encouraging educators to adapt it according to specific classroom circumstances. Consequently, although the nine steps were presented as a coherent structure, they were not meant to serve as a rigid blueprint. In practice, certain steps may be de-emphasised or intensified based on situational demands. The instantiation of PBLL in the present study was adapted to the specific school context, student characteristics, and curricular objectives. These adjustments sought to enhance the effectiveness of PBLL in this

study.

The PBLL implementation framework in this study is provided in the methodology chapter. While the participating teacher adhered to fundamental PBLL principles, she also proposed modifications informed by her understanding of the student cohort and course content, aiming to better address learners' needs and improve the overall outcome. Such adjustments may support students who have limited familiarity with this type of learning approach, potentially bolstering their motivation. On this basis, the following section further explores the role of students' motivation during the learning process and its impact on both their academic performance and capacity development.

3.4. Strategies for Enhancing Language Learning Motivation

Gardner and Smythe (1975) described four stages of language acquisition, emphasising the critical role of motivation throughout the process. They argued that high levels of motivation are essential at each of the four stages (elemental /consolidation/conscious expression/automation and thought stage) as one of the most effective means of promoting language acquisition. Therefore, to better encourage students' active participation during the PBLL process, it was necessary to collaboratively identify strategies that may enhance student motivation with the participating teacher before the course began.

3.4.1. Enhancing Motivation from the Student's Perspective

Research has explored strategies to enhance learners' motivation from their own perspective, with learner autonomy being a central theme. The concept of autonomy in language learning extends beyond the classroom to encompass aspects of learners' experiences and perceptions (Wang et al., 2024). Understanding and nurturing learner autonomy is vital for successful language learning, as it enables learners to actively engage in the learning process and make

informed decisions about learning goals and strategies (Zenouzagh et al., 2023). Activities such as maintaining language learning journals have been shown to promote the development of learner autonomy (Zhang et al., 2022). In this study, although the teacher did not explicitly require students to keep learning journals, some students or groups documented their learning processes and plans. Such behaviour also implies that, in addition to researcher's and teacher's efforts to enhance students' learning strategies, students themselves consciously or unconsciously contribute to sustaining their own motivation.

Students who attach high value to their coursework and pursue learning-oriented goals are more likely to apply a broad set of motivation-regulation strategies. These strategies include (1)self-consequating (providing oneself with external rewards during learning activities), (2) environmental control (managing the environment to minimise interruptions), (3) interest enhancement (making activities more engaging to increase task involvement), (4) mastery self-talk (regulating learning by aiming to acquire more knowledge and skills) and (5) performance self-talk (regulating learning by striving to outperform others and achieve high scores) (Wolters, 1999; Wolters & Rosenthal, 2000). Regular use of these tactics predicts richer cognitive-metacognitive learning behaviour and stronger self-reported effort.

Metacognitive strategies involve individuals monitoring, regulating, and managing their cognitive activities to enhance learning outcomes (Flavell, 1979). These strategies include planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Schraw & Dennison, 1994). Planning involves setting learning goals and selecting appropriate methods; monitoring entails continuously assessing one's understanding and progress; and evaluating involves reflecting on and judging the learning outcomes. Empirical research has demonstrated that metacognitive strategies help learners effectively organise and control their learning processes, thereby increasing motivation, efficiency, and academic performance (De Boer et al., 2018). Teng and Zhang (2018) emphasised the importance of metacognitive strategies in English learning,

noting that incorporating these strategies can positively impact students' motivation and engagement.

In the context of PBLL in this study, although the teacher did not explicitly provide specific requirements usually, students adopted various strategies to optimise their learning experiences. These strategies were employed based on the students' actual needs during the learning process, even if they were not aware of the professional terminology for these strategies. Chapter VI further elucidates the students' use of motivational enhancement strategies and their effects.

3.4.2. Enhancing Learners' Motivation from the Teacher's Perspective

Besides the strategies students adopt, teachers also play a crucial role in enhancing students' motivation. Literature has highlighted the importance of teachers in addressing issues of amotivation (Banerjee & Halder, 2021). Research indicated that supportive teaching practices based on Self-Determination Theory principles positively influence the motivational responses of amotivated students (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

Several strategies that teachers can employ to enhance learner motivation in language learning have been proposed in the literature. One key strategy emphasised is the importance of goal setting (Moeller et al., 2012). Teacher-set goals are often clearer and more targeted than student-set goals, better aligning with the students' current learning needs (Courville, 2015). In PBLL, the end product of group projects can serve as one of the learning goals for students.

Creating a supportive and engaging learning environment helps to foster motivation in second language acquisition (Gardner, 1988). Promoting positive interactions and a sense of community within the language learning environment can significantly influence students' motivation to learn (Wu & Dong, 2024; Yüksel

et al., 2025). In PBLL, interactions and collaborations during group discussions and communications with teachers might enhance students' social awareness and, consequently, their motivation.

Designing engaging and meaningful language learning tasks is another strategy for enhancing learner motivation and self-efficacy (Chang et al., 2024). By providing relevant, challenging, and rewarding tasks, educators might stimulate students' interest and confidence in using the target language, ultimately boosting their motivation to participate actively in the learning process.

Incorporating audiovisual materials that resonate with students' interests and experiences can increase their engagement and motivation to improve their language skills (Snigdha & Moriom Akter, 2023). The theme of "travel" selected for this PBLL was likely to resonate with students more than other topics, given their rich personal experiences and potential for connection, thus enhancing their active participation in the learning process.

Additionally, integrating technology into teaching has been recognised as a tool for enhancing student motivation and performance in language learning (Ni et al., 2022; Wei, 2022). By leveraging mobile-assisted and computer-assisted language learning technologies, educators might create interactive, personalised learning experiences tailored to students' individual needs and preferences, thereby potentially increasing their motivation to learn. However, A growing body of work indicates that many secondary-school learners are already highly accustomed to mobile- and computer-assisted technologies (Loh et al., 2025). Their routine exposure equips them to explore new digital tools independently. Consequently, tasks that incorporate video production, such as the activity implemented in the present study, might rarely present a significant technical challenge or motivational boost for learners of this age group.

In summary, enhancing motivation in language learning requires a multifaceted

approach that considers the interplay of social, emotional, cognitive, and technological factors in the learning process. By implementing a combination of goal setting, task design, anxiety reduction, positive reinforcement, and technology integration strategies, educators might create an inspiring learning environment that encourages students to actively engage in their language learning journey. Some of these strategies were also applied by the teacher in this PBLL project. Chapter VI explores the implementation effects of these strategies and students' feedback and perceptions in detail.

3.5. Summary of This Chapter

In this chapter, I transition from the macro-level theoretical framework of the previous chapter to the operational specifics of the Project-based Language Learning pedagogy that forms the core of this study. Through an analysis of the definition of Project-based Learning, the complex dynamics of multi-party collaboration (among students, between students and the teacher, and between the researcher and the teacher), and the internal mechanisms of learning motivation, this chapter collectively rendered a detailed practical blueprint for PBLL. This blueprint operationalised theory and provided a clear pathway for exploration of the two core research questions.

Firstly, concerning student perceptions (RQ1), this chapter enables analysis to move beyond generalised judgements of preference by linking students' behaviours and attitudes to relevant perspectives in existing research, such as the possible appeal of project content, the experience of group collaboration, or the degree of autonomy afforded to them. Drawing on the motivational concepts reviewed in Chapter II, this chapter synthesises PBLL related literature on implementation features and motivation support strategies in context, leading towards the research design.

Secondly, regarding the teacher's perceptions and adaptation process (RQ2), her adaptation can be examined and compared using the practical constructs established herein, rather than being vaguely perceived. Specifically, this chapter's review of established principles and staging model for project design provides the benchmarks against which her eventual pedagogical choices could be compared. Its detailed exploration of the effective collaboration offered a framework for analysing the quality of the interaction. Furthermore, its discussion of motivation theory furnished the theoretical lenses through which to interpret her pedagogical actions aimed at supporting students' psychological needs.

With the theoretical and conceptual groundwork for this study now fully established, the literature review addresses the "why" (theoretical rationale) and the "what" (practical blueprint) of the research. However, to implement this blueprint and gather authentic evidence to answer the research questions, exposition must be enriched through rigorous methodological application. The following chapter details the research paradigm, data collection methods, and analytical strategies that were employed to capture and interpret the real stories within this specific pedagogical context.

4. Chapter IV: Methodology and Research Design

4.0. Introduction to this Chapter

This chapter presents the methodological framework specifically designed to address two core research questions. The RQ1 focused on exploring the perceptions and experiences of participating Chinese high school students regarding Project-based Language Learning (PBLL). The second question (RQ2) investigated how the participating teacher adapted to and coped with the implementation of this student-centred approach.

To effectively address these research questions, this qualitative case study was grounded within a predominantly constructivist-interpretivist research paradigm, emphasising the exploration of authentic, context-specific experiences rather than generalisable outcomes. Data from multiple sources were strategically employed, aiming to capture the nuanced perceptions and genuine voices of the students as they engaged with PBLL. Similarly, these data facilitated a deeper exploration of the teacher's practical responses, adaptive decisions, and reflections during the implementation process.

Crucially, the PBLL design was co-constructed through a collaborative partnership between me, as the researcher, and the participating teacher. This collaboration was not unidirectional but involved an ongoing negotiation throughout the project. Such a dynamic and iterative process ensured that the methodological design closely aligned with the practical realities of the classroom context, providing authentic insights directly relevant to addressing both research questions.

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the collected data. Attention was also given to language-related strategies, including the choice of language during interviews, linguistic processing in data analysis, and the communication strategies used in the classroom. The chapter concluded with an overview of the

quality assurance criteria, underscoring the trustworthiness of the research design and setting the stage for the subsequent analytical chapters.

4.1. Research Paradigm

This study adopted a multi-paradigmatic framework that was primarily grounded in constructivist principles concerning diverse social realities and the co-construction of meaning, while also integrating interpretivist that emphasise reflexive praxis (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). From a constructivist standpoint, I viewed the teacher, students and myself as co-creators, positing that our understanding and practices of PBLL were formed progressively through interaction within specific social contexts and cultural milieus. In alignment with interpretivism, this study refrained from pursuing a singular, "objective" explanation of teaching practice; instead, it endeavoured to reveal the complexity and underlying logic of PBLL by analysing the diverse experiences and meanings held by different participants (Crotty, 1998).

Under this multi-paradigmatic framework, my position was not static but remained fluid throughout the investigation, maintaining openness toward multiple perspectives to more comprehensively understand and articulate the authentic experiences, role identifications, and practical significance of the teacher and students engaged in PBLL. By synthesising multiple data sources, this study acknowledged the multiplicity of realities and worlds of meaning among research participants, while also aiming to offer deeper and more context-specific insights for the redesign and broader implementation of PBLL in Chinese educational settings.

4.2. Research Design

4.2.1. The Process of Formulating the Research Questions

The formulation of the final research questions in this study underwent a developmental process and was continuously adjusted based on the data collected. This iterative approach aligns with qualitative research under the constructivist paradigm, which emphasises the diversity of social realities and the importance of interaction between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Flexibility and responsiveness to emerging data are considered crucial in this context.

Initially, the general direction of the research was determined by my academic interest in PBLL, particularly its application in Chinese secondary education. This interest stemmed from my observation of the insufficient oral training at the secondary level in China, where speaking practice is often a neglected aspect of traditional language curricula (see Section 1.1.2.). Therefore, the preliminary focus of the research was to understand students' experiences and perceptions of PBLL, especially how PBLL could effectively enhance secondary students' speaking skills. This objective aligns with those emphasised by other scholars investigating language learning in Chinese secondary education and remains an area requiring further exploration and practice in actual pedagogical contexts (Lou, 2021; Zheng & Borg, 2014).

Given that the majority of the course in this study was planned to be conducted online during the students' summer vacation, and considering the prevalence of online education and the extensive discussions surrounding its effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bozkurt et al., 2022), the study initially also aimed to explore students' views on the online learning mode. However, despite prompting participants through interview questions to reflect on their differing feelings towards online and offline learning modes, the students' discussions spontaneously focused more on PBLL itself rather than the online learning mode.

Their responses indicated that, compared to the differences between online and offline modes, the language learning method itself had a more significant impact on them. This finding reflects students' growing familiarity with online education, which might reduce its novelty and influence on the learning experience. Consequently, in the later stages, the focus of this study naturally shifted to understanding students' experiences and perceptions of PBLL, while the impact of the online mode on their learning became a subsidiary aspect of the research.

Simultaneously, although only one teacher participated, this teacher exhibited noteworthy behaviours and teaching strategies during the implementation of PBLL, providing valuable insights into how teachers adapt to student-centred teaching methods. These observations prompted the addition of a new research question during the study: how does the participating teacher Rachel (pseudonym) adapt to and cope with implementing PBLL, a novel approach for both her and her students? The teacher's adaptive behaviours are important for promoting student-centred teaching in the future, as this may require educators to shift from traditional lecturing roles to more guiding and supportive roles (Puntambekar, 2022). The flexible adaptation of teaching also resonates with the principles of Postmethod Pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006b), highlighting that teachers selectively adapt and adjust instructional strategies rather than rigidly replicating previously successful methods. Such adaptations must be context-sensitive and responsive to specific teaching situations.

Therefore, the final research questions of this study evolved into:
RQ1: What are the perceptions of the participating Chinese high school students in this Project-based Language Learning method?
RQ2: How does the participating teacher adapt to and cope with this student-centred language learning method?

The evolution of these research questions was based on preliminary data and participant feedback, consistent with the recursive and flexible nature commonly

found in qualitative research, where research questions can be continuously adjusted as data are collected and analysed to maintain relevance to the research phenomenon (Myers & Avison, 2002). In qualitative research based on the constructivist paradigm, adjusting research questions is commonplace to ensure they remain pertinent to the phenomenon being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In summary, the formulation of the research questions in this study was an iterative process influenced by the collection of data from both students and the teacher.

4.2.2. Case Study

A case study is a research method that explores complex phenomena through an in-depth investigation of specific cases, emphasising a deep understanding of the case context and a detailed description of the multifaceted characteristics of the research subjects (Yin, 2018). Case studies emphasise a profound comprehension of complex phenomena and are suitable for exploring unique individual or group experiences in educational settings (Duff, 2008; Stake, 1995). This method accommodates the dynamic and complex nature of educational research, as it allows researchers to focus on the uniqueness of the context and the differences among individuals (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). Moreover, the case study method can bridge theory and practice by providing actionable recommendations for educational practice through in-depth analysis of specific teaching or learning contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008). By adopting the case study approach, I was able to conduct detailed observations and descriptions of the implementation process of PBLL, noting that this was a specific case involving curriculum co-creation among the researcher, participating teacher, and students.

In this study, the case study method helped to reveal the experiences and responses of individual participants and provides concrete insights into how Rachel adapted to student-centred learning methods. It was possible to understand the strategies Rachel adopted when addressing different student needs and how these strategies affected learning outcomes. Additionally, the case study method

allowed for a deep exploration of students' learning experiences in PBLL, including their specific performances in autonomous learning, collaborative interaction, and project execution. These observations and analyses provided data for understanding the challenges and achievements students encounter in PBLL. The flexibility of the case study method enhanced its suitability for this research, allowing adjustments in data collection based on emerging circumstances and participant feedback (Creswell, 2013). Primary data sources included discussions with the participating teacher, classroom observations, and student interviews.

After the designed PBLL course concluded, I continued with a one-month observation focusing on students' regular English learning activities. This period, along with ongoing communication with Rachel, allowed me to observe the adjustments and changes she made to her daily classes following her involvement in PBLL. These adjustments were based on her reflections on the PBLL course and her observations of students' learning outcomes from participating in PBLL. This provided my research with a valuable perspective, illustrating how a teacher's instructional practices can continuously evolve and improve through the interplay of new and traditional teaching methods.

The subsequent observations of regular English classes helped to reveal the potential impact of PBLL on daily English teaching and the trajectory of changes in both teacher and student behaviours, offering insights into the long-term effects of PBLL. This comparison and reflection, grounded in actual classroom contexts, validated the value of the case study method in exploring complex educational transformations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

4.3. Selection of Research Site and Participants

The selection of the research site is crucial. To ensure the practical value of the research results, I considered multiple factors and ultimately determined the

research location and participants accordingly.

Firstly, I excluded China's first-tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. While these cities have higher educational levels and many educational studies are concentrated there (Zhang et al., 2015), the educational levels in most regions have not reached the average of first-tier cities in China (Guo & Li, 2024)). Therefore, if research is conducted only in first-tier cities, the results may not be applicable to a broader range of regions, making it difficult to provide feasible educational reform suggestions and new language learning and teaching method trials for the majority of ordinary state secondary schools in China.

One of the visions of this study is to provide educational reform options for ordinary state secondary schools in the Chinese context and to explore the feasibility of new language learning methods such as PBLL. First-tier cities have already had more practical experiences and positive outcomes in experimenting with new learning methods (Chen, 2024). However, applying the same methods to inland regions of China, which have relatively scarce educational resources, may not achieve the expected effects. This is because these regions lack the high-quality teaching resources of first-tier cities, including both software and hardware conditions (Wang et al., 2022).

Although the fundamental goal of qualitative research is not to provide universally applicable solutions but rather to focus on an in-depth understanding of specific phenomena and the analysis of complex problems in specific contexts, selecting representative case schools and teaching environments still holds significant academic and practical value (Yin, 2018). This approach provides practice-based guidance for policymakers and educators, offering foundations for further exploration and verification in subsequent academic research (Stake, 1995).

Based on the above considerations, I chose Chongqing, a municipality in Southwest China, as the research site. The educational level in Chongqing ranks above

average in China; it is representative of the Southwest region. As an important regional central city, Chongqing can provide a reference for language learning and teaching practices in the Southwest. Therefore, conducting research in Chongqing might make the results more promotable.

In selecting the specific school, I mainly considered the feasibility and practicality of the research. Initially, I contacted several schools and ultimately chose a secondary school with which I was personally familiar among those that responded. The reason for choosing this school is that I knew an English teacher there who had attempted teaching activities similar to PBLL, Rachel. Although Rachel might not be explicitly aware of the professional terminology of the method she used, her teaching practices closely aligned with the core concepts of PBLL. I proactively contacted Rachel to inquire about her willingness to participate. After she expressed great enthusiasm for participating in this study, I contacted the school and obtained its support. To ensure the smooth progress of the research, we selected the class originally taught by Rachel as the student participants. Ultimately, a total of 56 students participated in this study.

There are several advantages to choosing students from this class as participants. Firstly, Rachel had already spent a year with these students and had her understanding of their language proficiency, personality traits, and learning habits. This familiarity aided in more effectively implementing new teaching methods during the instructional process (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Secondly, a good trust relationship had been established between Rachel and the students, facilitating the rapid transmission of course content and implementation details, thereby promoting communication and adaptation.

4.4. Teacher Preparation

In this study, Rachel's personal preparation was crucial. Rachel had over twenty

years of teaching experience when she joined this project and had previously experimented with teaching methods similar to PBLL, achieving a certain degree of success and insight. Although PBLL emphasises student-centred learning, highlighting students' active engagement rather than teacher-led instruction, the teacher's involvement and guidance remain indispensable during the implementation of such new learning method. The teacher's understanding and preparatory work before the project's initiation were prerequisites for ensuring its smooth progress. The extent of the teacher's understanding of the project might directly affect whether students could adapt to this new language learning method. Therefore, Rachel's comprehension of PBLL concepts was a necessary preliminary step and critical for the successful implementation of the course.

Although I had a relatively more systematic and in-depth theoretical understanding of PBLL compared to Rachel, I lacked practical experience in interacting with and teaching students of this age group and language proficiency levels. Therefore, I might not accurately grasp the needs of students at this stage, especially regarding which learning activities they could complete independently and which aspects still required teacher intervention. Consequently, Rachel's participation was particularly important, as she was more familiar with the students' backgrounds and actual learning needs.

During my communication with Rachel, I realised that the collaboration between the teacher and the researcher was not unidirectional. Drawing upon her professional expertise and practical understanding of the students, Rachel actively engaged in shaping and refining our teaching plans through continuous discussion and mutual adjustments. For both Rachel and me, this communication was highly beneficial, helping us co-construct our understanding of PBLL and gradually form and refine the PBLL practice.

Specifically, during the initial preparation stage, I first confirmed Rachel's preliminary understanding of PBLL. I shared some PBLL-based literature cases and

related resources, such as how PBLL is conducted internationally (e.g. Beckett, 2005, 2009; Beckett & Slater, 2018; Stoller & Myers, 2019; Thomas, 2000), and recommended relevant books and websites. After reading these materials, Rachel provided me with her feedback and thoughts. Based on this, I prepared an initial lesson plan for her. This lesson plan was designed based on my theoretical understanding, but in Rachel's practical teaching experience, the steps needed to be flexibly adjusted according to the students' specific situations. Dynamic adjustments were made during actual teaching based on the students' feedback and progress. I have included the initial lesson plan design in the Appendix A; although it differed significantly from the subsequent actual implementation, it served as a preliminary conception during the planning of the entire PBLL process and can be compared with the actual learning and teaching situation.

During the course implementation, Rachel encouraged students to engage in self-exploration within project tasks, while she acted as a facilitator, intervening and guiding at appropriate times. In this process, students also provided specific suggestions based on their learning experiences. Rachel selectively adopted or improved upon the students' suggestions during her communication with them and made corresponding adjustments in actual teaching. Rachel's emphasis on students' voices made the entire learning and teaching process interactive and flexible.

Unlike the strict control of variables and standardised procedures in some quantitative research, the nature of qualitative research is dynamic (Maxwell, 2013). In this study, Rachel, students, and I grew together and learned from each other through collaboration. This dynamic learning and interaction not only enriched teaching and learning experiences but also provided me with more authentic and detailed data support. This process aligns with the concept of co-construction, where new insights and working methods are formed through collaborative practice (Jarvis et al., 2016).

In this study, it was through collaborative exploration and practice with Rachel and the participating students that we were able to successfully implement the PBLL course. In exploring PBLL, Rachel, the students, and I engaged in flexible exchanges of ideas, adapting to student needs and the specific contexts, which facilitated the smooth implementation of the course. Despite the challenges in this process, through this multi-party collaborative approach and continuous reflection and adjustment, we supported the effectiveness of PBLL. This demonstrates the value of the co-construction concept in actual language learning and teaching.

4.5. Main Data Collection Timeline

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the data collection process, I presented a timeline of key events (see Figure 4.1). This section provided a detailed explanation of each phase, aligned with the presented timeline.
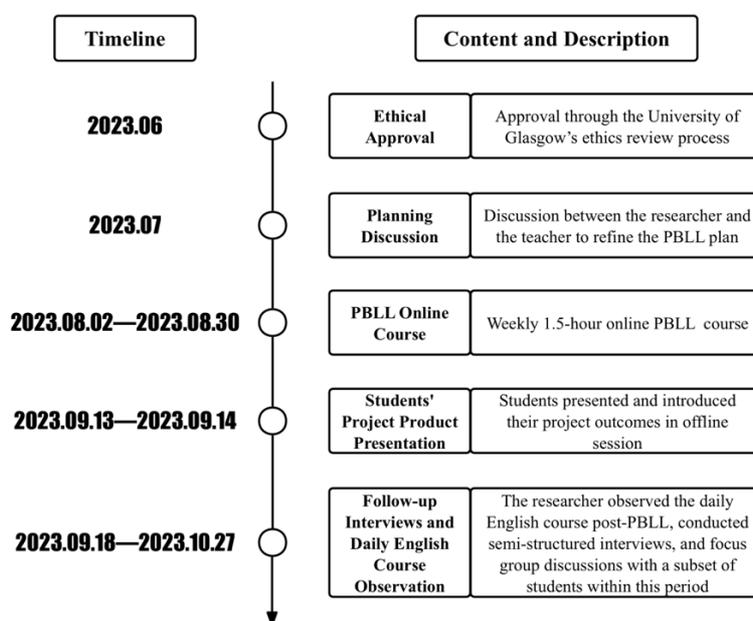
Figure 4.1. Timeline of the Primary Data Collection Process

In June 2023, I obtained ethical approval from the University of Glasgow to commence the preparation for implementing the PBLL course. Ethical approval is

a crucial step in educational research to ensure participant rights and the credibility of data (Creswell, 2013). Over the following month, I engaged in multiple online communications and discussions with Rachel. Our discussions were varied, including online voice conversations and information sharing through instant messaging tools like WeChat. My interaction with Rachel was an ongoing process, continuing from before the course began through to after it concluded, as well as during the subsequent regular classroom observations. Collaboration between teachers and researchers could be vital for the success of classroom research and contributes to the effectiveness of teaching practices (Campbell & Jacques, 2003).

After confirming the schedule with the students, on 2 August 2023, the students, Rachel, and I had our first online meeting. This initial meeting was not formal classroom teaching but a preliminary explanation of the general course arrangement. Additionally, this meeting served to confirm the equipment required for online classes, ensuring that every student could smoothly use the Tencent Meeting software for learning. Rachel outlined the scheduling and preliminary planning and introduced the requirement for grouping. After discussions, it was decided that groups of approximately four students would be formed, and the students would complete the grouping themselves before the start of the next class.

During the first formal class on 9 August, after confirming the group lists, further interaction and discussion took place between Rachel and students to clarify the course implementation steps and requirements. Although Rachel and I set the general topic of the course as "travel", the specific project content was entirely decided by the students themselves. This open-ended topic selection aimed to stimulate students' interest and creativity, aligning with the student-centred learning philosophy (Joo & Jin, 2024; Tin, 2024). Besides selecting the topic, the project deliverable was set as a collaboratively produced short video. Working in groups, students were to create a 3- to 5-minute video and present it to the entire

class along with an English explanation in the final stage. The reasons for choosing the topic and project format were elaborated in subsequent sections.

In this course, Rachel incorporated exemplar videos to serve as illustrative templates for student deliverables. She also recommended some video-editing software tools and addressed some of their related queries. These reference cases and suggested tools were carefully selected to guide students through the ideation phase and to alleviate potential confusion due to a lack of direction at the beginning of their projects. This process aimed to offer students a reference framework to help them progressively carry out the tasks. She emphasised that students were not required to follow the provided formats exactly, nor were they obliged to use the recommended software; this approach preserved flexibility and allowed learners to tailor their workflow to their own preferences and needs.

In the subsequent sessions, students remained in their groups, arranging discussions and preparations autonomously each week. They chose their group discussion methods based on their own schedules and preferences. In each weekly online class, each group was required to designate a different member to report their progress to the entire class, primarily in English, showcasing their preparations. Afterwards, they received targeted feedback from Rachel. Through these class-wide reports, groups could understand each other's progress, enabling horizontal comparisons. This peer learning approach can help stimulate students' sense of competition and collaborative spirit, promoting deeper learning (Rajaram, 2021).

The use of Tencent Meeting allowed Rachel to provide each group with approximately 30 minutes of independent online discussion space after the reporting session. After listening to all groups' reports and providing overall feedback, she would enter each group's online breakout room one at a time to address their specific issues and offer personalised guidance. This method utilised technological tools to enhance the specificity and effectiveness of teaching.

By the fifth class on 30 August, the students' project content and preparations were essentially complete. Rachel dedicated more time in this class to answering questions from each group. Subsequently, students had about two weeks to prepare their final project products and classroom presentations. During the implementation of the online classes up to and including 30 August, I, as the researcher, maintained a non-intervention observer role while observing the students' online classes. This approach helped to obtain authentic teaching and learning data and avoided interfering with students' natural behaviours (Cohen et al., 2018).

Since the students had returned to school in September, Rachel and I decided to arrange the final project presentations to take place offline. Scheduling the final presentations in the physical classroom aimed to provide students with opportunities for face-to-face communication, enhancing their English-speaking skills and self-confidence. Additionally, in-person presentations allowed the entire class to more intuitively see each group's project outcomes, promoting the sharing and discussion of learning achievements. The classroom presentation required each group member to speak primarily in English, responsible for introducing a portion of their project's video results. The requirement for full participation aimed to cultivate students' oral expression abilities and team collaboration awareness.

On 12 and 13 September, using two offline English class periods, all groups completed their final project presentations. At this point, the PBLL course in this study officially concluded. From 14 September to 17 October, I conducted approximately a month of classroom observations of the students' regular English classes. During this period, I carried out semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with some participating students. Meanwhile, I maintained ongoing communication with Rachel to understand her thoughts on adjustments to her regular teaching following the PBLL course.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, strict adherence to ethical norms was maintained to ensure that the rights and privacy of the participants were fully protected. This research referred to the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) and underwent a series of ethical review processes. Ethical approval for this research was granted by the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow (Application Reference: 400220220).

Firstly, before initiating the research, I engaged in thorough communication with Rachel, to confirm her willingness to participate in this study. Based on her verbal consent, I further contacted the school where she works to fully explain the purpose, content, and anticipated implementation plan of the research. During communication with the school, I explicitly stated that this research would require some of the students' and Rachel's time during the summer holidays and would involve data collection activities such as classroom observations and interviews; therefore, the school's consent was essential. I also clarified to the school the potential benefits this research might bring, such as helping the teacher and students explore new language learning methods and verifying the effectiveness and feasibility of these methods through practice. This aligns with the direction advocated in Chinese secondary education policies that promote innovative learning approaches (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017), thus gaining the school's support. After understanding the specific research process and the expected schedule, the school approved the implementation of the study.

After obtaining school-level consent, I engaged in several discussions with Rachel to formulate a detailed implementation plan for the PBLL course. Adhering strictly to institutional and international ethical guidelines when recruiting minors is

critical to safeguarding participants and ensuring research credibility (BERA, 2018; Heath et al., 2007). Given that participating students were minors aged between 16 and 18, guardian consent was mandatory. Therefore, I prepared separate informed consent forms for Rachel, the students, and their guardians. The consent forms explicitly stated that participation in this study was entirely voluntary and would not affect students' regular course grades. Additionally, participants were assured that all information would remain confidential, and collected data would be anonymised.

I conveyed relevant information about participating in the research to the students through Rachel, ensuring that they fully understood the content of the research and the potential benefits it might bring. To encourage active participation, after consultation and agreement with Rachel, we proposed that if students participated in this study, it could replace the requirement of completing their original holiday English written homework. This arrangement received approval from the school and Rachel. It was seen as an opportunity to help students consolidate their English knowledge through practical means, serving as a new form of attempt that meets their learning needs. This incentive measure mobilised the students' enthusiasm to participate to some extent, while not affecting their regular academic progress in formal classes.

There are some points that need to be clarified regarding the offline sessions. Ultimately, 44 students chose to participate in the online PBLL course during the holidays. However, when the offline courses resumed after the holidays returned to regular teaching, we used two offline class periods to conduct the students' project presentations and reports. Therefore, all 56 students in the original class participated in these offline sessions. Moreover, in the subsequent observations of students' regular English classes, all 56 students were included.

For the additional 12 students who had not participated in the online course, I prepared separate informed consent forms for students and their guardians. If

they did not wish to participate in this offline sharing class, they could choose not to participate. Rachel would coordinate other classrooms to provide them with self-study spaces during that time, and it would not affect their usual grades in any way. Although these 12 students did not participate in the online course, by attending the presentation classes of other students, they could also learn about PBLL, observe the learning outcomes of other students, and provide references for their own learning. Ultimately, all the students confirmed their willingness to participate and provided written consent, along with their guardians' signatures.

Since the courses during the holidays were conducted online, and students did not need to go to school, the main teaching activities in the research were implemented through Tencent Meeting (a Chinese online meeting software similar to Zoom). Tencent Meeting's built-in video recording function was utilised to document classroom activities. Access to these video recordings was strictly limited to Rachel, the participating students, and myself, preventing unauthorised individuals from obtaining the content. This measure ensured data security and protected participants' privacy rights. Safeguarding the confidentiality of digital recordings is a fundamental ethical responsibility in educational research. Any identifiable data must be securely stored, restricted to authorised researchers, and shared or reused only with explicit consent from participants (BERA, 2018; Pascale et al., 2022).

This access restriction aimed to protect data security while providing participants with the right to view their data, allowing them to review the content and key points discussed in class through this means. I also adopted a non-interventionist observation approach to minimise the impact on classroom teaching. I took classroom notes when necessary and ensured that I could check for any omissions of important information by reviewing recordings after class.

In the final stage of the PBLL course, the students conducted project presentations of their group project products. This session was conducted offline after the

students had started their formal school term. To record the presentation process and their following regular English classes, I used a video camera with recording capabilities, and all recorded data were stored in encrypted documents. I followed the University of Glasgow's data storage regulations to ensure that these data were properly preserved.

The manuscripts, notes, drafts, and other materials generated by students during classroom discussions and learning tasks in the research were collected on a voluntary basis. When quoting content from these manuscripts, I ensured that all information was anonymised to avoid disclosing personal identity information. Anonymising participants' work is recognised as a baseline ethical safeguard in educational and social research (BERA, 2018; Wiles et al., 2008). Additionally, I used a voice recorder to record all the communications with Rachel and all the interviews with the students. All recordings were stored on encrypted devices to ensure security.

All interviews were conducted in Mandarin, the participants' mother tongue, because using their native language might foster rapport, lower power distance and yield richer data (Temple & Young, 2004). Every interview and classroom observation were transcribed verbatim in Chinese to preserve the full linguistic and cultural context. After completing an initial round of open coding in Chinese, I randomly selected segments from each data set for translation into English so that my three English-speaking supervisors could review the analytic procedures. A bilingual researcher in the same field, who had signed a confidentiality agreement, compared the Chinese originals with the English versions; any discrepancies were resolved through discussion to achieve semantic, conceptual and functional equivalence (Brislin, 1970). The translated excerpts were then returned to the relevant students and Rachel, for member checking, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings (Squires, 2009).

Except for these sampled passages, all remaining data were coded and

thematically analysed in Chinese, both to avoid the meaning loss that can occur in translation and to exploit my familiarity with the participants' linguistic practices (Esposito, 2001). English utterances produced spontaneously by students and by Rachel during lessons were retained in their original form, and the analysis chapters clearly indicates whether each quotation is an original statement or a translated one, giving readers transparent access to data provenance.

In interviews with students, I was particularly attentive to the possibility that they might unconsciously provide positive answers to please me due to concerns that negative discussion content might be known to the participating teacher. Therefore, before each interview, I emphasised the confidentiality of the interview content to the students, explicitly telling them that the teacher would not know about our discussions, thereby reducing their psychological pressure.

4.7. Research Methods

4.7.1.   Course Design and Implementation

Although the PBLL course in this study was not strictly conducted according to a predetermined fixed framework, the overall course was still designed using principles of PBLL. For example, learning activities were carried out in groups, and each group was required to produce a final product; these reflect the core concepts of PBLL (Beckett & Slater, 2019). These basic principles were clarified and followed at the initial stage of course design.

However, the specific formation of the actual course in this study was not fully determined before the course began but was gradually refined as the research progressed. This formation process involved not only discussions between me and Rachel, but also adjustments to some course steps based on Rachel's communication with the students after the course started. Sustained collaboration with all research participants is indispensable for both ethical accountability and

methodological rigour, because it fosters shared ownership of knowledge and keeps curricular decisions responsive to learners' lived realities (Boyle et al., 2024; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Zeivots et al., 2025). Therefore, the course formation was a dynamic and progressive process, and its final presentation was the result of continuous modification and improvement. In this section, I detail key processes in which this PBLL course gradually took shape.

4.7.1.1. Topic Selection

In this study, the selection of the topic was determined through joint discussion between Rachel and me, ultimately choosing "travel" as the core topic of this PBLL. The determination of this topic considered multiple factors, aiming to balance students' interests, knowledge background, and learning experience, while ensuring the practicality of this method and the ease of implementation for the teacher.

For the participants in this study, PBLL was a relatively novel language learning method, unfamiliar not only to the students but also to Rachel, who needed to explore and adapt to it. This collaborative and creative process of knowledge co-construction between the teacher and students during the project also posed new challenges for a teacher lacking extensive PBLL experience. Therefore, when determining the topic, we jointly agreed that we should choose a topic that students could easily engage with and that the teacher could effectively guide.

We clarified that the topic should not be too complex or profound to avoid causing excessive difficulty in students' understanding and expression. In the initial stages of language learning, the complexity of content directly affects learners' enthusiasm and confidence (Evans et al., 2024; Krashen, 1984). Therefore, we avoided choosing complex topics that would be difficult even to discuss in one's native language and instead selected "travel"—a topic familiar to students and capable of arousing interest. The content of the travel topic is wide-ranging;

students could choose places they were familiar with or destinations they wished to visit in the future to design and discuss their projects. This provided them with considerable autonomy, helping to enhance their learning enthusiasm.

Furthermore, the topic of travel is interesting and realistically relevant, closely aligned with students' personal experiences and family activities, thus enhancing its authenticity as a learning context. Travel is often closely related to students' personal experiences and family activities in real life. Such emotional connections help enhance learning motivation (Chau & Ren, 2024; Gardner, 1985), assisting students in maintaining a high level of engagement even when participating in the project during holidays. Additionally, students were able to draw on information from their everyday lives; such life oriented content facilitated the integration of classroom learning with real-world experience and fostered the internalisation of linguistic knowledge (Dörnyei, 2009; Zhao et al., 2024).

In terms of information acquisition, travel, as a popular topic, makes it convenient for students to collect materials. The availability of information is one of the important factors affecting learning efficiency when learners engage in project activities (Munthe et al., 2024; Tangney et al., 2024). Students obtained information through online resources and from the teacher, their family members, friends, and personal travel experiences. These multi-channel information sources were able to help them to be more adept when preparing travel-related content, potentially reducing the pressure of information gathering during the learning process and enhancing the fluency and coherence of oral expression.

Moreover, the choice of travel considered its alignment with the students' existing English learning content. Although this study aimed to explore more recent language learning pathways through PBLL, it was not intended that students would completely diverge from their existing English learning content. Travel is a common topic involving cultural exchange, geographical knowledge, and other aspects, which are widely covered in the students' existing English textbooks (Lu

et al., 2022). This connection helped students review and consolidate existing knowledge in the project's context and prepared them for similar topics in future textbook units. This choice also provided persuasiveness to parents: even with new method, the students' learning content was not disconnected from the original academic goals.

We did not completely delegate the choice of topic to the students mainly based on two considerations. First, although the general direction of the topic was decided by Rachel and me, under the broad theme of travel, students still had full autonomy to choose specific project content, such as cities they wanted to introduce, travel experiences, or future travel plans. Second, for the only participating teacher Rachel, a unified topic direction helped provide more targeted feedback and guidance during the course, improving overall teaching efficiency. This design ensured student autonomy in the project while avoiding the problem of the teacher finding it difficult to provide effective guidance due to overly dispersed topic choices.

4.7.1.2.   Project Product Form

Rachel and I clarified in advance the final project deliverable for each group, namely, creating a 3- to 5-minute short video on the topic of travel. The following details our reasons for choosing this project form.

Firstly, determining a relatively unified project deliverable aligned with our thinking in topic selection. Choosing a specific project form might help the teacher provide more targeted guidance during instruction (Beckett et al., 2025). If the project forms of each group differed greatly, it would be difficult for Rachel to provide guidance applicable to all students during whole-class instruction. Therefore, by stipulating "short video" as the unified project deliverable, we could ensure that some of the guidance and suggestions Rachel provided in class were generalisable, thereby improving the overall teaching effect. Meanwhile,

although the project form was uniformly stipulated as a short video, students still had full autonomy in content creation; they could choose any content related to the travel topic, even producing animated videos. This form design, which provided a framework yet allowed ample creative freedom, aimed to help stimulate students' creativity and personalised expression (Zhang & Ma, 2023).

Besides being consistent with the core objectives of PBLL, the choice of short videos as the final project deliverable also aligned with other contemporary approaches to language learning, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), discussed previously in the literature review. Similar to PBLL, CLIL emphasises the simultaneous acquisition of language and content-area knowledge (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Dalton-Puffer et al., 2014). Accordingly, through producing short videos, students in this study were expected not only to improve their linguistic competence but also to acquire practical video-editing skills which are valuable in various real-life contexts.

It was closely connected to the fragmented nature of information dissemination in the current eras. Short videos have become deeply integrated into students' daily lives, serving as a primary format through which they frequently access information via mobile phones (Zhao & Kou, 2024). Many self-media creators share travel experiences or daily activities through short videos, a content form already highly familiar to students. Therefore, selecting short videos aligned closely with students' life experiences and capitalised on their existing familiarity with diverse short-video formats. This project provided students with an opportunity to extend their perceptual knowledge into practical skills, increasing the real-life applicability and practical significance of their learning.

Additionally, choosing short videos considered the teacher's guidance ability. In this study, Rachel had some experience in short video production. Although she was not a professional teaching video production, she could provide basic technical support to the students. In this case, students could not only receive

Rachel's guidance on video making, but also further develop their own creative styles based on what the teacher provided, even surpassing the teacher's ability level.

Finally, selecting short videos as the project deliverable balanced operability and feasibility. When planning the project, we considered that students had relatively ample time during the holidays to prepare, without the interference of other heavy learning tasks. Making a 3- to 5-minute short video was a task that was relatively easy to start but still presented some challenges. This moderately difficult task might both stimulate students' interest in learning and avoid making them feel overly challenged to the point of wanting to give up (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Liu et al., 2022). Students were provided opportunities to practise language and develop relevant skills in an environment that was both familiar and challenging, thus enhancing their linguistic competence and comprehensive literacy simultaneously.

4.7.1.3.   Grouping Strategy

The strategy for grouping students is an important link that directly affects the project's implementation effect and the students' learning experience (A. Li et al., 2022). Initially, Rachel and I had concerns regarding the project's difficulty. Although students regularly accessed and watched short videos online, we were uncertain whether they possessed sufficient technical skills at their age to produce such videos independently. Therefore, in our early discussions, we considered forming relatively large groups (e.g., 6 to 8 students per group) to distribute the workload and potentially enhance the overall video quality.

However, during the first online meeting, students expressed perspectives differing from ours when informed of the grouping requirement. They argued that larger groups could complicate task allocation, causing uneven workload distribution among members. Instead, students preferred smaller groups, which

they believed would promote more efficient discussions and balanced participation, ultimately benefiting the project's quality.

After careful consideration and further consultation with students, Rachel adopted their suggestions and reduced the group size, allowing students to select their own group members. Given that this PBLL project did not involve graded assessments, students were encouraged to form groups based on existing relationships, leveraging their familiarity to enhance collaboration effectiveness. We anticipated that greater autonomy in grouping decisions, especially without grading pressure, would foster more positive collaborative experiences, further stimulating creativity. This decision aligns with existing research highlighting that learners tend to exhibit greater motivation and engagement in learning contexts that provide them with choices (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Ultimately, groups consisted of four students each. For students who had not identified suitable group members during this free-grouping stage, the teacher facilitated appropriate adjustments after obtaining their consent, resulting in the formation of 11 groups.

This grouping strategy granted significant autonomy to students, and the final grouping plan was formulated through teacher–student consultation. This collaborative process demonstrated the teacher's respect and inclusivity towards students' opinions. This way of collaboratively formulating learning strategies between the teacher and students might help enhance students' sense of participation and self-efficacy, thereby stimulating their enthusiasm and creativity in project implementation (Geurts et al., 2024; Omland et al., 2025; Zimmerman, 2002). Since the grouping stage involved early negotiation and adjustments between students and Rachel, this collaborative process also represented part of the broader teacher–student interaction in the project's actual implementation. This grouping process is revisited and further analysed in Chapter VI.

4.7.1.4.   Course Procedure

We carefully designed and dynamically adjusted the course procedure to promote students' autonomous learning and team collaboration skills. The initial course procedure was not entirely fixed; this flexibility allowed for subsequent optimisations of the process, aligning with educational theories on dynamic instructional design (Abuhassna et al., 2024; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006b). The general procedure of the PBLL as it was ultimately presented is shown in Figure 4.2. below.
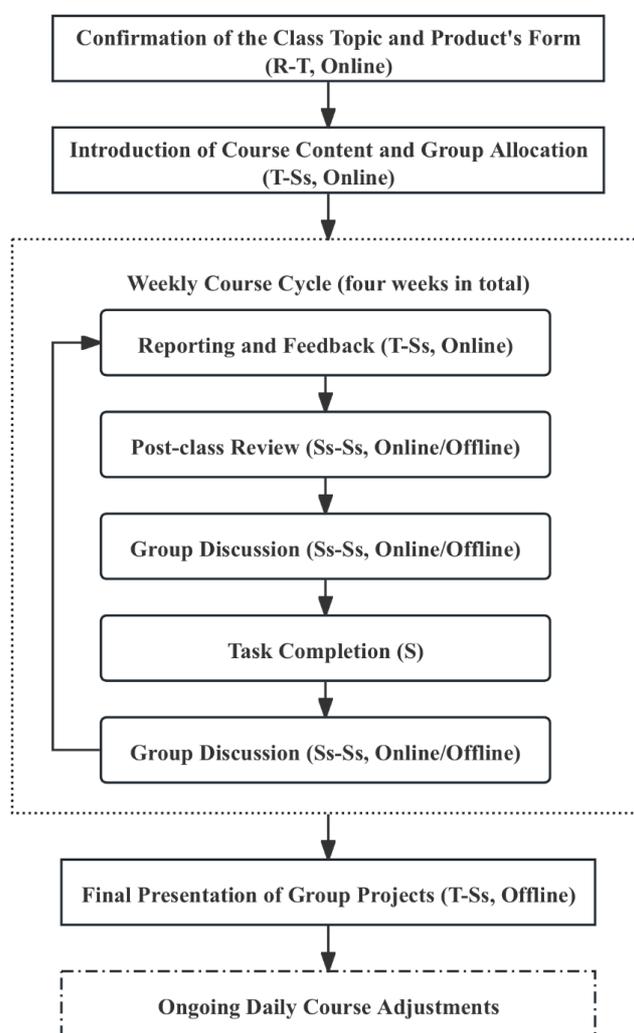
Figure 4.2. The General Project-based Language Learning Course Process in This Study

In Figure 4.2, each step specifies the primary participants and interactive parties

involved in parentheses, as well as the mode of implementation (online or face-to-face). For instance, the first step, confirming the project topic and final product format, is indicated as conducted online between the researcher and the participating teacher.

Subsequent teacher-student sessions for PBLL were scheduled weekly, each lasting one and a half hours. The first session consisted primarily of an online meeting introducing the course framework, including the confirmed project topic, final product requirements, and discussions on group assignments, without engaging in formal teaching. Following this initial phase, subsequent course scheduling was collaboratively negotiated with students, ensuring a consistent structure for each session. Once the course was established, the weekly procedure proceeded as follows:

(1) **Group Progress Reports**: In each weekly online session, each group designated a representative to report the group's current progress and discussion details, primarily in English. If complex technical content needed to be explained, especially regarding video production, students were permitted to supplement their explanations in their native language or use a mix of Chinese and English.

(2) **Teacher Feedback and Guidance**: After listening to each group's report, the teacher provided feedback to each group in the online classroom, offering directional suggestions. The feedback focused on guiding students to think deeply and enhance the quality of their projects.

(3) **Group Discussion and Problem Solving**: Each session allocated half an hour for students to return to their respective online group discussion rooms to further discuss their projects. During this time, if any group encountered issues, they could consult the teacher online at any moment.

(4) **Group Planning and Task Execution**: Post-class, students reviewed and organised the teacher's suggestions and formulated plans for the following week. They autonomously organised group discussions and completed the tasks they had set for themselves. While group members individually undertook their allocated

sub-tasks, the process was not entirely independent; rather, they frequently utilised communication platforms such as WeChat to provide mutual support throughout their task completion.

(5) **Preparation for Next Report**: Before the next session, students held group meetings to determine the content and presenter for the upcoming report, summarising the week's progress.

This cyclical process fostered continuous engagement and team collaboration among students, ultimately enabling them to complete the final project deliverables and the subsequent offline classroom presentations through gradual weekly accumulation and improvement. The final stage of the course included two offline sessions. Each group was required to present their project product in the offline classes and provide an introduction and explanation primarily in English. Every member needed to participate in the presentation. This provided students with another opportunity to practise English oral expression.

In Figure 4.2, the final dashed-line box indicates a stage that, although not directly part of the students' PBLL process, was included because it represents subsequent course adjustments made by Rachel. These adjustments were influenced by her experiences and insights gained from engaging in the PBLL implementation process, and thus warranted inclusion in the overall framework.

4.7.2. Classroom Observation

One of the core data collection methods in this study was classroom observation. The classroom observation data primarily originated from three sources: PBLL online practical courses, offline PBLL project presentation classes, and the regular English learning and teaching sessions following the completion of this PBLL course. These different types of classes provided me with multidimensional perspectives to systematically understand the behaviours and interactions of students and Rachel, under the PBLL method or influenced by it. Each part of the classroom observation data could reflect the dynamic development of teacher–students

interactions by recording the teacher's guidance methods and the students' responses (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

4.7.2.1. Classroom Observation of the Project-based Language Learning Course

The purpose of classroom observation in this section was to deeply understand the specific behaviours and underlying reasons of the teacher's and students' actions in PBLL, as well as their experiences and perceptions of PBLL. Additionally, it aimed to analyse how the interactions between Rachel and students affected the students' learning processes and outcomes. Specifically, I focused on how Rachel guided students to solve problems encountered during the learning process and provided support, as well as the students' initiative and collaborative behaviours in problem-solving.

To avoid interfering with the class, I adopted a non-participatory observer role when observing these online course activities, refraining from classroom interaction and solely recording observations. In qualitative inquiry, the non-participant observer aims to minimise researcher reactivity while still capturing naturally occurring interaction (Hammersley, 2015; Spradley, 1980). During the online sessions, students appeared largely unaware of my presence (despite having been informed beforehand), and teacher feedback indicated that their classroom performance was unaffected by my observation. In subsequent face-to-face observations, students also quickly adapted to my presence. Where deeper contextual cues are needed, researchers typically combine systematic field-notes with ethically approved screen or video capture to offset the limited participation inherent in this role (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). After each online session, I took time to discuss some of the recorded content with Rachel, exploring the students' in-class performance and Rachel's impressions to further supplement the observational data.

Group discussion was a crucial component of the PBLL course and a key process

where students autonomously solved problems. Since the course was conducted online, students' group discussions utilised online tools; each group could discuss in an independent "room", and the teacher could sequentially enter different groups' rooms to provide guidance. To fully understand each group's discussion dynamics, I reviewed and analysed the observation of these group discussions. In this observation phase, I not only focused on the interactions among students but also specifically recorded the strategies and methods the teacher employed when addressing different groups' questions. This was to understand how the teacher facilitated deep learning in each group through personalised and targeted guidance.

4.7.2.2. Classroom Observation of the Group Presentation Classes

The presentation classes, marking the culmination of the PBLL course, were crucial for students to showcase their learning achievements. In this phase, students needed to report their project outcomes to the entire class and the teacher, primarily through English oral presentations. Rachel continued to provide verbal feedback and evaluated the students' performances during this process. My observation in this segment focused on the students' oral expression, team dynamics, and the actual completion status of each group's project.

During the presentation classes, each group member was responsible for introducing a segment of their group's final video product. They also explained the specific division of responsibilities among group members throughout the project's development. This enabled me to gain an intuitive understanding of the group's overall collaboration level and each member's individual performance. Such multi-level observation allowed me to meticulously record the students' learning outcomes and deeply comprehend the impact of PBLL on their English proficiency and other comprehensive skills.

4.7.2.3.   Classroom Observation of Regular Courses

Following the conclusion of the PBLL course, I decided to extend my observation to the students' regular English classes to facilitate a better comparison with the PBLL course. This component was not part of the initial research design, but interactions with teacher Rachel during the PBLL course prompted me to recognise the necessity of comparing the two teaching models. Rachel frequently mentioned the differences between the PBLL course and regular classes in our discussions. To directly compare the two, I decided to systematically observe the regular classes subsequently.

Following the conclusion of the PBLL, the observation of the students' daily lessons continued for approximately one month. During this time, I also conducted follow-up interviews with the students and the teacher. The students' daily English curriculum was intensive, consisting of at least one to two English classes each day of the school week. Although I did not attend all of their daily English lessons, I ensured that I observed a minimum of two classes per week. I selected a variety of lesson types taught by the participating teacher, such as listening, writing, reading comprehension and assignment review classes. It was noted that while these classes incorporated some brief question and answer sessions in English, there was an absence of dedicated lessons focused specifically on oral skills training.

Another aim of observing the regular courses was to analyse the PBLL course's impact on Rachel's daily teaching. During this process, I observed how Rachel applied or adjusted strategies from the PBLL course in her routine teaching, exploring the teacher's adaptation and transition between traditional classroom settings and innovative teaching methodologies. By combining interviews with Rachel and observational records, I gained deeper insights into the teacher's reflections post-PBLL course and the changes in her teaching practices.

4.7.3.   Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were selected because they balance a clear guiding structure with the flexibility needed to follow participants' leads, producing data that are both comparable and richly descriptive (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Karatsareas, 2022). This adaptability is especially valuable when exploring teachers' and students' evolving perceptions of PBLL, as it allows the interviewer to probe unexpected but meaningful ideas without straying from the study aims (Kallio et al., 2016). Moreover, semi-structured formats have been shown to foster rapport and elicit candid, in-depth accounts, enhancing the credibility and depth of qualitative findings (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). All semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were recorded using professional audio equipment, securely stored according to data-protection guidelines, and thoroughly reviewed during subsequent data transcription and analysis stages.

To comprehensively supplement the classroom observation data, I conducted interviews with both students and the teacher. Although I describe these conversations whit Rachel as "semi-structured interviews", the exchanges with her began well before the course and went beyond unilateral information gathering. From the outset, our dialogue was collaborative: we shared and challenged ideas, deepened mutual understanding of PBLL, and co-developed the final curriculum. This co-constructive approach is akin to the "co-interviewing" or collaborative research methods documented in qualitative inquiry, which highlight knowledge co-creation and mutual professional growth (Velardo & Elliott, 2021).

After the PBLL course concluded, I conducted semi-structured interviews with some students to capture discussions that took place outside the PBLL classroom, where I could not observe directly. These extracurricular discussions were entirely student-led: they organised meetings during the week via face-to-face gatherings, online voice calls, or WeChat text groups to address immediate questions. Neither Rachel nor I participated, ensuring the spontaneity of these peer interactions. This non-interventionist approach minimises potential influence that teacher presence

might exert on student discourse (Darani et al., 2023).

To ensure data diversity, I randomly selected eight students from different groups, comprising four males and four females. Each interview lasted approximately 50 minutes, focusing on their perceptions of PBLL and the differences in their experiences between traditional learning and PBLL. To ensure the authenticity and credibility of the students' responses, I emphasised that the interview content would not be disclosed to the teacher, thereby encouraging students to freely express their genuine thoughts.

4.7.4. Focus Group Discussions

Focus-group discussions were adopted because they let participants co-construct meaning through interaction, uncovering shared norms as well as points of disagreement that individual interviews might miss (Kitzinger, 1995). Their conversational nature also helps quieter students recall events and elaborate on each other's comments, offering a more natural picture of classroom life. Scholars warn that focus groups can suffer from dominant voices, conformity pressure, or confidentiality concerns; following Barbour (2005) I set clear ground rules, invited every member to speak, and used some relevant follow-up questions to balance the discussion.

I conducted focus group interviews to supplement any data that might have been omitted in individual interviews and to explore noteworthy phenomena identified from the previous one-on-one semi-structured interviews. One member was selected from each group to form two focus groups, each engaging in discussions lasting about 30 to 50 minutes. These discussions had no strict content limitations and primarily involved open conversations about their learning experiences. This method provided me with more comprehensive data on the students' feelings towards PBLL and allowed for a deeper understanding of their collective experiences within the PBLL project.

4.7.5.   Supplementary Data

In qualitative research, supplementary data such as students' self-generated PowerPoint presentations, manuscripts, and other artefacts can enhance data diversity and explanatory depth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These materials were collected and analysed as complementary evidence, capturing students' cognitive processes within the PBLL learning context. As Maxwell (2013) indicates, multiple data sources improve research credibility by mitigating biases inherent in single-source approaches. Thus, students' informal artefacts offered original insights into their learning trajectories, effectively reducing potential bias from socially desirable responses in interviews or focus groups.

Throughout the project, students produced numerous drafts, diagrams, and other documents during their collaborative discussions and project preparations. This diversity offers researchers opportunities to analyse students' cognitive structures and expressive preferences (Creswell, 2013). As Stake (1995) pointed out, such supplementary data can verify information from other data sources and provide detailed support for in-depth analysis, helping researchers identify how students organise knowledge structures, reasoning processes, and levels of knowledge application. These materials might reveal their mastery of complex concepts, providing a crucial basis for interpreting research findings. These artefacts were referenced during student interviews as well, as concrete prompts to revisit detailed aspects of their preparation process.

In summary, this qualitative case study intentionally integrated multiple data sources to construct a robust and contextually rich account of the PBLL classroom environment. The diversity in data sources not only facilitated capturing nuanced dimensions of students' learning experiences and instructional behaviours but also enabled rigorous triangulation across qualitative datasets.

4.8. Thematic Analysis Method

In this study, I employed thematic analysis (TA) as the main method for data analysis. TA is an effective qualitative method, particularly suitable for analysing complex emotions, attitudes, and behaviours (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). It assists researchers in extracting core themes and patterns from extensive interview data, thereby revealing respondents' subjective experiences and multilayered psychological factors (ibid.). Therefore, TA method possessed high applicability and flexibility in this research.

TA process includes systematic steps from coding to generating initial themes, reviewing, and naming themes, providing a clear and structured framework for the research. It offers readers a transparent analytical process, enabling them to understand the data analysis logic of the entire study. Based on TA, I developed a framework containing eight themes and twenty-four subthemes. Under each subtheme, specific details were further elaborated, all of which are thoroughly discussed in the later data analysis and discussion chapters (Chapter V-VII).

The analytical framework was developed through a systematic process. Initially, I organised data collected during the study. Guided by the research questions, I summarised content closely related to these questions to form an initial thematic structure, presented in Appendix C. Although this preliminary framework differed slightly from the finalised thematic structure, it provided an essential early-stage outline, facilitating clear and systematic organisation of emerging themes.

Subsequently, I conducted inductive coding of the entire dataset, refining the initial framework by identifying recurrent categories and themes. Through iterative analysis, I verified significant themes while removing less prominent content. This resulted in a refined analytical framework comprising major themes and corresponding subthemes, each detailed and explored comprehensively in Chapter V-VII.

Employing thematic analysis allowed for systematic management and interpretation of complex qualitative data, capturing the multidimensional experiences within the PBLL context. The iterative nature of thematic analysis ensured the robustness and credibility of findings (Nowell et al., 2017). The resulting thematic structure, detailed in the following table, systematically organises study findings, ensuring each theme and subtheme was examined thoroughly within its context.

Table 4.1. Framework of Themes and Subthemes

	Main Theme	Subtheme
V: Student-centred Learning Experiences	T1: Progress Centred on Productive Language Skills	S1: Emphasis on Oral Fluency in Expression
		S2: Preparation of Written Drafts for Oral Output
		S3: Listening to Others' Speeches
		S4: Selection of Reading Materials Focused on Serving Project Goals
	T2: Plurilingual Skill in This PBLL Context	S5: Cultural Understanding of the "Travel" Topic
		S6: The Integration of Language Triptych and Translanguaging
VI: Students' Learning Motivations and Strategies	T3: The Internalisation Process of Student Learning Motivation	S7: External Regulation as an Initial Motivational Catalyst
		S8: Introjected Regulation—Pressure and Competition
		S9: Identified Regulation—Embracing Perceived Value
		S10: Integrated Regulation—Aligning Personal Goals
	T4: The Collaborative Processes Between Students and Between the Teacher and Students	S11: Responsibility Sharing
		S12: Expression and Listening
		S13: Critical Thinking and Negotiation
		S14: Conflict Resolution
	T5: Reflection on the Learning Process	S15: Developing a Study Plan
		S16: Assessing Learning Progress
VII: Teacher's Perceptions, Experiences and Changes	T6: Rachel's Motivation to Engage in PBLL Practices	S17: Personal Growth and Professional Development
		S18: Rachel's Perceptions of PBLL's Influence on Students
		S19: Exploring Teaching driven by Education Policy
	T7: Challenges faced by Rachel	S20: Challenges Based on Rachel's and Students' Existing Conditions
		S21: Challenges Arising from the Characteristics of PBLL
		S22: Discrepancy between Exam Requirements and PBLL Outcomes
	T8: Communication and Creativity	S23: Rachel's Subjective Initiative
		S24: Everyday Classroom Transformation

4.9. Language Use in This Study

4.9.1.   Language Choice in Interviews

Throughout the research process, language choices varied according to the objectives at different stages. During course design and implementation, I communicated with Rachel in Chinese, our shared first language (L1). Working in the L1 made planning discussions faster and clearer, and it cut down the risk of meaning being lost in later translation, a problem well documented in cross-language qualitative studies (Temple & Young, 2004; Van Nes et al., 2010). This choice also let us explore innovative teaching ideas with greater precision and depth. Student interviews and focus-group sessions were likewise conducted in Chinese. Using the mother tongue helped participants recall events accurately, express emotions freely, and reduced the anxiety that can silence less confident speakers.

Language is not merely a tool for communication but a carrier of cultural nuances, and the same vocabulary can hold different meanings across contexts. This presents a risk of what is known as construct bias, where the concepts being measured are not truly equivalent across cultures, potentially invalidating research findings (He & Van De Vijver, 2012; Wenz et al., 2021). To mitigate this, one possible way is conducting interviews in the participants' mother tongue (Fryer, 2019). This practice aligns with the ethical imperative to explain research in terms meaningful to participants. More importantly, using the mother tongue allows researchers to build genuine rapport and a sense of connection, which is crucial for maximising the richness and depth of the data gathered (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). By doing so, I tried to ensure that participants' experiences are not misinterpreted.

4.9.2.   Language Processing in Data Analysis

During the data analysis process, since the original research data were all presented in Chinese, I primarily used Chinese for initial sorting and coding to

ensure comprehensive understanding of the raw data and accuracy in analysis. However, as the thesis is written in English and required reporting of analysis results to my supervisors, it was necessary to translate parts of the analysis into English for discussion. As noted earlier in the ethical consideration section, language-related data-handling procedures have been detailed and are not repeated here.

In this process, I endeavoured to maintain the integrity of the original Chinese data to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of the information. Simultaneously, during translation, I preserved the respondents' language styles and expressive characteristics, such as pauses and repetitions, to reconstruct the original scenarios as authentically as possible. Respondents' pauses and repetitions reflect, to some extent, their emotional states and the depth of reflection on the issues (Clark & Tree, 2002; Kahng, 2020); therefore, these details were retained during translation, ensuring correct interpretation of the data.

On this basis, I provided all participants with the right to review the translated texts to ensure the accuracy of the translation and their acceptance of the research results. This method aimed to preserve the authenticity of the data while also verifying the logic and scientific trustworthiness of the analysis process through feedback from my supervisors.

4.9.3. Language Strategies in Classroom Communication

In classroom learning and teaching, language use strategies were flexibly designed according to course objectives. Since one of the goals of the research course was to improve students' English expression abilities, students were encouraged to use English as much as possible during class reports, especially during team presentations and group discussions. However, considering the difficulties students might face when using English to express technical concepts, students were free to choose the language used in the course. For example, when discussing content involving new knowledge areas such as video production, students were

allowed to use Chinese to avoid language barriers affecting learning efficiency.

Multiple instances of language alternation appeared in the classroom. For example, during reports, when students encountered difficulties expressing certain English vocabulary, they could directly use Chinese as a substitute. In the subsequent data analysis chapters, I further explore the impact of translanguaging on students' language acquisition and classroom participation.

In summary, at various stages of this study, the choice of language use strategies was based on improving data quality, enhancing communication effectiveness, and ensuring the scientific nature of the research. Whether in interviews with the teacher and students or in language use during classroom communication, these strategies fully considered the characteristics of the research subjects and matched the research objectives. These approaches helped to ensure the effectiveness of data collection and enhance the credibility of the research findings.

4.10. Trustworthiness

This study established criteria of quality appropriate for a qualitative case study guided by a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm. Although Yin's (2018) criteria for evaluating case studies are valuable, it should be acknowledged that Yin adopted a largely positivist stance, emphasising concepts such as consistency, cross-validation, and bias avoidance, which may not align fully with the interpretivist approach employed here. Therefore, I recast these criteria to better reflect my epistemological stance, focusing on credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Tracy, 2010).

Firstly, credibility was established by employing multiple data collection methods

(including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and students' project manuscripts and product) to achieve data triangulation. Such triangulation was aimed not at "verifying consistency" but at enriching the depth of understanding and capturing the complexity of the phenomenon from different perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking was regularly conducted, involving discussions with Rachel and the students, to ensure the interpretations genuinely represented their experiences and perspectives.

Secondly, transferability was addressed through thick descriptions of the research context (Stake, 1995). Specifically, the context of this PBLL was carefully documented, providing insights into how the choice of project topic, travel, and the production format, video creation, were closely aligned with students' everyday experiences. This detailed contextualisation allows readers, especially language educators, to judge the applicability and relevance of these findings to their own teaching contexts and recognise the conditions under which similar outcomes might be achieved.

Thirdly, dependability was ensured through systematic and transparent documentation, including detailed records of classroom observations, coding strategies, analytical decisions, and ongoing reflections on the research process. Specifically, the collaborative discussions and reflective dialogues with Rachel after each class session helped ensure consistent documentation and interpretation of classroom events and student experiences. This systematic audit trail enhances readers' confidence in the research process, making it clear how each stage of analysis informed the conclusions drawn (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability was addressed through explicit reflexivity and ongoing dialogue with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the research, I maintained openness regarding my positionality, continuously reflecting on my interactions with Rachel, thus acknowledging and managing potential biases. Decisions and

interpretations were regularly discussed through collaboration, ensuring that the final interpretations and conclusions emerged directly from participants' perspectives rather than solely from my subjective views.

Regarding authenticity, participants' genuine voices and experiences were encouraged, while anonymity was rigorously maintained. Furthermore, the participatory nature of the research, involving co-construction of teaching practices and ongoing adjustments based on student feedback, enhanced authenticity. Additionally, the careful selection of the project topic (travel) and product format (video creation) ensured that students engaged in authentic tasks closely linked to their everyday lives, thereby reinforcing the real-world relevance and meaningfulness of the project.

4.11. Summary of This Chapter

In conclusion, this chapter lays out a comprehensive foundation for the study by delineating the chosen research paradigm and design, detailing the process of participant selection, outlining the preparatory work undertaken by the teacher and me, and explaining the main data collection timeline and ethical considerations. The research instruments, comprising course design, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and other supplementary data, were presented and discussed in light of their appropriateness and feasibility for this context. Through thematic analysis, the study is positioned to delve into the depth of various data sources, further enriched by thoughtful strategies concerning language use. In the following chapters, the methodological framework presented here serves as the basis for interpreting and analysing the data, ultimately contributing to the understanding of the research questions.

5. Chapter V: Student-centred Learning Experiences

5.0. Introduction to This Chapter

This chapter initiates discussion of the data analysis in the present study. Before exploring the chapter's content, it is important to revisit the two main research questions guiding this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of the participating Chinese secondary school students in this Project-based Language Learning method?

RQ2: How does the participating teacher adapt to and cope with this student-centred language learning approach?

This chapter, along with the following two chapters, weaves the influence of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) throughout. The results of the data analysis and discussion reveal that, from both the students' and the teacher's perspectives, PBLL could be viewed as a practice deeply embedded in sociocultural processes. This involved not only interactions among students and between students and teacher but also collaborations between the teacher and the researcher, aimed at developing and refining relevant learning and teaching skills. SCT posits that knowledge is constructed through social interaction, emphasising that learning is a social, collaborative process (Vygotsky, 1978b). This theory supports the phenomena observed in the PBLL environment of this study, where learning and teaching are not merely individual cognitive activities but are deeply rooted in the social interactions and cultural practices among participants. Throughout the data analysis and discussion, specific manifestations of SCT continually emerged.

This chapter primarily focuses on the first part of the first research question, which concerned the learning experiences of students in PBLL. Specifically, through classroom observations and interviews with students, detailed insights were gained into their personal reflections on the content learned and the arrangement of learning activities. Additionally, as students transitioned back to

their regular English classes at the start of the new semester, their daily English lessons were also observed and compared. The research findings indicate that students experienced a distinct shift in learning through PBLL, characterised by a more student-centred approach that emphasised their active participation and central role in the learning process. This shift resulted in differences in the emphasis on language skills and learning content compared to their regular English classes. This chapter thus elaborates on these findings and provides an in-depth analysis of the students' learning processes and experiences in PBLL.

This chapter identifies two core themes. The first theme is "Progress Centred on Productive Language Skills". Participating teacher Rachel (pseudonym) and the clear majority of the interviewed students (most volunteered this view without prompting) reported that they still perceived the PBLL process as primarily language-focused: when students spontaneously described their learning experience, the very first points they mentioned were almost always language-related. Consequently, during their interviews, students directed a portion of their attention to the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. From this focus, the first theme emerged. Students shared their distinct experiences in speaking and writing compared to their regular English learning. However, analysis of this theme revealed potential limitations in PBLL's ability to equally enhance the four basic language skills. Furthermore, the flexibility in learning content selection based on personal interests and group discussions led to significant variations in the final learning products among different groups, posing challenges for the teacher in maintaining consistent learning quality.

The second theme explored in this chapter addresses the development of "Plurilingual Skill in the PBLL Context". A key finding from the interviews and classroom observations is that students' learning extended beyond the four basic language skills to deeply incorporate cultural content and its practical application. This integration of culture and language moved beyond the scope of, where

intercultural aspects can sometimes be supplementary. Instead, the method observed here treats cultural learning as an intrinsic component in this project. The core aim is not just communication, but the enhancement of learners' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities within diverse social and cultural contexts. This chapter posits that by foregrounding cultural content, the plurilingual PBLL method functions as a more integrated model, sharing characteristics with Content and Language Integrated Learning. Subsequent sections of this chapter further analyse and discuss these findings.

This chapter contributes knowledge and practical insights related to PBLL in the context of Chinese secondary education. Next, I begin with the first theme, examining the language skills that students emphasised during this PBLL experience and contrasting them with the linguistic competencies more commonly prioritised in their regular English classes.

5.1. Theme One: Progress Centred on Productive Language Skills

Although the four fundamental language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing were not the sole learning content of this PBLL experience, they remained the focus for the teacher in the language classroom. Through the observation of students' performances during the PBLL course and insights gained from interviews with both students and the teacher, I explored the students' experiences in practising these four basic skills within the context of this course. During the interviews, both students and teachers expressed the distinctions between the skill acquisition process in PBLL and that in regular English classes.

5.1.1. Emphasis on Oral Fluency in Expression

In subtheme one, I initially focus on students' oral performance within this PBLL context. Classroom observations reveal that, during this PBLL process, the

demonstration of speaking skills occupied a significantly larger proportion compared to listening, reading, and writing. During the final project presentations by student groups, in addition to showcasing their video productions, the oral explanations by each group member constituted a substantial part of the presentation. Moreover, students expressed a rich array of feelings related to speaking in the interviews conducted. Rachel also noted in her interview that there were differences in students' oral performances between PBLL and regular English classes. These differences can be said to reflect the impact of PBLL on the development of students' speaking skills and highlight the contrast between conventional teaching and PBLL methods in cultivating students' oral expression abilities. Therefore, this subtheme initially focuses on students' speaking abilities, exploring their speaking skills in the PBLL environment and its supplementary role to traditional learning methods.

Excerpt 5.1. shows that students prioritised communicative flow during project preparation. Mandarin was used to negotiate task scope and organise the itinerary efficiently, while English was used to trial key sentences for the emerging oral script. This interactional pattern supports the claim that fluency oriented oral production was enabled through collaborative planning rather than immediate accuracy focused correction.

Excerpt 5.1. Classroom Observation (Breakout Room Discussion)

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*我们先把 itinerary 说清楚，再去管 grammar。先三天还是四天？* [English translation: Let's make the itinerary clear first, then worry about grammar. Three days or four days?]
2	S2	*三天比较合理，老师说不要太长。But we need highlights, like pyramids, museum, and desert.* [English translation: Three days is more reasonable. But we need highlights, like pyramids, museum, and desert.]
3	S1	*我刚看了中文攻略，很多都是 "3 天 2 晚"。 two nights。* [English translation: I just checked a Chinese travel guide. Many use "three days two nights". Two nights.]
4	S3	*对，那我们英文开头可以说：This is a three days two nights adventure in Egypt.* [English translation: Yes. Then our English opening can be: This is a three days two nights adventure in Egypt.]
5	S2	*听起来可以，先顺着说。细节后面再改。然后 Day 1 讲 Cairo。* [English translation: Sounds fine, speak smoothly first. We can

		revise details later. Then Day 1 is Cairo.]
6	S3	我补一句，英文说 *"We will start in Cairo and visit the Egyptian Museum."* 你们觉得 ok 吗？ [English translation: I'll add a sentence: "We will start in Cairo and visit the Egyptian Museum." Is that ok?]
7	S1	*ok，先这样。不要一直停在一个句子上。* [English translation: Ok, let's keep it. Don't get stuck on one sentence.]

The following excerpt is taken from a segment of students' speech during their group presentation. Beginning with this classroom observation, I analyse the students' emphasis on language fluency throughout this PBLL process.

Excerpt 5.2. Classroom Observation (Group Presentation)

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	T	*Now let's welcome our second group to introduce their video about traveling in Sichuan. Welcome!*
2	S1	*Good morning, everyone! So here is our group. And today we will introduce you about... umm... travel in Sichuan.*
3	S1	*And as you can see, this is our group member. My name is XXX, and this is XXX, and this is XXX. And this is XXX. So first of all, let's watch the video.*
4		(The whole class watches the video made by the group.)
5	S2	*Thank you for watching. Now, I will represent our group members to give you a brief introduction about our video. As you can see, in this video, we present a kind of city walk in Sichuan, in the... in the province, Chengdu.*
6	T	*Provincial capital,* 省会城市.
7	S2	*Right, provincial capital, Chengdu.*
8	S2	*And I know it is a very big city and we didn't present many area in Chengdu, but we pick some of the... the most interesting view we think to present to you.*

The classroom observation excerpt above originates from a group's final presentation dialogue. Throughout this interaction, students made several grammatical errors, inappropriate phrase usage, and expressions resembling Chinglish. However, as these did not significantly hinder comprehension, the teacher refrained from interrupting the students' speech in most instances. For instance, in serial No. 2, the student's phrase "introduce you about…" was incorrect. The preposition was used improperly, and the expression should be "introduce you to Sichuan" or "tell you about travelling in Sichuan". In serial No. 3, "this is our group member" should be pluralised to "these are our group members". In serial No. 8, "many area" should be "many areas", and there is also a lack of agreement in number with "some of the most interesting view".

Additionally, at serial No. 5, there is an expression akin to Chinglish: "we present a kind of city walk in Sichuan". Such expressions, often direct translations from Chinese to English, may diverge from native English speakers' usage but remain comprehensible to other Chinese students and to English speakers.

Krashen (1994) viewed fluency as a natural outcome of students' language competence development, even if it includes some non-standard expressions. In the course of this study, it has been observed that although students may exhibit non-standard or erroneous expressions during their speech, they are generally not interrupted by the teacher. This indicates that, during this oral communication process, the students and teacher place a greater emphasis on fluency. In light of perspectives within the field of Global Englishes, English as a global language is increasingly understood as dynamic and fluid, challenging the traditional norms previously dictated by native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2005). In contrast, non-native varieties of English, emerging from diverse geographical and cultural contexts, demonstrate strong communicative efficacy in intercultural exchanges, and serve as rich sources of innovation and ongoing linguistic evolution (Murata & Jenkins, 2009). Accordingly, grammatical errors, inappropriate phrase usage, and expressions resembling Chinglish do not necessarily constitute serious issues if they do not materially impede comprehension among the teacher and other students. Rather than being deficiencies, these slightly unconventional or not entirely native-like features can be viewed as natural outcomes of intercultural language practice, reflecting the flexible and evolving use of English as it unfolds across multiple localities and cultural contexts.

The excerpt features a notable instance of oral corrective feedback at serial No. 6. After the student made a lexical error by referring to "provincial capital" as "province", Rachel provided immediate, explicit correction. The teacher interjected with the accurate phrase "provincial capital" and clarified its meaning in Chinese. This corrective intervention, lasting only two to three seconds, was quickly grasped by the student, who then reiterated the accurate phrase and

continued speaking. The following excerpt from an interview with Rachel sheds light on her rationale for employing such on-the-spot oral feedback.

Excerpt 5.3. Translation of the Teacher Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	T	*Students often make mistakes in speaking, like grammar errors. I usually don't interrupt them unless it affects others' understanding.*
2	T	*I think it's important to let them complete their sentences. This way, they speak more fluently and confidently.*
3	T	*Interrupting them too much can make them afraid of making mistakes.*
4	T	*...The student mistakenly says "provincial capital", and I quickly correct them by saying the phrase correctly. This is a brief interruption, and they continue speaking. I don't stop them for a long explanation.*
5	T	*I do this to remind them and make unfamiliar words more memorable.*
6	T	*Overall, most of the time, if there's something special I want to emphasise, I wait until after their presentation or speech to correct or add information.*
7	T	*I'm pleasantly surprised by their progress in speaking skills, more than I expected before.*

Scholars understandings of spoken grammar highlight its interactive, real-time, and context-dependent nature, characterised by non-sentential structures, the frequent use of small words and fixed expressions, and an emphasis on collaborative construction that incorporates flexibility and multimodality (Carter & McCarthy, 2017). Reflecting this perspective, the teacher's interview (serial No. 1) reveals a deliberate policy of delaying corrective feedback during oral presentations. She noted that she avoided intervening over minor grammatical errors, brief pauses, or occasional "Chinglish", as these typically do not hinder comprehension or warrant disrupting the student's speech flow. This implies a recognition that the grammatical demands on spoken English need not mirror those for written English, and that prioritising effective communication holds greater significance. This perspective has been reflected in the research of scholars such as Hymes (1972) and Savignon (1991).

Rachel's choice of brief, immediate feedback is intended to emphasise unfamiliar concepts and correct blatant factual errors to prevent students from reinforcing

misunderstandings (serial No. 4 & 5). The teacher's preference for providing corrections, supplements, and emphasis after the student's complete remarks allowed for significant feedback without disrupting fluency (serial No. 2, 3 & 6). Additionally, since oral practice is less frequent in routine coursework and not the main focus of Rachel, the students' performance in this project exceeded Rachel's expectations (serial No. 7), potentially providing motivation to continue using this method. More specific insights into Rachel's instructional experience are detailed in subsequent chapters.

In contrast, although students' speaking expressions in their regular English classes (non-PBLL lesson) are seldom interrupted by the teacher as well, their output tends to consist of relatively fixed answers. Students are required to search for information by consulting textbooks or materials provided by the teacher to respond to questions. The answers to these questions are often brief and straightforward, prompting the teacher to insist that students answer entirely in English. Below is an excerpt from one of their daily English classes where a student responds to the teacher's question:

Excerpt 5.4. Classroom Observation (Regular English Course)

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	T	*Can you tell me where are the grand Rocky Mountains?*
2	S1	*The grand Rocky Mountains are located to the east of the Pacific coast.*
3	T	*What can you do on Cape Breton Island?*
4	S2	*I may visit Cape Breton Island in the province of Nova Scotia, where I can dance to fiddle tunes and enjoy the cultures and traditions of Celtic settlers.*

The corresponding excerpt from the textbook passage:

…
In the ten provinces and three territories which make up Canada, there is great diversity in geography. **To the east of the Pacific coast rise the grand Rocky Mountains**, which are home to high peaks and deep valleys carved by ice and water. Ancient, slow-moving glaciers hug the land and a huge variety of wildlife wanders the remote forests.
…
Finally, if you are looking for something off the beaten track, **you may visit Cape Breton Island in the province of Nova Scotia**, where you can dance to fiddle tunes and enjoy the cultures and traditions of Celtic settlers. As you are exposed to diverse cultures, you may feel transported through time and space.
…

In my observations of students' daily English classroom practices, a common phenomenon is the frequent occurrence of similar question forms like Excerpt 5.4, which are based on the content in the textbook material. This question-and-answer mechanism provides clear information localisation based on the textbook itself. Specific keywords used by teachers in their questions, such as "Cape Breton Island", help students quickly identify the relevant paragraph in the original text. Students' responses can often be directly extracted from the text, with minimal modifications. For instance, S2's response might only slightly alter the original sentence, such as changing the subject from the second person to the first person (serial No. 4). Keywords for specific questions might appear in only one location within the text, allowing students to directly quote the sentence to answer the question. Although this Q&A pattern enables students to swiftly and accurately locate relevant information in the text and respond to the teacher's questions in English, it may fall short in assessing students' oral proficiency and their comprehensive understanding of the reading material. This is because it relies heavily on the extraction of direct information from the text, with minimal engagement in independent thought. Students' regular English lessons lack opportunities for students to independently exercise their spoken English or engage in impromptu verbal exchanges.

When comparing Excerpts 5.2 and 5.4 from the perspective of learning purpose, PBLL differs from traditional oral practice approaches that rely on textbook-based content. The latter typically involves quickly locating and reproducing information from the text, with evaluation criteria focused primarily on verifying basic comprehension and simple reiteration. In contrast, PBLL integrates language learning with an authentic project, such as the production of the short videos and corresponding presentations featured in this study. This approach demands that students utilise the target language to search for, organise, and express information, and that they engage in autonomous discussion and decision-making regarding the project's content and quality. As a result, the English oral presentations delivered by each group during the final reporting stage cannot be

sourced directly from the textbook. In other words, PBLL's purpose emphasises sustained language use, collaborative problem-solving, and meaningful oral production within a more comprehensive, context-rich task environment (Dooly, 2013), which fosters more practically relevant communicative abilities than would be achieved through traditional methods.

5.1.2. Preparation of Written Drafts for Oral Output

As previously mentioned, students have had limited opportunities for spontaneous oral expression in their regular English classes. Consequently, the oral practice in this class was somewhat unfamiliar to them. Many students, therefore, required additional preparation to deliver formal oral presentations. Interviews revealed that, in an effort to enhance their speaking presentation, students often prepared written drafts or scripts of what they were going to say. This pre-class preparation method was proposed by the students and discussed with the teacher, resulting in a mutually agreed-upon approach. The interview data indicate that most participating students found that preparing written drafts in advance was an effective strategy for improving oral output. This collaborative approach in the classroom, where the teacher respects and incorporates student feedback, underscores one of the central themes of Chapter V in this study's data analysis: PBLL is student-centred.

Excerpt 5.5. Classroom Observation (Classroom Discussion)

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S	*Teacher, we want to know if we can, um, write down what we're going to say in our final presentation and practise with that.* (The student is speaking in Chinese.)
2	T	*Of course you can! If you think that doing this will help you improve your English expression, then definitely go ahead.*
3	S	*Thanks!*
4	T	*However, I hope that when you present your final products, you try not to read directly from your script as much as possible. Doing so might not show your process of thinking about how to express your ideas. This is just a suggestion, though.*
5	S	*Okey...* (The student showed a bit of uncertainty and hesitation.)
6	T	*...I think you can use scripts to help you while practicing. Then, for the final presentation, you could use keywords to remind you of your points. For example, you could display some keywords on your PowerPoint slides. If you can manage to present without relying on your script, that would be the best.*

| 7 | S | *Understand!* |

This excerpt illustrates a discussion between a student and the teacher concerning the preparation process for the final oral presentation. Following the student's initial suggestion, the teacher Rachel responded affirmatively, providing a clear reply for the student (serial No. 1-3). Subsequently, Rachel offered additional advice in English. Despite the student's positive response, his tone reveals a degree of uncertainty and hesitation (serial No. 4 & 5). Perceptively, Rachel recognised that the student may not have fully grasped the conveyed meaning and proceeded to further elucidate, concluding with a summary in Chinese (serial No. 6). This excerpt exemplifies classroom negotiation and the strategies employed by Rachel when the student's comprehension of English was incomplete. Throughout the interaction, Rachel remained attentive to the student's expressions and verbal cues. For instance, although the student positively acknowledged the teacher's advice, Rachel inferred from the student's manner of speaking that the student had not entirely understood. Therefore, Rachel provided additional clarification and an explanation in Chinese. Without the teacher's attentiveness, the student might have faced partial understanding of the instructions.

The student's proactive approach in discussing strategies for the oral presentation preparation during the class discussion indirectly highlights a lack of sufficient oral training in their regular class, leading to uncertainty in their preparation process. Consequently, they actively explored or sought additional methods to aid their performance in the upcoming oral presentation. It was a common practice for students to prepare written drafts in advance to aid their subsequent oral expressions. This approach assists speakers in better organising their thoughts, ensuring the completeness of the information conveyed (Akki & Larouz, 2021). By preparing a draft beforehand, speakers have the opportunity to contemplate and select the most appropriate vocabulary and phrasing, resulting in clear and

professional oral delivery. Furthermore, for those less proficient non-native speakers, drafting allows them to practise and familiarise themselves with the content they will communicate. This practice can reduce the level of nervousness and the rate of errors during actual spoken interactions, thereby enhancing the confidence and effectiveness of oral communication (Aubrey, 2025; Luo & Sun, 2025; Suratin & Sribayak, 2025). The following excerpt from students' interviews corroborates some of the aforementioned research findings. The students elaborated on their oral preparation process and the underlying reasons:

Excerpt 5.6. Translation of Student Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*In our final presentation, we all got a chance to speak and we really cared about how it would go since we had to present and introduce our video in front of the whole class. So, we all prepared in advance.*
2	S2	*We thought we might get nervous if we just winged it, and we might forget to say some things or leave stuff out, which would be a bummer.*
3	S3	*We each worked on our parts separately, but we practised together.*
4	S4	*When we practised within our group, we could give each other feedback, and everyone was pretty open to it.*
5	S5	*I wrote down my part and went over it a few times beforehand. But when it was showtime, we didn't stick to the script word for word. Writing it out and practicing meant we knew the material really well by then.*
6	S6	*At first, I missed some details in practice, and others would remind me, so I wouldn't forget the next time. During the speech, I had some key words written down to help me stay on track and speak smoothly. There were some differences between practice and final presentation, but overall, I think our group covered everything we wanted to say.*

In the excerpt above, the students elucidated their preparatory process and rationale prior to their group presentations. While there were slight variations in the preparation steps undertaken by each group for the final oral presentation, the general procedure followed is outlined below. Initially, to ensure that each group member had an opportunity to speak, they delineated different speaking parts in advance for the final presentation (serial No. 1). Subsequently, they prepared written manuscripts individually based on the segments they were responsible for (serial No. 3). On one hand, this allowed them to organise their thoughts and meticulously outline key points, and on the other hand, it served as

a foundation for oral practice to minimise omissions during the actual presentation. Next, during group discussions, they practised the entire presentation in the sequence agreed upon, where fellow members could assist in checking content and identifying overt issues in spoken expression (serial No. 4). Following the feedback from their peers, they could continue to refine their manuscripts and improve their respective presentation segments.

During the final class presentation, most group members adhered to the method previously discussed with Rachel. Rather than reading directly from a prepared script, they utilised keywords on their PowerPoint slides or their own prepared cue cards to assist with the final oral presentation (serial No. 5 & 6). There were still notable differences in oral performance among the students, which could be attributed to their varying levels of initial speaking proficiency, as well as the teacher's prior emphasis on different aspects of student performance during their daily English class. Consequently, even though many students adopted the same preparation method, the speaking quality of the presentation varied. Nonetheless, during interviews, many students expressed approval of the method involving preliminary discussion and written practice. Furthermore, Rachel also expressed satisfaction with their final presentations. This preparation process reveals a parallel between writing and speaking exercises, each complementing the other. Writing facilitates more fluent and complete oral output, while issues exposed during oral expression prompt students to further refine their written drafts. Similar perspectives are presented in other research (Akki & Larouz, 2021; Hirvela, 2004). The "writing to speak" process and outcomes displayed by the students in this study offer a window for future scholars in the field and could be further delineated through other research methodologies to clarify the effects of "writing to speak" in the language learning process.

When comparing students' preparation and presentation to the oral production criteria outlined in the CEFR framework (Council of Europe, 2001), it can be strongly argued that these approaches have contributed to enhancing certain

aspects of their oral proficiency. For instance, improving coherence and logical organisation in their oral expression, as well as enhancing accuracy and lexical range, align closely with the CEFR's expectations for language learners. However, this study also exhibits notable limitations, particularly in fostering students' spontaneity and improvisation during oral communication. Although students had the opportunity to respond to questions from their peers during group presentations, classroom observations reveal that the depth of interaction in this activity was limited. In most cases, peer feedback focused primarily on simple evaluations or emotional reactions to the presentations or their products rather than posing specific questions that could facilitate a deeper exploration of the content. Additionally, Rachel tended to focus her feedback on evaluating the group products as a whole rather than guiding the students' improvisational or reactive abilities during their presentations. This practice inadvertently reduced opportunities to cultivate students' on-the-spot oral interaction skills.

These circumstances can be attributed in part to constraints in teaching time. Since the PBLL presentations were scheduled early in the academic term, Rachel's regular English teaching curriculum left limited room for extensive real-time interaction or question-and-answer sessions for each group. As a result, students' on-the-spot linguistic production and reactive strategies were not fully demonstrated or developed during their presentations. This does not imply, however, that students lacked potential or progress in these areas; rather, these competencies were not adequately observed or fostered within the current PBLL. Future PBLL practices and research could place greater emphasis on assessing and developing students' real-time interaction skills during presentations.

Despite many students in most groups adhering to the "writing to speak" process, a minority exhibited alternative states of preparedness. Through classroom observation, I discerned a stark dichotomy among a small subset of students. The first type displayed a robust foundation in spoken English, likely having received additional oral training prior; the second type showed weaker oral skills coupled

with a lack of confidence. These two groups demonstrated notable differences in their preparation and presentation styles. The former could prepare without scripts, whereas the latter remained dependent on complete manuscripts even during presentations. Although this phenomenon was limited to a few individuals, I conducted interviews with two students exhibiting these characteristics and gleaned further insights. The following content shows excerpts from the interviews with these students:

Excerpt 5.7. Translation of Student Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*So, I'm kind of lazy when it comes to preparing. I just use keywords... I feel like writing it all down beforehand isn't necessary for me. It takes away some of that real feeling of conversation, so I didn't do it... I do think my speaking skills are a bit better than some of the others in class. Doing an oral presentation isn't that hard for me. I just need to jot down my main points, make sure I hit them all when I'm talking. We have a PowerPoint during the presentation, and I look at it and kind of know what I'm supposed to talk about, so I didn't bother writing out a full script.*
2	S1	*...I feel like my spoken English hasn't really improved much... There have been improvements in other areas though, like how I organise my thoughts and working with others.*
3	S2	*I get really nervous when I have to speak formally, even when practicing with my group, I get a bit tense. I've tried going without a script, but I kind of struggle to express myself. It's hard for me to put together complete sentences on the fly. I feel like I have to really think hard about how each English sentence should be, and that takes too much time. Plus, we had other stuff to do in the group, like making the video, so I didn't want to spend ages memorising a script... I realised I wasn't the smoothest talker, so on the day of the report, I brought a more complete script with me. I highlighted most of the important sentences and kept that script with me, and probably looked at it more than the others did, because facing most of the class, I get nervous, even shaky... and if I tried to memorise it, I'd probably speak super slow... To not hold everyone up, I decided to just bring my script to class.*
4	S2	*...I still struggle to speak without a script, so I don't think I've made much progress. However, I wasn't really able to express so much in front of the whole class before, but now I can manage to speak up and get through it all.*

The following conclusions could be drawn from the interviews: S1 required minimal preparation, merely needing to briefly organise his thoughts before being able to articulate them directly (serial No. 1); whereas S2, despite extensive preparation, still relied on scripts due to nervousness among other factors (serial

No. 3). The interviews reveal a significant difference in these participants' perceptions of their progress in oral proficiency. S1 believed that his advances during the learning process were primarily manifested in aspects such as information organisation and teamwork rather than in spoken expression, as he did not dedicate substantial effort to oral practice in the PBLL context (serial No. 2). S2 remained apprehensive about speaking without a script, with his practice sessions more closely resembling a reading exercise. Consequently, he also perceived little improvement in his spoken skills, although the experience did afford him more opportunities to present in front of their peers (serial No. 4). These cases illustrate that the PBLL process offers students considerable autonomy in their learning choices. However, due to their differing preparatory methods, the nature and extent of progress in English proficiency varied. Rachel did not impose mandatory outcomes on any specific aspect, resulting in significant variability. Despite both participants acknowledging limited progress in spoken language skills, they reported benefits in teamwork and other areas through PBLL (serial No. 2 & 4).

5.1.3.   Listening to Others' Speeches

During student group discussions and final presentations, an element of auditory input was involved. While students were engaged in oral output, their peers participated as listeners to this English expression. Listening comprehension is a critical component of foreign language acquisition. Magyar et al. (2022) indicated a significant positive correlation between listening skills and foreign language proficiency. In the current PBLL setting, although the instructional activities did not include a structured study of specific English auditory materials, students were exposed to English expressions from their peers during group discussions, teacher interactions, and other groups' presentations. However, the speakers' English expressions were not as accurate as those of native speakers, and even contained errors. From a beneficial perspective, this practice offers an authentic language learning environment: During the PBLL process, the dialogues emerged from genuine conversations among students as they collaboratively tackled real-world

issues related to product preparation and presentation. These discussions were not fabricated based on hypothetical scenarios from textbooks. In contrast, when students engage in dialogue activities based on textbook prompts during conventional English lessons, they might not genuinely find themselves in the described situations. Consequently, they may opt for vocabulary and content with which they are familiar to fulfil the exercise. However, in authentic environments, students inevitably confront unfamiliar challenges that they must address, prompting deeper reflection and problem-solving (Hymes, 2009). This engagement with real issues likely fosters more substantial cognitive and linguistic development than textbook-based simulations (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

According to Vygotsky's (1978b) Sociocultural Theory, language learning is a social interactive process where students develop linguistic abilities through communication and collaboration with others. Therefore, listening to English speeches by non-native speakers helps students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the practical application of English. On the other hand, this exposure might have adverse effects on students' English listening skills. Frequent exposure to inaccurate or erroneous English expressions could lead to the unconscious imitation of these errors, thus affecting their English acquisition. Krashen's (1994) input hypothesis suggests that language learners need exposure to language input slightly above their current level (i+1) to foster their language development. Insufficient proficiency or pervasive errors in the input language could impede the linguistic advancement of students. The following is an excerpt from student interview transcripts, showcasing their perspective on the English expressions heard during the learning process.

Excerpt 5.8. Translation of Student Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*During our interactions, we do use English for part of our conversations. However, when we find it difficult to express ourselves, we tend to switch back to our native language. As a result, I feel like I haven't had much practice with listening during this learning process. The only time I encounter English listening practice is when I look up specific English materials, which sometimes include videos*

		in English.
2	S2	*When I listen to my classmates, I find it easier to understand what they're trying to say, probably because they speak more simply. I feel like I can understand about 90% of what they say, but I struggle more with the listening materials used in class.*
3	R	*So, what do you think is the difference in your listening practice when you're listening to these two different sources? Or, which do you think is more beneficial for your listening skills: your classmates' spoken English or the listening exercises in class?*
4	S2	*I believe it's the listening exercises in class that are more beneficial. My classmates' expressions are quite basic, so they might not significantly help improve my listening skills.*
5	S3	*Sure, the classmates' presentations are detailed and can give us a deeper understanding of the video, but it's a lot of English to listen to at once, and some of them aren't that expressive. Like, some fellows speak in a monotone, without any intonation or variation, and that's when I start to lose focus.*

S1 noted that during this PBLL process, the opportunity for students to listen to English in class and discussions was limited due to their freedom to choose the language of discussion (serial No. 1). As a result, it can be argued that the design of this PBLL did not sufficiently cater to the practice of listening skills. S2 expressed that while interacting with peers or listening to other groups' presentations, students' spoken English was relatively simple. Although they could understand most of the content, merely listening to their peers' oral output offered limited improvement to their listening abilities (serial No. 2 & 4). My classroom observations revealed that students often experienced pauses and hesitations during their oral presentations, which might be attributed to the inherent difficulty of the target language and the need to organise and articulate their thoughts coherently. These disruptions in speech could potentially divert the listener's attention, aligning with John Sweller's (2011) Cognitive Load Theory. This theory posits that extraneous cognitive load can arise from the manner in which material is presented or from the inclusion of unnecessary information, such as unclear or monotonous speech and irrelevant images. As S3 highlighted, the lacklustre delivery in other students' presentations could distract listeners, causing even initially attentive students to disengage from their peers' oral outputs (serial No. 5). In summary, students indicated that the listening practice

within this PBLL was relatively weak. Below is an example of a student's English expression during a PBLL presentation, where the student's oral proficiency is approximately average for the class. Additionally, I selected a segment of a listening exercise from a regular course for comparison.

Excerpt 5.9. Comparison of Student Oral Output as Listening Material with Textbook Listening Material

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S	*...Now I'll talk about the food in Chongqing. Actually, I think people in Chongqing eat very spicy food. So I think if you like spicy food, you... you will definitely like here very much. However, there are also other choices, which is not spicy. So let me introduce to you one by one. Firstly, the most impressive thing is hotpot. Actually, it's very easy to cook, but in other play... place in China, it's not as delicious as here. So basically, the people can put those foods... they like into the... pot and the... and it taste very good... and you can prepare a small bowl to put some of your favourite spices and the... the most classic flavour is garlic and 麻油 (sesame oil). And then you pick up the... the food from the pot and into your bowl and it really taste very good. So this is one thing...*
2	Textbook	*From April 13th to April 15th, there is a big water fight all across Thailand. People use water guns. They pour buckets of water on everyone. They do this for Songkran—the Thai New Year celebration. Songkran and Chinese New Year have some traditions in common. People return home, clean their houses, and visit temples. However, they also pour water on their elders' hands to show respect. Today, they pour water on everyone else, too. It washes away all of the bad things from the past year. If you travel to Thailand in April, you can join in. Just make sure to wear a swimsuit under your clothes. You should also leave your valuable things in your hotel room. Then, get a water gun and find the crowds. During the celebration, someone might put powder on your face. If they do, that's a blessing. You should leave it there. It will protect you from bad luck. By the end of the day, you'll be soaked, but you won't care. It will be too much fun.*

By comparing students' spoken expressions with the listening materials in textbooks, distinct differences are evident in terms of vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and overall linguistic complexity. The textbook materials utilise more diverse and sophisticated vocabulary and syntactic structures. For instance, the simple and repetitive vocabulary found in students' spoken expressions (such as "very spicy", "very good") contrasts sharply with the advanced vocabulary in textbooks (such as "large-scale", "celebration", "traditions", "show respect",

"protect from bad luck"). Grammatically, students' spoken expressions predominantly feature simple sentences and repetitive vocabulary, often with grammatical errors (such as "it taste very good"). In contrast, textbook materials include complex sentences and various tenses (e.g., "there is a big water fight all across Thailand", "they pour buckets of water on everyone", "it washes away all of the bad things from the past year"). Additionally, the textbook materials demonstrate higher coherence and cohesion through the use of connectors and transitional phrases. Students' spoken expressions typically present information in a straightforward manner, lacking clear connectors, and often include pauses and repetitions (such as "you... you will definitely like here very much"). On the other hand, textbook materials employ cohesive and linking expressions (such as "however", "today", "just make sure", "then", "by the end of the day"), enhancing the flow of information.

The provision of input slightly above the students' current level, as suggested by Krashen (1994), may facilitate language development. Overall, the textbook listening materials aim to improve students' language skills by providing more complex language use, which contrasts with the simpler forms, repetitions, and grammatical errors reflected in most students' speech. In China, high school students' English listening skills generally surpass their speaking abilities (Zhang & Hope, 2021). Most of the English input in this PBLL comes from classmates' relatively basic spoken expressions, which is insufficient for listening training if used exclusively.

5.1.4. Selection of Reading Materials Focused on Serving Project Goals

During the initial and middle phases of the PBLL, most students consulted a wide variety of materials for reference. The search for pertinent materials extended beyond traditional written English resources to include images, videos, and more. Both student interviews and teacher's feedback indicate that, although students independently sought the necessary information, they engaged in a targeted

selection of materials they deemed useful for learning and application. The following excerpt is drawn from student reflections on the process of finding reading materials, shared during focus group discussions.

Excerpt 5.10. Translation of Focus Group Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	R	*How did your group go about reading materials?*
2	S1	*After we decided on our travel theme and what our group needed to do for the project, we picked out our own reading materials. We looked for relevant vocabulary and expressions, especially the terms we'd need for the travel topic we were about to present.*
3	S2	*It seems our group hasn't used many English resources, mainly because we're presenting about Chongqing* (a city in China), *so there's a wealth of information available in Chinese. We've found the information we needed and then translated it into English for our presentation.*
4	S3	*We did something similar. Since we're presenting about our hometown, we're already familiar with the content and just needed to focus on how to express it in English.*
5	S4	*Well, most of the English stuff online is probably aimed at people who read English regularly. Some of it's simple, but on the whole, it feels tougher than what we're used to in our current textbooks. We did filter a lot though, and these materials were just for reference. If something was too tough, we'd use translation tools to help us out.*
6	S5	*Most of the online materials we found were quite recent, which was helpful. Our group's video is somewhat like a travel guide, so we aimed to provide practical travel tips for our classmates. Outdated information wouldn't be very useful for this purpose.*
7	R	*How have the resources you collected been helpful to you?*
8	S1	*They've mainly helped us describe certain aspects more accurately during our presentation. However, we found it challenging to follow the original texts exactly because they were too "professional" and used complex vocabulary that we couldn't remember. So, we simplified the language using words we knew to make it easier to remember and understand during our presentations.*
9	S2	*We incorporated some video materials into our own video to enrich our content.*

During this focus group discussion, students from different groups shared their experiences in selecting reading materials. Despite variations in their approaches and content choices, all groups unanimously agreed that the chosen materials must be closely related to the PBLL theme of "travel" (serial No. 2). Each group gathered and selected references specific to the content of their final video presentation. Additionally, through classroom observations of this PBLL, it was

noted that the teacher, Rachel, facilitated weekly progress reports where group representatives would present their current stage of learning. This allowed Rachel to verify the appropriateness of the materials prepared by each group and provide suggestions.

Regarding the selection of reading materials, group members expressed several viewpoints. They pointed out that the materials they found online were not as precisely tailored to their learning level as the textbook content designed for their stage. Many original English websites presented a higher reading difficulty and contained more unfamiliar words (serial No. 5). However, the students mentioned that they could understand these new words with the help of translation software or dictionaries. Thus, despite the higher difficulty of these online resources, their comprehension was not significantly hindered. Notably, some students reported that after learning and digesting these materials, they would simplify the content during their presentations to ensure smooth expression and accommodate the understanding of their peers (serial No. 8). This process of information processing and adaptation was not a requirement from the teacher but rather an adjustment made by the students to suit their oral expression and the listening capabilities of others, showcasing their autonomous learning and critical thinking abilities. The students' thought processes were also evident in their selective screening of reading materials based on the specific content of their learning tasks and final products. For instance, some groups mentioned the timeliness of their travel guides: their video productions were intended to serve as usable travel guides for others, which led them to include current events to visit in their videos (serial No. 6). This preparation rendered their videos practically applicable, aligning with PBLL's emphasis on real-world application (Stoller & Myers, 2019).

However, some groups expressed differing views. Certain groups found Chinese resources to be more abundant and useful, hence they relied more on Chinese materials (serial No. 3). Additionally, some groups, particularly those introducing their hometowns, possessed sufficient information themselves, requiring only the

translation of existing knowledge into English and presenting it in the video format mandated by the project (serial No. 3 & 4). Given the project's requirement for a short video, some groups selected reading materials that included not only text but also videos they deemed directly applicable (serial No. 9). Although these video materials might not involve extensive English reading, they contributed to the richness of the project's content. Due to the varying preparation content and perspectives of each group, there were significant differences in their reading material preparation processes. Consequently, the target language reading exercise varied among groups: some engaged in less English reading, while others undertook more English reading, leading to discrepancies between groups. One of the reasons for this disparity can be attributed to the fact that Rachel did not impose strict requirements on the content of the materials prepared by the students for this PBLL. Chapter VII's data analysis places greater emphasis on analysing the teacher's actions and perspectives.

5.2. Theme Two: Plurilingual Skill in This Project-based Language Learning Context

In traditional English classrooms, the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are often regarded as the most crucial aspects by educators and are the primary focus for students in most examinations. Consequently, other competencies such as the ability to tackle complex tasks, deep cultural understanding, and thorough contemplation on specific topics may not receive adequate attention. Although the current General Senior High School Curriculum Standards in China increasingly emphasise students' comprehensive abilities and cognitive abilities (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017), a significant gap often persists between these curricular ideals and classroom realities. This phenomenon could be largely attributed to the powerful washback effect of China's National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao). Given that the examination places a heavy emphasis on listening, reading, and writing, teachers

are compelled to concentrate their instruction on these test-focused skills. Consequently, the development of speaking ability and other comprehensive competencies, despite being mandated by the curriculum, is often relegated to a secondary priority.

However, during the PBLL process, due to the requirement for collaborative group work and the production of outputs connected to real-life contexts, the learning content and methods diverged from traditional approaches. As a result, students engaged in PBLL were exposed to additional learning content beyond the target language skills. These contents align closely with the plurilingual approach (Coyle et al., 2023; Meyer, Coyle, et al., 2015). While such aspects might be touched upon in traditional classrooms, they are not typically prioritised. In the PBLL context, however, these elements potentially occupied a substantial portion of students' time and effort. This finding is supported by post-lesson interviews and through classroom observations and comparisons with regular courses. In Subtheme Five, I explore the culture contents that might be underemphasised in conventional English classrooms and how they manifest specifically within PBLL environments.

Additionally, this study conceptualises a student's linguistic repertoire as a dynamic and developmental entity. In this conceptualisation, the existence of distinct linguistic systems (e.g., Chinese, English) is acknowledged. It is posited that when acquiring a new language, a learner can leverage their knowledge of existing languages to facilitate this process. The practical manifestation of this cross-linguistic leveraging, particularly during the language learning phase, is observable through translanguaging practices.

A critical distinction is made in this study which diverged from some models of translanguaging. In situations where learning a new language is not the only goal, such as routine interactions among native speakers, it is argued that a speaker's additional linguistic resources are not necessarily activated or interfering when

using their first language. For this reason, this study challenges the notion of a fully integrated, singular repertoire that is perpetually active across all contexts. Instead, it aligns with a plurilingual perspective that sees a student's repertoire as a constellation of related, yet distinguishable, linguistic systems, from which resources can be strategically and context-dependently deployed. In Subtheme Six, an in-depth exploration is conducted regarding students' deep and authentic language use during the learning process.

5.2.1. Cultural Understanding of the "Travel" Topic

Following a collaborative discussion with the participating teacher, Rachel, we decided to establish "travel" as the topic for this PBLL. The primary rationale for selecting travel as a topic lies in its direct relevance to the learning of cultural components mandated by the Chinese General Senior High School Curriculum Standards (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). According to Kramsch (1993), culture is an indispensable fifth language skill in language learning, in addition to listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, classroom observations reveal that in everyday English classes, the teacher predominantly focuses on students' basic language skills. Hymes (1972) posited that communicative competence includes not only linguistic abilities but also a comprehensive understanding and adept application of the sociocultural context in which the language is used. The requirements set forth by PBLL for students to complete predetermined project products may aid in enhancing their integrated problem-solving abilities. However, careful consideration is necessary in selecting learning content to ensure the inclusion of cultural learning and the cultivation of cultural awareness.

Given that this was Rachel's first time guiding students through a PBLL project, she opted for travel as a topic, recognising its straightforward approach to integrating cultural studies. Throughout this learning process, students engaged with cultural information related to the arts, customs, habits, and beliefs of various regions or countries. Through classroom observations and post-class

interviews, I gathered insights into the students' understanding of and engagement with cultural concepts, as well as their overall cultural experiences during this project.

Excerpt 5.11. Classroom Observation (Breakout Room Discussion)

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	我们要不要加一个文化点，比如斋月？但是要解释清楚，不然听众不懂。 [English translation: Should we add a cultural point, like Ramadan? But we must explain it clearly, otherwise the audience won't understand.]
2	S2	斋月中文解释是"白天不吃不喝"，但是也不是完全这样。要说从日出到日落。 [English translation: In Chinese it is "no eating or drinking in the daytime", but it is not exactly that. It is from sunrise to sunset.]
3	S3	那英文可以这样说：*During Ramadan, people fast from sunrise to sunset*. [English translation: Then in English we can say: During Ramadan, people fast from sunrise to sunset.]
4	S2	还要加一句尊重，比如不要在他们面前吃东西。中文先写，再翻译。 [English translation: We should add a respect tip, like don't eat in front of them. Write it in Chinese first, then translate.]
5	S1	*ok*，这个文化点很实用，也跟 *travel tips* 贴合。 [English translation: Ok, this cultural point is practical and fits our travel tips.]

Excerpt 5.11 demonstrates translanguaging as cultural mediation. Students used Mandarin to negotiate the meaning and boundaries of a culturally embedded concept, then produced concise English formulations that could be communicated to an audience. This supports the discussion in Section 5.2.1 that cultural understanding was developed through collaborative meaning making across languages rather than through single language processing.

Excerpt 5.12. Translation of Student Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*Every group's projects really broadened my cultural knowledge and horizons. They made me want to visit those places they talked about and experience it for myself.*
2	S1	*I discovered a lot of cultures that are different from what I'm used to, and I found that really interesting.*
3	S2	*The cultural info from other English countries that the other groups showed us was often shared from some pretty cool and unique perspectives.*
4	S3	*When we were gathering info about local cultures, we looked through a ton of stuff and had to pick what to show. We didn't present everything.*
5	S4	*Some group projects weren't that engaging, so I might not*

Through classroom observations and the collection and analysis of group project submissions, I observed the extensive range of content their work encompassed. This included specific music, history, art, festivals, traditions, and food from the target regions they chose. As discussed in the previous section, they engaged in extensive information searching and preparation (serial No. 4). These culturally rich products have the potential to enhance students' awareness, curiosity, and interest in other cultures, aiding learners to view the world from different perspectives and understand cultural diversity (Huang, 2023). Notably, when some groups introduced cultural content related to English-speaking countries, they provided rich and immersive ways to understand and participate in the culture associated with the language (serial No. 3). Even if some students might not had been particularly interested in the cultural content presented by other groups (serial No. 5), they could still benefit from the cultural information gathered within their own group's preparation of their travel content. The process of viewing different groups' videos and encountering various cultural messages also reflected a cross-cultural learning experience for the students (serial No. 1 & 2). In the aforementioned interviews, the students' positive feedback regarding cultural learning stemmed not only from the extensive coverage of cultural content within the learning material, but also from the varied presentation methods employed. During the final classroom presentations, the students utilised diverse forms of materials, including videos, images and so forth (one group even presented a skit for their presentation). These varied and unconventional presentation methods, distinct from the standard textbooks provided by teachers in regular classes, likely enhanced the appeal of the learning materials and consequently sparked the students' interest. In the subsequent Chapter VI, I explore in detail the students' learning motivations and how the different strategies they employed influenced their learning experiences.

The following content is extracted from manuscripts preserved during one group's

discussions, showcasing specific aspects of cultural learning they engaged in:

[2. Sights]

Best sight: Visit Colonne di San Lorenzo 科隆·迪·圣洛伦索

Day 1: Discovering Milan's Artistic Treasures

Milan is home to many world-renowned art galleries and museums. Start your

morning at the Pinacoteca di Brera, a gallery housing a collection of old master

paintings. Here, you can view works by Bellini, Canaletto, and Rubens. In the

afternoon, visit the prestigious Gallerie d'Italia to see its collection of Italian masters.

Day 2: Exploring Beyond Milan City Center 探索米兰市郊郊

Head to the outskirts of Milan to visit some of the city's most picturesque

neighborhoods. Navigate through narrow streets and discover hidden gems like the

Chiesa di San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore. This church is known for its beautiful

frescoes and tranquil atmosphere.

Day 3: Excursion to Lombardy's Scenic Country side 去伦巴第风景优美的乡村

Spend your final day exploring Lombardy's idyllic countryside. Head to Lake Como, a

picturesque lake located north of Milan. Here, you can take a boat ride and admire the

beautiful scenery. Another option is to visit the small town of Bergamo, located just

outside Milan. Explore this quaint town's old quarter and enjoy its charming

atmosphere.

168

Day 5 : Watch Milan Derby 观看米兰德比

Milan is famous for its culture of the football. AC Milan and Inter Milan are the great football team. In their home field — SAN siro stadium, there will be a derby in the Serie (意甲).

圣西罗体育场是AC米兰和国际米兰的主场，可容纳80,000人，它是意大利最大的体育场。

Cause Milan is not Milan

Italy ya is Milan ____ Ibra

With this travel plan, you'll be able to make the most out of your visit to Milan and

experience all that this vibrant city has to offer. So pack your bags and prepare for an

unforgettable adventure in Milan!

在上述旅游计划中，提到了以下几个著名景点：

Milan Cathedral（米兰大教堂）：也被称为 Duomo，是米兰的标志性建筑之一，也是意大利最大的哥特式教堂之一。

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II（维托里奥·埃马努埃莱二世长廊）：这是一个历史悠久的购物廊，里面有许多高级时装店和咖啡馆。

Pinacoteca di Brera（布雷拉美术馆）：这里收藏了一系列由伦巴第艺术学院捐赠的绘画作品，展示了意大利老大师们的作品。

Chiesa di San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore（圣毛里齐奥大教堂）：这座教堂以其美丽的壁画和宁静的环境而闻名。

Lake Como（科莫湖）：这是意大利北部的一个美丽湖泊，周围环绕着许多历史悠久的别墅和花园。

Bergamo（贝尔加莫）：这是一个迷人的小城，拥有许多历史建筑和美丽的公园。

这些景点代表了米兰及其周边地区的文化和自然风光，每个景点都有其独特的魅力，值得游客前去一探究竟。

daoLen®

169

Tips:
1. Respect the religion of everyone in Milan.
The population of milan is the same as that of Italy as whole, and the most people
is Catholic.
Greater Milan is also home to the protestant, orthodox, jewish and Muslim. Hindu.
Sikh and buddhist communities.

2. Learning the culture.
When we visit Milan, not only become a traveller, but become a
learner. Milan has a vorious of culture, you should ev

[3. Food]

Milan Food Guide

Milan, the fashion capital of Italy, is also a city with a rich culinary tradition. Here is a
food guide to help you discover the delicious flavors of Milan and its surrounding
regions.

1. **Pizza:**
   Milan is famous for its thin-crust pizza, which is cooked to perfection in a
   wood-fired oven. Lombardi's, located in the city center, is one of the most
   renowned pizza restaurants in Milan.
2. **Risotto:**
   Risotto, a creamy rice dish cooked with vegetables or meat, is a Lombardy
   region specialty. Try the Risotto alla Milanese at Trattoria Toscana or Risotto
   al Salto at L'Orto di Lombardia for an authentic taste of Milan.
3. **Polenta:**
   Polenta, a cornmeal dish, is a traditional Lombardy dish that was once
   considered peasants' food. Today, it is a favorite among foodies and is served
   with various toppings. Visit Antica Corte Pallavicina for their signature
   Polenta Toscana.
4. **Italian Beef:**
   Milan is famous for its cured beef, known as carpaccio or chilcano. This dish
   is served with raw onions, capers, and lemon juice. Try it at Trattoria
   Toscana or Luini.

Hope this plan can help our friend, even everyone.
Thanks a lot

Figure 5.1. Manuscript from Student Group Discussion

The manuscript compiled by the students in this group was fashioned into a format
resembling a travel plan. This plan not only reflected their practical skills in
devising a travel itinerary but also demonstrated their profound understanding of
cultural learning. In the plan, they not only listed specific travel items but also

emphasised the importance of respecting religious diversity. The students' plans to experience Milan's art, history, and unique culinary culture exemplified their desire for a deeper understanding and experience of the destination's culture. The mention of Milan's contemporary football culture alongside traditional artistic treasures illustrated the students' recognition of culture as a concept encompassing both historical traditions and modern practices. In the paradigm of Sociocultural Theory, culture is regarded as the foundation of language and cognition (Vygotsky, 1978a).

The approach to cultural learning in this PBLL did not solely rely on specific topics predetermined by the teacher, although the topic of travel indeed directed students' attention towards relevant cultural information. Instead, during the process of information collection and integration, the specific content that students decided upon was not dictated by the teacher. The target language acted as a bridge, becoming the medium for both the input and output of information as students engaged with cultural content. This perspective is akin to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which emphasises not the selection of specific content or language, but rather involves deeper and more complex learning concepts, including the enhancement of students' cognitive abilities and intercultural understanding (Meyer et al., 2015). Through such collection, curation, and output of information, students were able to learn about different cultures in practice, fostering a pathway to develop a global outlook and cross-cultural communication skills (Bajec et al., 2025; Coyle et al., 2023; Xin et al., 2025).

5.2.2. The Integration of Language Triptych and Translanguaging

In this section, I continue to employ the concept of the Language Triptych from CLIL to elucidate some student behaviours in the classroom. This concept divides the language needed for learning into the "language of learning", "language for learning", and "language through learning" (Coyle et al., 2010). This part will provide explanation through specific instances of students' language use in the

classroom. Unlike the hard CLIL discussed in literature review, where the Language Triptych is typically associated with the target language, in this study, the Language Triptych demonstrated by students during the PBLL process was not confined to the target language. Students frequently utilised a translanguaging approach and their native language in their learning process. Thus, this section first explicated the manifestation of the Language Triptych in the PBLL context through classroom excerpts, followed by student interviews that revealed the differences from hard CLIL perspectives.

Excerpt 5.13 shows the emergence of functional language for learning during project work. Mandarin enabled efficient negotiation of reasoning and decision making, while key English discourse moves (for example, "what if, in my opinion, because") were introduced and rehearsed as interactional resources. This excerpt provides interactional support for the discussion on how students developed language for learning through collaborative talk.

Excerpt 5.13. Classroom Observation (Breakout Room Discussion)

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*我觉得我们第二天安排太满了，要不要删一个景点？* [English translation: I think our Day 2 plan is too full. Should we remove one attraction?]
3	S2	*Keep the museum, because it is indoors and easier. 然后把市场删掉。* [English translation: Keep the museum because it is indoors and easier, and then remove the market.]
4	S1	*可是市场也很有文化。What if we move it to Day 1 evening?* [English translation: But the market is also cultural. What if we move it to Day 1 evening?]
5	S3	*这个方案好。我们英文可以说: In my opinion, the market is better at night.* [English translation: That plan is good. In English we can say: In my opinion, the market is better at night.]
6	S1	*Because the lights and atmosphere are better. 中文先写理由，再翻译。* [English translation: Because the lights and atmosphere are better. Write the reason in Chinese first, then translate.]
7	S2	*ok，我把中文理由整理一下: 夜市更安全，人更多。英文可以说: It feels safer when there are more people.* [English translation: Ok, I organise the Chinese reasons: it is safer, more people. In English: It feels safer when there are more people.]

The Language Triptych is related to language learning but differs from students'

language learning in traditional English courses, as it focuses on language content that transcends the simple division of language skills into listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Instead, it involves more I integrated language use (Coyle, 2015). The following excerpt was taken from the presentation of a student in a group whose video theme was Japanese city landmarks. This student was the second in their group to present and explain. During the presentation, they used a PowerPoint to display some video screenshots and bilingual information in both Chinese and English.

Excerpt 5.14. Group Presentation of Classroom Observation

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S	*Thank you, my friend, Tracy. You've just gave us a very detailed introduction and overview of Japan.*
3	S	*And as Tracy just said, we divided our video into different part by the different cities. And now I will start by talking about Tokyo.*
4	S	*Actually, this city is a crazy mix of the future and the past.*
5	S	*First, let me introduce you some famous tourist attraction in Tokyo.*
6	S	*And I think the most place that I'm interested in is 秋叶原 (Akihabara).*
7	S	*So there are a lot of video games. Even though I didn't been to there before, I know it's very famous.*
8	S	*It's like the heart of Japan's otaku culture. You can find many comics, something like this.*
9	T	*otaku, 日本的御宅族, otaku culture 可以表示动漫文化. Go on, please."*
10	S	*And then I'd like to talk about the 浅草. There is a very beautiful temple. It's like stepping back in time.*
11	S	*Next,…*

This brief segment of the student's English oral presentation exemplified how the various aspects of the Language Triptych intertwine and manifest during spoken output. In this project, the "language of learning" specifically referred to specialised vocabulary related to travel. In Excerpt 5.11, the student employed specialised terms such as "tourist attraction", "otaku culture", and "temple", which were frequently encountered in the study of Japanese culture and geography (serial No. 5, 8 & 10). These terms represent the professional words to understanding the cultural and geographical context of Japan. The "language for learning" encompasses the linguistic tools necessary for logical and fluent

expression, such as connectors indicating continuity, contrast, cause-effect relationships, and so forth. In the presented material, the speaker uses connectors like "and now", "first", "and then", "next", and "even though" (serial No. 3, 5, 7, 10 & 11), structuring their speech and guiding the audience through the various segments, signifying the beginning and end of each part and introducing contrasting ideas. Not only this student, but others as well demonstrated varying degrees of linguistic skill usage throughout their presentations. Due to the preparation of written drafts and oral practice, instances of semantic or logical dissonance in their presentations were rare. Although their written drafts and oral practice were not guided by the teacher in advance this time, they managed to integrate necessary linguistic techniques into their usage based on their current English knowledge. The student's presentation on Tokyo's landmarks illustrated the development of language capability through practical context and application while simultaneously enhancing language skills through content learning, embodying "language through learning". It is evident that the three dimensions of the Language Triptych mutually support each other. Learners develop the language tools needed to explain new knowledge (language for learning) through the study and organisation of specialised content (language of learning), and in this process, enhance their language skills through practice (language through learning). These three dimensions collectively create a mutually reinforcing learning environment, providing learners with the potential to enhance their language proficiency, develop sophisticated cognitive skills, and acquire subject-specific knowledge simultaneously.

In this PBLL process, despite reflecting the Language Triptych inherent in CLIL, there were certain differences in its application compared to hard CLIL. I further elucidated this through excerpts from the following focus group discussion:

Excerpt 5.15. Translation of Focus Group Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	R	*Under what circumstances do you use English to communicate during your studies? And in what situations do you use Chinese?*

2	S1	*Our group communicates entirely in Chinese when discussing the video production process. We don't switch to English for these discussions.*
3	S2	*Same here. For example, when we discuss editing techniques or the specific placement of video clips, we use Chinese.*
4	S3	*…Yes, because video technology is already a new subject for us, and we need some time to get familiar with it. If we encounter communication issues in English, it feels like it would take even more of our time.*
5	S4	*…When it comes to content related to the topic, like adding English subtitles to our group video, we use English. However, we initially prefer to discuss the general ideas and framework in Chinese, as we are not familiar with some of the specific terms. Gradually, we switch some words to English, often using dictionaries or asking peers for help. Eventually, we present the content entirely in English.*
6	S5	*During the final group presentation, we mostly introduce everything in English. If we can't recall a specific word, we use Chinese instead. Sometimes, Rachel helps us with the English term.*
7	S6	*…when we introduce Japanese place names, we directly use Chinese because the teacher and classmates might not know the English equivalent. It's easier and we probably won't need to use those terms in English very often.*

In CLIL, the Language Triptych process is often conducted in the target language. However, during this PBLL process, students were unable to fully express the required content in the target language due to cognitive and linguistic limitations in some aspects of the Language Triptych (serial No. 4). Consequently, the use of the mother tongue emerged, a point less frequently discussed in previous scholarly research of the Language Triptych.

Combining interview content and incorporating students' language use into the Language Triptych framework yields further insights. When dealing with "language of learning" content related to the travel topic, students initially may not be familiar with certain English expressions (serial No. 5). In such cases, they started by communicating in Chinese (code-switching), then used dictionaries or other tools and asked peers for assistance with English comprehension, ultimately using English to express related content in their presentations (serial No. 5). During their final presentations, if students could not recall a specific English word, they would often substitute it with its Chinese equivalent and continue speaking in English without interruption (code-meshing) (serial No. 6). In such instances, Rachel

sometimes found it necessary to provide the English term, guiding students on how to express the corresponding vocabulary (serial No. 6). However, for certain specific terms, such as uncommon place names, students believed these are rarely encountered in everyday English usage, and therefore preferred to use Chinese (serial No. 7). This is also reflected in Excerpt 5.14, where students used the Chinese name for Akihabara in Japan. Students felt that the likelihood of needing these terms again in future studies was low, so they did not invest time in mastering the target language equivalents. When dealing with "language for learning" content related to group collaboration and video technology, students tended to communicate directly in Chinese (serial No. 2 & 3), without further consideration of the English expressions used (serial No. 2). Although some "language for learning" content was conveyed in Chinese, Excerpt 5.14. demonstrates that in the final presentation, students were able to use logical connectors, indicating they had gained some skills in target language presentation techniques. Regarding "language through learning", it is evident that students progressed from an initial lack of vocabulary knowledge to understanding and using the terms effectively in their final presentations through project preparation (serial No. 5). This indicates that even when using students' first language during their study process, their target language abilities could still improve, albeit with variations among different groups and individuals.

Returning to the students' manuscript shown previously in Figure 5.1, translanguaging provides a valuable complementary perspective to the Language Triptych framework for interpreting students' linguistic practices. Specifically, students strategically incorporate Chinese annotations, budget notations, and visual symbols within a predominantly English-written text. This exemplifies translanguaging practice as a dynamic mobilisation of learners' full linguistic and semiotic repertoire beyond simple switches between distinct languages (Li, 2018; Li & García, 2022). Rather than mere linguistic translation, students deployed diverse resources to effectively support information retrieval, audience engagement, and meaning making. Furthermore, the interplay between linguistic

notes, numerical labels, and visual symbols demonstrates how students transcended traditional linguistic boundaries, constructing novel spaces for cognitive activity and intercultural interaction. Thus, translanguaging not only enhances communicative effectiveness but also reveals students' sophisticated understanding of language as an integrated and transformative process (Li & García, 2022; Lu et al., 2025).

5.3. Summary of This Chapter

This chapter examines the specific learning experiences of students in PBLL. From the student perspective, PBLL, which stresses active participation and student-centred learning, stands in clear contrast to the teacher-oriented pedagogy commonly seen in traditional English classes. This shift changed the focus of language skill development during the learning process and enhanced students' capacity for language use in multicultural contexts. Nevertheless, the chapter also identifies certain constraints, such as the challenge of promoting balanced development in all four language skills, as well as the difficulty in ensuring consistency in learning outcomes due to the diversity of projects chosen by students themselves.

The chapter explores two themes: (1) progress in productive language skills, and (2) plurilingual skill in the PBLL context. First, regarding productive language skills, the chapter discusses students' improvements in speaking and writing and the limitations therein. Classroom observations and interviews reveal that PBLL offers more authentic opportunities for oral practice. During the preparation of written drafts and oral presentations, students composed their own manuscripts, engage in group feedback processes, and thereby enhanced both the completeness and coherence of their expressions, as well as their teamwork abilities. However, because students asked relatively few questions during the final presentations, presenters were not sufficiently prompted to provide impromptu explanations.

Furthermore, teacher feedback tended to focus on project content rather than targeted questioning, which limited students' opportunities to further develop flexibility and spontaneity in oral communication.

Second, in relation to plurilingual skill, PBLL moves beyond the traditional classroom's single-minded focus on language skills by integrating language learning with cultural content and real-world applications. Through collecting and filtering materials relevant to their chosen project topics, students deepened their understanding of the target language and broadened their exposure to cultural diversity and strengthened their capacity for critical reflection. The chapter further points out that, although students often relied on their native language for complex technical discussions in PBLL, such a strategy did not hinder the improvement of their target language proficiency. Rather, it demonstrates a flexible ability to transfer and integrate language resources. In addition, the chapter illustrates PBLL's potential to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. For instance, by independently selecting materials, designing content, and converting it into language output, students develop multilayered cognitive competencies. This process transcends mere language training, serving as a platform to cultivate cross-cultural understanding and practical skills.

This chapter also underlines certain areas for improvement in actual classroom settings, such as insufficient scaffolding for impromptu speaking and limited emphasis on listening and reading comprehension. These observations offer valuable insights and implications for future research and instructional practices. Drawing on classroom observations, student work, and interview data, the chapter demonstrates that language learning in PBLL is not merely an individual cognitive activity but is embedded in interactions and collaboration among students as well as between the teacher and students. Sociocultural Theory supports the phenomenon of students enhancing their language competencies through collaboration in PBLL contexts and also highlights how collaboration between Rachel and me can optimise instructional methods. These points form the core of

the present study and are further discussed in chapters VI and VII. The upcoming chapter VI delves into how learner motivation, collaborative behaviour, and reflective practice in PBLL collectively shaped students' overall learning experiences.

6. Chapter VI: Students' Learning Motivations and Strategies

6.0. Introduction to This Chapter

Chapter VI extends the response to RQ1 by unpacking the motivational, collaborative, and reflective processes through which students appropriated the PBLL. The previous chapter primarily focuses on discussing the student-centred nature of the learning experiences observed in this PBLL context, based on an analysis of students' learning processes. It highlights two core aspects: the learning process, which was predominantly centred on productive language skills, and the development of plurilingual skills within the PBLL context. These discussions provide a foundation for this chapter's exploration into the reasons behind students' learning experiences, which differ from those encountered in their regular classroom settings.

Specifically, Section 6.1 traces the internalisation of initially extrinsic incentives into progressively autonomous forms of regulation within the Self-Determination Theory framework. Section 6.2 analyses the interactional and organisational dynamics that characterised collaboration between students and between students and the teacher, highlighting responsibility sharing, critical negotiation, and conflict management. Section 6.3 explores how ongoing individual and group reflection supported goal setting and task completion.

This chapter particularly emphasises students' subjective experiences. Despite the variability and occasional contradictions in these experiences, trends in the majority of students' subjective feelings were identified through interviews and classroom observations, thereby facilitating further contemplation on future improvements for the practical application of PBLL in Chinese secondary education contexts.

6.1. Theme Three: The Internalisation Process of Student Learning Motivation

Throughout the entire PBLL process, every student behaviour and decision could be traced back to a corresponding underlying cause. During one-on-one interviews, many students explained their sustained or specific behaviours in terms of their learning motivation. Beyond that, classroom observations and teacher feedback further revealed insights into these motivational factors. Dörnyei (2001) posited that attending to and leveraging student motivation is essential for facilitating behaviour aimed at achieving individual goals. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation can be initially categorised into two main types: intrinsic and extrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation, derived from learners' inherent interest in or enjoyment of the learning activity itself, serves as a critical driver for sustained engagement and deeper exploration. Extrinsic motivation, by contrast, is associated with external rewards or pressures, such as grades, certificates, or social recognition.

However, the interviews indicate that the boundary between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is not always clear-cut; instead, these two types of motivation can intermingle, or extrinsic motivation can transform into intrinsic motivation. This finding aligns with previous research (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Howard et al., 2021). To examine the factors underlying this process, the current study analyses the types of motivation students mentioned and explores the internalisation of motivation and the reasons why this internalisation occurs. Notably, some motivational factors influencing students' learning, as discussed in their interviews, were rarely manifested in their everyday English learning experiences. This suggests that PBLL might provide students with motivational drivers that are less accessible in conventional English-learning contexts.

The classroom structure guided by external forces from the participating teacher Rachel and me. While the study ensured that students had the autonomy to choose

whether to participate, a motivational mechanism was introduced to encourage greater participation. Specifically, we aligned the project with the students' existing holiday study plans by offering it as a substitute for their traditional written English holiday assignments. As a result, the initial motivation for students to engage in this learning activity can be categorised as extrinsic motivation. However, over the course of the learning process, some students' external drivers gradually became internalised, evolving into autonomous learning motivation. Informed by the motivational framework of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985), this study developed a new conceptual diagram (see Figure 6.1) that integrated data from this study to illustrate the students' motivational internalisation process.
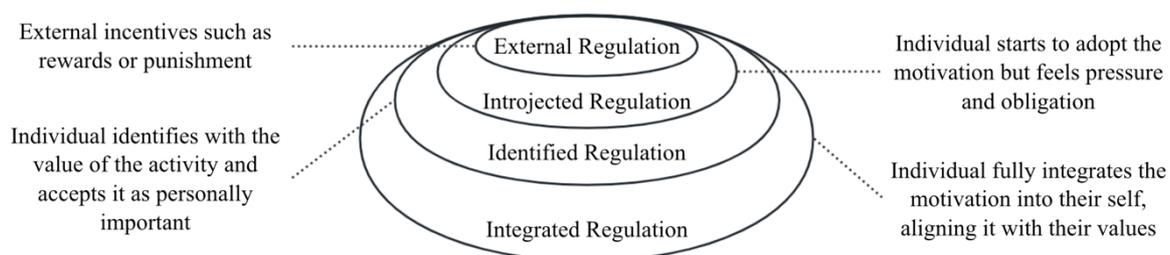
Figure 6.1. Process of Extrinsic Motivation Internalisation

Building upon SDT, Figure 6.1 illustrates the progressive internalisation of extrinsic motivation across four levels. Research indicates that, as forms of extrinsic motivation move closer to intrinsic motivation along this continuum, their capacity to nurture sustained and meaningful learner engagement tends to increase (Li et al., 2024). This progression should not be interpreted as a trade off because the different regulatory forms can coexist within learners and jointly influence their motivation. These four motivational states are not discrete or mutually exclusive; rather, they may coexist and collectively influence sustained and deeper student engagement over time.

In the Chinese secondary education system, students are typically required to complete written assignments across various subjects during their winter and summer breaks. These assignments serve to reinforce the knowledge acquired in the previous semester and to provide a preview of the upcoming curriculum.

Recognising this characteristic, Rachel and I designed an incentive mechanism within this study: participating students were given the option to forgo their written English assignments and instead fulfil their English review and preparation tasks through participation in this PBLL activity. This research design was not driven by the students' intrinsic needs but rather by an external incentive orchestrated by Rachel and me. The study's participation information sheet clearly outlined the potential benefits students could gain from engaging in the project. It clarifies that these benefits would, at a minimum, incorporate the advantages from their previous written assignments, while also holding the potential for a broader range of more rewarding experiences.

Although the initial motivation for students might have been extrinsic, this study served as a substitute for traditional assignments, maintaining the educational objective while potentially enhancing the learning experience through increased novelty and engagement. For the students, this project reinforced their English language skills and allowed them to explore a new learning method. Classroom observations and student interview data revealed specific behaviours and perspectives that indicated how students gradually internalised their learning motivation throughout the project. These findings provide insights into the mechanisms underlying students' motivational shifts when engaging with innovative language learning methods.

6.1.1. External Regulation as an Initial Motivational Catalyst

Within the framework of SDT, extrinsic motivation is categorised into four distinct types: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (Figure 6.1). These types represent a continuum along which extrinsic motivation progressively transitions towards intrinsic motivation. At the lowest level of this continuum is external regulation, where an individual's actions are primarily driven by external factors, such as rewards or punishments. The

following excerpt from a student interview provides insight into the initial motivations that prompted students to participate in this study:

> *…Volunteering means no summer English homework, which is pretty cool. We usually get loads of writing tasks over the summer, but they're nowhere near as fun as this project.*

From the perspective of external regulation, the excerpt illustrates that the student's motivation to participate in the project was partly influenced by the external reward of avoiding summer English homework. This sentiment was echoed by several other students, who also expressed a desire to alleviate the burden of their typical summer assignments by engaging in the project.

6.1.2. Introjected Regulation—Pressure and Competition

Extrinsic motivation encompasses not only direct rewards or punishments but also behaviours driven by the desire to avoid negative emotions, such as anxiety or feelings of being left behind (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of academic settings, the pressure of competition and the resultant anxiety may serve as factors influencing students' decisions to engage in this PBLL initiative:

Excerpt 6.1. Translation of Student Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*Since I know our English teacher will be directly involved in this learning project, I don't want to miss out on the extra guidance she'll offer during the holidays, so I'm keen to join in.*
2	S2	*Seeing everyone else putting in their best effort to complete the task, I feel compelled to do the same. I don't want to be the one lagging behind in the team. I don't want to let the team down.*
3	S3	*After getting a rough idea of the progress of other groups in class, sometimes I realise our team might be falling behind a bit. In such cases, we make it a priority to catch up as soon as we learn about the progress of other groups. Conversely, if we're already ahead, we aim to make the aspects we've already completed even better and more polished. Therefore, listening to the reports of other group members is also helpful for us.*

Although the informed consent form provided to students explicitly stated that

non-participation in this research project would not affect their academic evaluation, and that Rachel would not differentiate between those who participated and those who did not, students may still experience pressure to participate. This pressure may stem, in part, from students' concerns that by not participating, they might miss out on additional learning opportunities offered to participants by the teacher. Consequently, they may fear falling behind academically compared to their peers (serial No. 1). This phenomenon highlights the complexity of student decision-making in academic research participation, where perceived opportunities and competitive pressures can subtly influence voluntary engagement, despite assurances of impartiality and equal treatment.

The involvement of their English teacher Rachel might enhance students' recognition of and engagement with this learning activity (serial No. 1). As mentioned, this PBLL implementation mostly took place during students' holidays, a time traditionally devoid of teacher involvement, with students completing assignments independently after tasks were set before the break. For this project, students could not only study English during the holiday but also have teacher supervision. Although students are the primary learners in PBLL, teachers can still play a supportive role (Sun & Zhu, 2023). Students encountering any issues during the learning process could consult and discuss these with the familiar teacher at any time. The abundance of time available during the holiday period for students to independently choose and creatively engage with learning content was a key reason for scheduling the project during this time. However, for Rachel, although expressing interest in this learning method, the additional workload during holidays was acknowledged as a burden. No additional rewards were provided for Rachel's participation in this study, only the opportunity for deeper engagement with the learning method. The thoughts of the teacher Rachel is further discussed in Chapter VII. Interviews with students reveals that despite PBLL empowering them as the main agents of learning, they still required and valued teacher support, which provided reassurance and motivation to embark on new learning endeavours.

Furthermore, the PBLL was conducted in a collaborative group setting, wherein students exhibited a certain degree of competitiveness. This competitive awareness can be categorised into intra-group competition and inter-group competition. Vandercruysse et al. (2013) found that while competition had little correlation with academic performance, it could influence aspects of students' learning motivation. Despite being informed that their performance would not affect their academic grades, most students still approached the course with a serious and positive attitude. A healthy sense of competition among students can enhance focus on learning quality (Bates & MacWhinney, 2014). In this PBLL, intra-group competitiveness was primarily reflected in students' self-imposed performance standards. When students observed their peers investing significant effort into the group project, they might experience feelings of guilt and a reluctance to be perceived as "the one lagging behind" within the team (serial No. 2). On the other hand, inter-group competitiveness was manifested through comparisons and adjustments between different groups. Through weekly progress updates, students gained insights into the progress of other groups. This allowed them to adjust their own group's pace accordingly, ensuring they do not fall behind the average and, when necessary, accelerated their progress to keep up (serial No. 3).

Research indicates that healthy competition can serve as a critical impetus for students to develop skills and pursue personal goals while providing objective feedback that helps them assess their performance in the task (Reeve, 2023). The two forms of competitiveness reported by students can both be considered as attitudes conducive to constructive competition. They drive students to elevate their self-expectations by observing the performance of their group members and other groups, thereby helping to propel the entire team toward higher objectives.

Although the initial forms of competition described by students may primarily stem from the psychological pressure of not wanting to fall behind others, this motivation nonetheless offers positive reinforcement for their proactive behaviour.

This motivation is not directly imposed by the teacher but likely originates from the students' own internal pressures and expectations of their performance. Furthermore, this sense of competition may also be linked to the students' desire to gain recognition from their teachers and peers. More specifically, this motivation can be aligned with the notion of the "ought-to self", which emphasises how individuals form a self-guide based on external standards and expectations (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Within this framework, students might remain actively engaged in learning to avoid negative evaluations and to secure social acceptance. This motivation overlaps and intersects with the concept of identified motivation, which is discussed in the following sections.

6.1.3. Identified Regulation—Embracing Perceived Value

Identified regulation refers to an individual's recognition and appreciation of the inherent value of a particular learning activity, which in turn stimulates their willingness to actively engage in that activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of this study, students also exhibited this form of identified motivation:

> *…Even though there's no grading for the group project, I still hope our team puts on a good show. I'd love for us to get recognition from both the teacher and our classmates. Standing out among the other groups would be the icing on the cake!*

This excerpt from the student interviews indicates that, despite the absence of a formal grading mechanism, students were still motivated by the desire to gain recognition from both their teacher and peers through the outstanding performance of their team. This motivation stems from their pre-existing understanding of the value associated with project success and social recognition. Although the teacher explicitly stated that student outcomes in this study would not be graded, the students nonetheless perceived a potential competitive element between different groups and were keen to distinguish themselves through excellence, thereby securing broader recognition.

6.1.4. Integrated Regulation—Aligning Personal Goals

Integrated regulation is considered an advanced form of identified motivation, representing a higher level of internalisation (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). When students exhibit integrated motivation, it indicates that their drive is derived not only from recognising the value of the behaviour but also from its alignment with their own personal values (Gerstenberg et al., 2024). This form of motivation suggests that students are aware of their own needs and perceive the behaviour as a means to fulfil these needs. During the interviews, it became evident that, in the early stages of their involvement in this research, particularly before the formal commencement of the PBLL, most students' motivation was primarily influenced by external regulation, introjected regulation, and identified regulation. However, as the students gained a deeper understanding of the specific PBLL processes and mechanisms and engaged in the learning activities, many began to demonstrate characteristics associated with integrated motivation:

Excerpt 6.2. Translation of Student Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*This project isn't like our usual tasks, which often don't give us much time to prepare. But this time, we've got about a month to get our group project ready…And along the way, we have plenty of learning options and content we can choose for ourselves.* *…* *I think this schedule is quite reasonable, and I believe my team and I can stick to it. Even though it's during the holidays, we've managed to set aside enough time to prepare for this project. I'm confident we can complete it, and in the end, we did. I'm actually quite satisfied with the outcome and our final product.*
2	S2	*Working on a project in a group is pretty new to me. Plus, we got to choose our own teams, which means we're more in sync when tackling tasks together.* *…* *And I'm also wondering if I can work on this project with my usual mates. I'm excited to team up with my good friends to create some videos that we find fun and meaningful.*

The Excerpt 6.2 from the interviews with the two students highlights characteristics of the PBLL approach that have fostered integrated motivation in their learning experience. For instance, S1 noted that PBLL provided ample time

for preparation, a luxury often not afforded in regular courses (serial No. 1). Based on classroom observations and interviews with Rachel, students' regular English learning tasks are typically short-term, requiring completion within a day or over a weekend. These tasks are generally fragmented and specific, with limited scope for student autonomy as they are usually prescribed by the teacher or based on textbook content. In contrast, this PBLL framework, despite requiring students to produce a group project in video format and limiting the topic to "travel", allowed students considerable autonomy during the extended preparation period. Under the broad theme of "travel", students had the freedom to select specific focal points and decide on the exact format of their video. This point was corroborated by S1's interview, which indicated a demand for greater autonomy in learning. It suggests that granting students more control over their learning process and decisions may enhance their motivation to complete the project.

S2's motivation, on the other hand, is closely linked to another core aspect of PBLL: teamwork. Observations of regular classes revealed that students occasionally engage in group role-playing or collaborative tasks. However, similar to the situation mentioned earlier, these collaborations are typically brief and centred around textbook-prescribed content, with a limited duration, starkly contrasting with the month-long PBLL. This extended form of collaboration was novel for the students, and many expressed interest in this new approach (serial No. 2). This interest can be interpreted as a reflection of the students' latent need to explore more sustained forms of collaborative learning. Moreover, the PBLL framework offered more opportunities for students to engage in discussions and negotiations with Rachel, regarding learning arrangements. This flexibility likely further enhanced their motivation, particularly the drive to complete the project with peers they were familiar with or trusted (serial No. 2).

Both the extended preparation phase and the collaborative group format inherent to PBLL provided students with ample preparation time (Gibbes & Carson, 2014), offering more freedom for creativity; moreover, group collaboration, uncommon

in their regular English learning experiences, coupled with the teacher's allowance for students to freely form groups based on project interest, served as innovative factors motivating student engagement. Wang (2024) demonstrated that collaborative learning could enhance learners' motivation and mitigate anxiety to some extent. During online classes, the Chinese online conference software "Tencent Meeting" was used, allowing the teacher to divide students into discussion groups by their teams, facilitating focused online discussions while enabling the teacher to join any group to address questions.

As an observer who did not intervene in the classroom, I was also able to freely enter any discussion group for observation. As a result, this high level of participation may have been influenced by the presence of the teacher and me observing their online discussions. The presence of the teacher and observer could indeed affect their natural performance. According to Labov (1972), when research subjects become aware that they are being observed, their behaviour may unconsciously change. In this case, students might have increased their level of engagement and interaction during discussions in an effort to present a more favourable image of their learning. However, as all students were subjected to the same observational conditions, the impact of the observer's paradox is likely to be consistent across different groups. While students may have exhibited heightened participation due to the observation, this still reflects the value of PBLL in enhancing learning motivation.

Several students highlighted the impact of flexibility in the PBLL process during their interviews:

Excerpt 6.3. Translation of Student Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*The teacher said before we split into groups that we could chat in English or Chinese, depending on what we need. This makes prepping way easier for me, lets me chill a bit more, and focus heaps on what we're actually doing in the project.*
2	S2	*Once we sorted our groups, we planned out specific timelines for different tasks. Before each deadline, we aim to complete our assigned parts based on our discussions, so*

		we can update and share our progress within the group during the next meeting. Having deadlines set up like this really boosts my motivation.
3	S3	*Actually, when the teacher doesn't insist on English, I seem to find myself speaking more of it!*

In this study, one of the flexible strategies employed by the teacher, Rachel, was the decision not to mandate the exclusive use of English during all communication activities. Students reported that being allowed to combine the target language with their native language during classroom discussions alleviated the pressure associated with articulating their ideas (serial No. 1). Although English is the target language for learning, Rachel recognised the unfamiliarity of video production as a task for students and, therefore, relaxed the strict language requirements. Rachel explained in her interview that enforcing the use of English when discussing unfamiliar content could heighten students' sense of frustration, especially when they encounter a significant amount of new vocabulary. Such a rigid approach might diminish their motivation by making the task of producing the target language overwhelming. To mitigate this, Rachel chose not to impose the exclusive use of English in all interactions, a strategy that contrasts with their typical classroom setting. Observations of regular lessons revealed that Rachel generally encourages students to use the target language, English, as much as possible in conversation exercises aligned with their language proficiency and learning context, to fulfil the practice objectives.

However, in the context of this project, the absence of a strict requirement to use the target language reduced students' psychological burden, allowing them to concentrate more on the substance of the project, such as how best to complete the project deliverables (serial No. 1). This approach may have led to unexpected positive outcomes. For example, S3 mentioned that in the absence of a mandatory English usage requirement, they were more inclined to use English voluntarily (serial No. 3). This willingness could be attributed to the reduction in psychological pressure, which, in turn, facilitated more fluent language expression.

This phenomenon aligns with Gu et al.'s (2024) finding, suggesting that permitting students to learn the target language within a multilingual environment can provide a positive motivation. Observations of students' PBLL classes and regular English courses revealed richer expression and output in PBLL settings. While this is inherently linked to the student-centred nature of PBLL, which demands more expression from students (Thomas, 2000), the depth and fluency of student discourse were enhanced compared to regular courses. For instance, discussions with the teacher in PBLL sessions were more focused on how to improve their projects under the theme of travel, including but not limited to presentation techniques, subtitle additions, and the logical sequencing of video content. In contrast, in regular English classes, students typically provide brief responses to specific questions about texts or knowledge points raised by the textbook or teacher. The pauses in students' output during PBLL classes or discussions were more often due to organising their language and logic for more comprehensive expression, rather than struggling to recall English vocabulary.

Nevertheless, there is a dual aspect to the flexibility in language use. While students were not compelled to use the target language in this study, a limitation lies in the absence of a precise pre- and post-assessment comparison of students' language learning outcomes. As a result, it remains unclear whether their actual language proficiency improved when they were given the autonomy to choose whether to use the target language for communication. Although the interviews with most students indicate that this flexible language environment increased their motivation to express themselves and reduced their psychological burden, this study cannot definitively determine the specific impact of such autonomous decision-making on students' score in English. Future research could explore this issue in greater depth, particularly the differences between student-led language output and teacher-directed language use in terms of actual language skill improvement. This would provide clearer insights into the relationship between learner autonomy and teacher guidance in the context of language acquisition.

In practice, Rachel adopted a weekly milestone-based teaching strategy. She met with the students online once a week, during which formal teaching was reduced, allowing more time to listen to students' progress reports. Based on these updates, Rachel provided practical advice and suggested adjustment strategies. This approach implicitly established the weekly summaries as interim deadlines. During the interviews, students generally agreed that these interim deadlines were necessary and aligned with their needs in the learning process (serial No. 2). This arrangement helped them complete tasks within the specified timeframe, preventing delays that could result from procrastination. This finding aligns with related research, which has suggested that setting clear interim goals and deadlines helps students maintain progress and enhances learning outcomes (Alessandri et al., 2020).

The development of integrated motivation is associated with an individual's deep engagement in an activity and a comprehensive understanding of its significance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The transformation and internalisation of student motivation not only indicate an increased sense of identification with the activity but also demonstrates their ability to align the activity's objectives with their personal long-term goals. This alignment fosters a more enduring and self-driven motivation, suggesting that students are more likely to sustain their engagement over time when they perceive the activity as meaningful and relevant to their broader aspirations.

Brief Summary

The four subcategories of extrinsic motivation are interconnected and gradually progress in a system of intertwined influences throughout an individual's motivational development. The interaction within this motivational system revealed the complexity of student motivation and provided a theoretical basis for understanding their behaviour in the learning process.

The excerpts from the interviews above indicate that innovative learning

approaches, such as PBLL, have the potential to stimulate student engagement, even though these methods are typically introduced by teachers or researchers rather than discovered by students themselves. After becoming familiar with the specific format of PBLL, many students actively chose to participate in this relatively new learning approach. While some students may have been initially driven by internal pressures or other negative emotions, others expressed a desire to explore new learning methods as a means of unlocking their academic potential. In light of these findings, educators might consider regularly incorporating diverse learning strategies that differ from traditional methods, particularly when these new approaches have been shown to enhance student motivation. Providing opportunities for exploration and self-development, without compromising the primary educational objectives, could be beneficial in fostering a more engaging learning environment.

Another outcome emerging from the PBLL intervention was that Rachel recognised students' increased willingness to express themselves compared to regular lessons, prompting her to proactively adjust her regular curriculum to sustain and further enhance students' motivation. These pedagogical changes appeared to be intrinsically linked not just to the PBLL, but to the collaborative nature of our work together. This partnership seemed to have fostered the professional confidence and agency for Rachel to initiate such changes herself. Specifically, she introduced new modules and repurposed the first five minutes of some classes each week for students to engage in creative activities. This change is further explored in Chapter VII, with a focus on how the collaborative process acted as a catalyst for Rachel's exercise of teacher agency and her subsequent adjustments to her teaching strategies.

6.2. Theme Four: Collaborative Processes Between Students and Between the Teacher and Students

In the process of data organisation, group collaboration emerged as a particularly significant aspect. Many of the interviewed students spontaneously discussed their experiences with group collaboration. This voluntary discussion indicates that this approach left a deep impression on them. Most students had previously primarily learned the language through independent study, with interactions mainly consisting of teacher-student Q&A in the classroom or small-scale peer dialogue exercises that could be completed within a short time during class. Therefore, this project was a relatively unfamiliar learning method for most students, as it required them to spend considerable time working closely with four fixed group members over about a month.

Various forms of interaction occurred to facilitate and realise effective collaboration. Specifically, collaboration took place through interactions among students as well as between students and the teacher. Student-student interactions involved jointly discussing task requirements, allocating sub-tasks, sharing information, and providing mutual support and suggestions. Meanwhile, student-teacher interactions encompassed the teacher's role as a more capable collaborator who provided assistance, offered targeted guidance, responded to student inquiries, and delivered periodic feedback. Both interactional dynamics permeated every stage of project implementation, underpinning the attainment of learning objectives within a collaborative learning framework.

In the earlier section discussing student motivation, students also shared how the group collaboration model affected their motivation. It can be said that the group collaborative learning method represents one of the most significant departures from their traditional learning approaches. In the literature review, I summarised six aspects of group collaboration skills. In this section, I combine data from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to explore how these

collaborative skills were realised in this instance of PBLL. Additionally, I examine potential issues exposed by the collaborative learning method in this study.

6.2.1. Responsibility Sharing

During group collaboration, members are usually assigned different tasks. These sub-tasks are not independent of one another but exhibit a certain degree of interdependence, requiring close collaboration to advance the overall project's completion. In this study, group members were granted considerable autonomy, allowing them to assign tasks among themselves. However, since each group ultimately needed to jointly complete a product, the sub-tasks were closely connected.

The following task allocation table illustrates the planned arrangement of video processing-related tasks that one group expected to complete during a particular week:

Table 6.1. Example of Group Task Allocation

Original Student Manuscript	Video Processing Task Allocation Table	
	Group Member(s)	**Work Content**
	All Members	Submit video materials for their respective parts
	A	Perform initial synthesis of the video
	B	Create and embed subtitles
	All Members	Review the overall coordination of visuals and scripts
	C	Collect supplementary video materials if necessary
	D	Adjust videos and subtitles based on group discussion
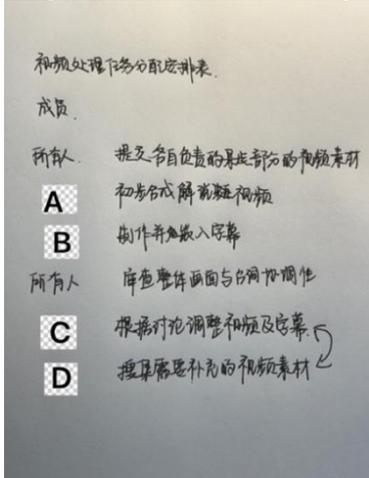
Although not every group would prepare a similarly detailed division of labour in advance, this structure is representative, reflecting the general pattern of most groups' task allocation. From the table, it can be seen that tasks include parts for which members are independently responsible but also emphasise collaboration

among members. These sub-tasks are not entirely independent but may be interrelated. For example, in Table 6.1, group member A is responsible for video composition—a task that cannot be completed independently and requires content and material provision from other members. Subsequently, member B needs to embed subtitles based on the video processed by member A. In this way, almost every member's task is interdependent. Moreover, group members need to jointly discuss video modification suggestions and supplementary content, making subsequent adjustments and refinements based on the results of the previous stage. Therefore, in this PBLL, it was necessary for each group to conduct at least two group discussions per week.

During student interviews, they expressed different views on this distribution of responsibilities. The majority of students felt that frequent discussions enhanced their sense of participation and motivation, especially as they saw the project gradually materialise from initial conception to final product, gaining a strong sense of achievement. As one student stated:

> *In each discussion, we can see how our work combines with the team's efforts, making the results more complete bit by bit. This gives me a great sense of achievement.*

However, some students expressed different views on this collaborative approach, particularly those who do not favour group collaboration. They considered the interdependence of tasks to be a challenge. Two students candidly said:

> *I prefer to complete tasks independently, but in this model, I have to rely on others' progress. Sometimes waiting for them to complete tasks is simply torturous.*
>
> *I constantly have to urge my group members to finish their tasks; otherwise, my work can't proceed at all. This situation is really frustrating.*

Clearly, this group collaboration model is not suitable for all students, and its advantages and disadvantages vary from person to person. This also highlights an issue that future research needs to address: how to design more flexible collaboration mechanisms to balance different students' needs and individual

differences.

6.2.2.   Expression and Listening

Apart from responsibility sharing, classroom observations revealed other collaborative abilities demonstrated by students during this PBLL process:

Excerpt 6.4. Translation of Classroom Observation (Student Group Discussion)

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*I'm on Ctrip's website right now, and I've found a travel itinerary to Egypt shared by someone. I'll drop the link here in the chat so you can all take a look.*
2	S2	*Oh, I see it. It's a ten-day itinerary. We could definitely take some inspiration from this when designing our own route. What do you think?*
3	S3	*Ten days might be a bit too long, don't you reckon? If we're making a video that's only 3-5 minutes, trying to cram in ten days' worth of content would just end up being too rushed, don't you think? Plus, longer trips mean covering more places, so we'd need to do loads of research, and it'd take a lot of time.*
4	S4	*You've got a point. I feel like planning something around a week would be just right…*

The above excerpt from classroom observation is a short segment of dialogue during an online group discussion by one of the groups. This segment reflects some students' collaborative abilities. A specific analysis is as follows:

In Excerpt 6.4, centred around S1's suggestion of referring to travel routes based on the Ctrip website (a major comprehensive travel information platform in China), all four group members expressed their views. Classroom observation revealed no significant indications of group members failing to understand each other's perspectives; rather, each individual's contributions demonstrated their capacity for independent thought. This exchange of ideas provided a foundation for the group to further explore specific details. In team collaboration, each member's input brings different perspectives and ideas to the group discussion, which helps advance the project more deeply.

As the project topic, travel, was relatively simple and familiar, interviewees reported few comprehension difficulties in peer interactions, with initial misunderstandings easily resolved through further questioning. However, the effectiveness of expression and listening also depends on the quality and relevance of the viewpoints. If contributions are made merely for the sake of speaking, they may not effectively promote discussion and could even cause the topic to deviate from the main focus. The following is a viewpoint mentioned by a student during the interview:

> *When we're having online classes and doing group discussions within a limited time, we tend to stay pretty focused on the topic. But when we organise group discussions on our own, without a teacher keeping an eye on us or a set time limit, things can sometimes drift off track. We might start chatting about stuff that has nothing to do with the project, and before we know it, the discussion's gone on way longer than it should have.*

According to the student's feedback, without teacher supervision and time constraints, the group may work less efficiently, with some time potentially occupied by non-project-related content. This phenomenon indirectly highlights the importance of appropriate teacher oversight, which can help maintain the goal-oriented and efficient nature of the discussion process. Additionally, this situation reveals one of the potential drawbacks of group collaboration: student-led group discussions may exceed expected timeframes due to a lack of external constraints. If PBLL is scheduled within an academic semester, students' time is usually limited, and the flexibility to allocate discussion time freely is therefore restricted. Without external supervision, students may not always focus on the project itself, further increasing the difficulty of task completion.

In this practice, ensuring that team members engage in ample discussion and active listening is typically facilitated by regular group meetings and feedback from the teacher or peers. Evidence from interviews and observations indicates that although accumulating and thoroughly debating ideas can be time-intensive, it might also foster richer learning experiences and deeper reflections. Not all students perceive this process as burdensome or detrimental to maintaining

progress; some benefit from these extended discussions. Nonetheless, given the limited time available during the academic term, prolonged discussion may impede the timely production of the project. Consequently, balancing the depth of discussion with the completion of project requirements becomes essential. Future instructional designs should carefully consider this dynamic balance to ensure that students gain a high-quality collaborative learning experience while still fulfilling the necessary tasks within the allotted timeframe.

6.2.3.   Critical Thinking and Negotiation

During group discussions, students encounter a variety of perspectives from their peers. Rather than merely accepting or dismissing these ideas, these viewpoints may also help them refine or clarify their own understanding. By analysing, negotiating, and making informed judgements about diverse opinions, students demonstrate both critical thinking and collaborative negotiation skills. For instance, in Excerpt 6.4., critical thinking is primarily reflected in the analysis of the relationship between the duration and depth of content. One student (S3) pointed out that planning to introduce too many travel days might lead to overly superficial video content, demonstrating her keen grasp of balancing video length and content. Critical thinking ability helps students evaluate problems in complex situations and make reasonable judgements (Hitchcock, 2017).

Ennis (2018) emphasised that critical thinking prompts students to balance depth and breadth in practical tasks. According to Facione (2011), critical thinking comprises six core cognitive skills: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. The entire process of group collaboration in this PBLL was not fully observable to me; therefore, it is uncertain which critical thinking abilities were involved in all the group discussions among the students in this study and how these abilities were distributed. To better understand the practical value and impact of critical thinking in PBLL, future research could devote more attention to systematically recording and analysing students' critical

thinking process in PBLL.

Based on critical thinking, when a member's viewpoint in a group discussion differs from other group members' opinions, it needs to be expressed in a reasonable manner. In excerpt 6.4., students exhibited relatively smooth communication during the negotiation process: when expressing differing opinions, they could clearly articulate their reasons and gain recognition from other members. However, not every group discussion proceeded so smoothly.

Although specific instances of significant conflicts among students during group activities were not directly recorded in the classroom observations of this study, interview data indicate that students did mention feelings of dissatisfaction with group members in certain situations or more intense disputes in private discussions. If such conflicts are not properly resolved, they often hinder the smooth progress of subsequent collaboration. Therefore, another important skill in group collaboration—conflict resolution—becomes particularly crucial.

6.2.4. Conflict Resolution

The cultivation of conflict resolution skills not only helps to resolve disagreements but also ensures the effective advancement of group tasks (Hesse et al., 2015). In interviews with students, they mainly expressed the following potential conflicts:

Table 6.2. Conflicts in Group Collaboration

Conflict Type	Student Interview Statements	Interpretation
Disagreement on Ideas	*I thought we should use another approach, but they said this one is simpler, and we couldn't convince each other.*	Different understandings of the task direction or content make it hard to reach consensus.
Unequal Task Distribution	*I always end up doing the most, but some members don't complete their assigned tasks, which feels unfair."*	Some members take on excessive tasks while others contribute less, leading to imbalance.
Power Struggles	*"He kept talking about his ideas and didn't give others a chance to speak, it felt like taking orders.*	Certain members suppress others' opinions.
Personal Emotional	*I don't get along well with them usually, and their tone made me*	Emotional disputes arising from personality or past experiences

Conflicts	*uncomfortable, so I didn't feel like discussing anymore.*	disrupt group dynamics.
Differing Goal Expectations	*I wanted to make it better, but others thought it was good enough, which made me feel we weren't on the same page.*	Members have differing expectations for project quality, e.g., some aim for high grades while others just want to finish.
Lack of Active Participation	*She said she didn't have time to join discussions, making it hard for us to allocate tasks.*	Some members show indifference or passivity, impacting the group's overall enthusiasm.

In the above table, I summarise some conflicts and disputes mentioned by students during their group work. Although these conflicts have been categorised and listed, not all situations were severe. According to students' interview feedback, in most cases, these issues did not have a significant negative impact on group collaboration.

Because some conflicts are relatively minor, when asked during interviews whether they had taken specific measures to resolve them, students did not always have clear coping strategies for all problems. In some cases, they stated that they were at a loss and chose to ignore or let the situation develop (such as when some members were not proactive). However, for more serious issues or problems that might affect the group's progress, some groups did adopt corresponding strategies. For example, I learned from student interviews that when differences in opinions arose, some groups resolved the issues through a voting mechanism, following the principle of majority rule; others sought help from the teacher. Students choosing to turn to the teacher, Rachel, to resolve conflicts they could not solve themselves, indicate that they do not persist in unsolvable problems but actively seek external assistance.

Teacher Rachel also played a key role in this process. Besides resolving surface conflicts, she needed to adjust students' emotions and maintain team harmony. Rachel mentioned during our conversation:

> *I think I can relatively sensitively notice some students' emotional discomfort, and then I might privately ask about the specific situation and give specific suggestions to individual students or their entire group.*

Prior to this, Rachel had already had a year's experience with the students participating in this PBLL, was relatively familiar with them, and could keenly observe emotional and team collaboration issues, taking measures to mediate. However, as students mentioned in interviews, for some issues they considered insignificant, they might choose to ignore them directly. Rachel might not have noticed these issues. If this continues in the long term, such situations may adversely affect the group's long-term collaboration. Furthermore, this behaviour may hinder the continuous progress of certain individuals who are not actively participating in language learning.

Brief Summary

This subtheme explored the various manifestations and challenges of group collaboration during the PBLL process. Students exhibited diversity in collaborative skills such as responsibility sharing, expression and listening, critical thinking and negotiation, and conflict resolution. The interdependence of tasks and frequent discussions enhanced some students' sense of participation and achievement but also posed challenges for those who prefer independent learning. Additionally, group discussions showed relatively positive interaction in terms of expression and listening, but efficiency may decline in the absence of external supervision. Critical thinking and negotiation skills played an important role in group decision-making but were not always smoothly conducted in all group discussions. The ability to resolve conflicts was particularly crucial in maintaining team harmony and task progression. Although Rachel's involvement played a positive role in resolving conflicts, ignoring some minor disputes may pose hidden dangers to long-term collaboration. In light of these observations, future research and pedagogical practice might explore targeted strategies to accommodate diverse student preferences, including flexible discussion formats and staged monitoring mechanisms, so as to balance collaborative efficiency, individual learning needs, and the quality of project outcomes.

6.3. Theme Five: Reflection on the Learning Process

For students, PBLL represents an innovative attempt at exploring a relatively unfamiliar learning method. Beyond mere curiosity about this new approach, students engaged in continuous reflection throughout the learning process. To gain deeper insights into students' self-analysis during this educational experience and determine whether they were able to promptly adjust their attitudes and behaviours within this new learning model, I included several questions about self-reflection during the learning process in my interviews. The findings reveal that the majority of students were fundamentally aware of various issues that emerged within themselves and their learning groups throughout the process and attempted to self-adjust during the progression of PBLL. Although the teacher provided them with advice, there was no comprehensive evaluation of their performance; the guidance offered was more targeted towards their immediate presentation scenarios. The teacher proposed suggestions based on observable issues, while parts not presented in front of the class required group discussion and improvement. While some students did not actively identify issues during the interviews or recognised certain problems without finding solutions, a considerable number engaged in self-reflection and demonstrated the ability to make adjustments throughout their learning process.

6.3.1. Developing a Study Plan

Although the teacher introduced course objectives and requirements, she only provided a preliminary general direction. PBLL has returned the learning process's agency to the students (Shin, 2018), hence the specifics of the learning plan required more detailed planning by the students and their groups. Despite this process being somewhat unfamiliar to most students, especially in terms of collaborative learning planning within teams, the students navigated and practised within this project. Overall, they reported that they had acquired certain experiences.

Excerpt 6.5. Translation of Student Interview		
Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*Our division of tasks is quite clear, but before discussions, we each draft an initial plan on our own.*
2	S2	*For example, in our group discussion about Japan, today, Student A is responsible for researching food-related content, Student B is researching landmarks, and Student C is looking into customs and traditions.*
3	S3	*Since it's currently during the holidays and I have plenty of free time with no travel plans, I thought of combining this learning opportunity with my original plan to self-study English during the break.*
4	S4	*Group members often bring up ideas I hadn't considered or propose more reasonable arrangements during our discussions.*

Students reflected on both individual and group planning. In the initial class, the teacher outlined the course overview and final requirements, highlighting key information such as the necessity for students to form small groups for collaborative learning, determine the content of the final product as a group, and divide the labour for the project's required video production. Rachel's preliminary course planning served as an initial learning framework provided to the students, but the specifics of its implementation were largely negotiated among the groups themselves. During interviews, students mentioned that after being assigned to their groups, they came up with some preliminary ideas, which were further refined through consultation with group members (serial No. 1). Some students reported a harmonious process in developing the overall learning plan, finding that group members sometimes suggested more rational or creative solutions than they could have on their own (serial No. 4). In such cases, the collective brainstorming of group members had the potential to yield high-quality work. For example, one group mentioned in the interview that in their first week of researching relevant materials, each member looked into different aspects of the chosen topic, and efficiency was improved through shared discussions during their meetings (serial No. 2).

Additionally, a few students shared their personal plans focusing on the language learning, although very few were able to make such detailed plans for their English

skills. Those who devised such individual plans intended to integrate this PBLL experience with their own planned holiday English self-study (serial No. 3). Although this behaviour was exhibited by a very small number of students currently showing strong self-learning capabilities, their plans revealed a deep consideration for PBLL, indicating a proactive exploration of how to incorporate basic language skill practices into various steps of the project and motivation. Moreover, they were also capable of finding specific resources or software to assist them in their learning activities.

6.3.2. Assessing Learning Progress

After formulating their learning plans, students were required to implement and execute these plans according to the detailed strategies they had devised. On one hand, during the execution process, these students did not focus solely on their own progress and changes as they might have in their regular courses. Interviews with some students indicated that they were able to view themselves and their group as a cohesive whole throughout the learning process. On the other hand, unlike in regular learning scenarios where only the teacher evaluates the students' learning progress and performance, other members of the group also provided feedback on specific members' task progress and content.

Excerpt 6.6. Translation of Student Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	S1	*In one week, I noticed that Group X had arranged the sequence of video footage very effectively. We decided to take inspiration from their approach and modify the sequence of our own group's video accordingly.*
2	S2	*Within our group, because we have at least two focused discussions every week, we implement an internal review process. For instance, if there's a particular aspect that our group feels isn't coming together quite well, we prioritise discussing it. Other members pay attention to each member's contributions because we function as a cohesive unit.*

Students engaged in assessments of their learning progress and the content they had completed. In weekly online sessions, Rachel listened to each group's interim

reports. Under Rachel's guidance, groups monitored their own progress and compared it with that of others, ensuring that their pace and the overall progress of the class remain aligned, and that project deliverables were completed within the stipulated timeframe. When reviewing group progress, Rachel intervened only if a group was significantly behind; thus, students predominantly undertook self-assessment and improvement throughout the learning process. This evaluative process was conducted from two perspectives: an internal self-assessment within the group and a comparative assessment against other groups. Feedback from students indicates that each group followed a similar weekly learning process: from the conclusion of one session to the beginning of the next, they convene for at least two focused discussions. During the first discussion, they distilled key points from online class and planed specific tasks for each member for the week; in the second, students shared their progress on these tasks and prepared for the next session's collective presentation. The following illustration depicts a simulated weekly student learning process flowchart:
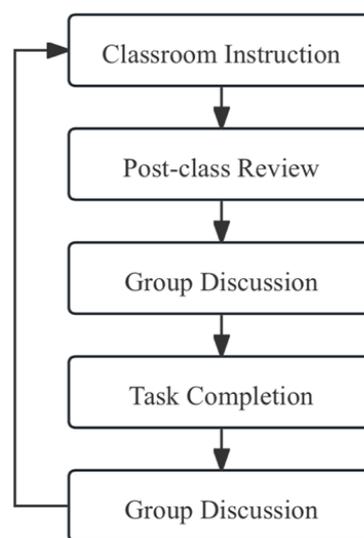
Figure 6.2. Weekly Student Learning Process

Apart from the initial week, when students mainly focused on understanding the course outline and group allocations, classroom discussions and weekly group reports provided opportunities for groups to view each other's progress and

compare their own development with that of their peers (serial No. 1 in Excerpt 6.6), aimed at facilitating enhanced self-improvement. This comparative exercise was not intended for the replication of content from other groups but rather for identifying and adopting strengths while addressing shortcomings from the reports of various groups. The focal point of the group's second concentrated discussion each week was on the progress of the group itself, responding to the plans previously established by individuals and the group collectively. Each member presented the outcomes of their tasks for the week, whereupon other group members offered suggestions based on the shared content or engaged in discussions to clarify any ambiguities.

Additionally, when consolidating their weekly progress, groups consciously prioritised addressing any identified shortcomings or problematic areas in their task completion (serial No. 2 in Excerpt 6.6). This prioritisation, emerging naturally as a self-regulated group discussion strategy, enabled them to effectively utilise the limited available time to optimise the overall quality of their group's outcomes.

6.4. Summary of This Chapter

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of students' learning motivation, group collaboration behaviours, and reflective practices within the context of the current PBLL implementation. Drawing on classroom observations and interviews, the study highlights the potential of PBLL to enhance students' motivation, collaborative abilities, and autonomy. It also analyses challenges encountered in PBLL practice.

Analysis of the data indicates that PBLL can offer students learning motivation distinct from traditional classroom environments. At the initial stage of PBLL, most students' participation was driven primarily by external factors, such as a desire

to avoid heavy written assignments or reliance on teacher guidance. This type of external motivation appears multifaceted, with students influenced by not only rewards and punishments but also competitive pressure and social expectations. As the project progressed, some students began to show signs of internalised motivation. By actively planning their own learning content and finding personal interests within the project theme, students increasingly recognised the value of the learning tasks and linked them to their long-term goals. In particular, the openness of PBLL provided greater opportunities for choice and adaptation during team collaboration and ongoing tasks. This flexibility might alleviate the psychological stress typically associated with high-pressure classroom settings and further stimulate student agency.

As a key feature of PBLL, group collaboration is extensively discussed in this chapter. The findings show that interdependence in group tasks can strengthen students' sense of interaction and cooperation. Although this collective pursuit of project goals underscores the benefits of teamwork, it also reveals potential issues, such as uneven task distribution or divergent objectives. While some students expressed reservations about group collaboration, the majority reported that frequent group discussions and coordinated efforts enhanced their sense of participation and accomplishment. In this process, the teacher's role proved crucial; timely intervention and guidance were essential to maintaining group harmony and advancing task progress. Despite PBLL's emphasis on student autonomy, the study reveals that moderate teacher involvement can improve discussion efficiency and help circumvent misunderstandings or unresolved conflicts that may otherwise compromise effectiveness.

The importance of reflective practice within PBLL is also strongly evident. Students not only reflected on their own learning behaviours at the individual level but also compared and contrasted approaches within and across groups to optimise task planning and execution. Weekly summaries and feedback mechanisms might offer clear direction for improvement. By observing other groups and integrating

lessons into their own work, students developed the capacity to adjust learning strategies dynamically. This reflective practice, to some extent, cultivated self-regulation skills, enabling students to proactively identify issues and implement corresponding solutions. Nonetheless, the study indicates that while reflective practice had a positive impact on learning experiences and project quality, its effectiveness varied among students, with some lacking sufficient reflective abilities to fully capitalise on the process.

7. Chapter VII: Teacher's Perceptions, Experiences and Changes

7.0. Introduction to This Chapter

Among the two principal research questions proposed in this study, the second specifically focused on how Rachel adjusted her role during the process of accompanying students in Project-based Language Learning (PBLL). Although previous discussions emphasised the importance of students as the central part and, highlighting PBLL as a "learning" method rather than a "teaching" one, it is undeniable that the teacher played an indispensable role in PBLL, a role that cannot be overlooked. This chapter examines Rachel's perception towards PBLL, the challenges during the process, the adjustments made by Rachel to PBLL and her subsequent classroom instruction, the factors prompting these changes and the nature of the collaborative process between Rachel and me.

Continuous engagement and dialogue were maintained with Rachel throughout the initial, middle, and final stages of the course implementation. Through classroom observation, changes in teacher-student behaviours during the PBLL process, as well as adjustments and transformations in the teacher's everyday English teaching strategies after the start of the new term, were recorded. These observations aimed to deepen the understanding of behavioural modifications in teaching practices. Although the study encapsulates the perspective of merely one teacher, whose representativeness may be limited, it is noteworthy that Rachel boasts over two decades of teaching experience and is a professional well-versed in English teaching practice. Therefore, despite not comprehensively representing all teachers' viewpoints, her insights offer a valuable perspective for understanding the views and practices of teachers with similar backgrounds, still providing significant insights and revelations in the teaching domain.

Another highlight of this study is the ongoing dialogue and collaboration between

Rachel and myself as the researcher, which began well before the implementation of the PBLL course and continued throughout and after the intervention. Rachel brought extensive practical experience in English teaching, which complemented my own academic knowledge in PBLL. Our continuous exchanges played a crucial role in facilitating the successful delivery of this project.

7.1. Theme Six: Rachel's Motivation to Engage in Project-based Language Learning Practices

Beyond discussing the pedagogy and specific implementation steps, I explored with Rachel her motivations for participation before the project's initiation, her mindset changes during its implementation, and her reflections after its conclusion. Rachel's motivation underwent an internalisation process similar to that of the students discussed in Chapter VI. In this theme, I summarise the main motivations expressed by Rachel during her practice of PBLL, drawing from classroom observations and our exchanges at different stages of the course implementation.

In discussing this part, I draw on Kubanyiova's (2012) theory of language teachers' "possible self". In brief, "possible language teacher self" includes the "ideal language teacher self" (the teacher one aspires to become), the "ought-to language teacher self" (the self based on responsibilities and obligations), and the "feared language teacher self" (what the teacher fears becoming). According to this theory, discrepancies between a teacher's possible selves and their actual teaching situation can serve as a source of motivation for change. In this study, Rachel's ideal self prompted her to pursue personal growth and professional development; her ought-to self motivated her to respond to relevant educational policies in China and promote teaching reform; and her feared self led her to anticipate potential challenges before the PBLL activity began, proactively taking preventive measures or adjusting teaching plans promptly during implementation.

These motivations driving teaching reform are discussed in detail in this section.

7.1.1.   Personal Growth and Professional Development

In this study, interactions with Rachel and classroom observations conveyed an important message: during the implementation of this PBLL teaching process, Rachel was not only a conveyor of knowledge but also an active participant in learning. For Rachel, engaging with innovative pedagogical method afforded her a wealth of new teaching experiences. Rachel's pursuit of self-growth and professional development as an English teacher motivated her to focus on updating and exploring teaching methods. This pursuit drove her to actively participate in the teaching practice without material rewards and prompted her to invest personal time and energy into course design and implementation.

Excerpt 7.1. Translation of Teacher Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	Rachel	*We've been talking about changing some of the education methods that aren't working well, but in reality, there are few opportunities to actually make it happen. Because of the tight schedule between semesters, even if we want to innovate during the term, we can't conduct systematic, periodic experiments with teaching methods like this time and observe the different learning states of students simultaneously.*
2	Rachel	*Even though it took up some of my holiday time, it provided me with a lot of new ideas for my teaching work after school started, so I feel it was quite beneficial.*
3	Rachel	*You'll notice some small changes in their (students') daily lessons after school starts, which actually stem from the experiences gained during our project practice this time. They're some changes and experiments that I feel are really good.*
4	Rachel	*In the past, students were more in line with me, but now I have to align more with the students. I feel it's a significant shift, but I don't see it as a negative one.*
5	Rachel	*In our daily lessons, teachers often provide students with a lot of information, but students have very little room for creativity. I didn't realise students could be so creative. When you give students some fixed things to learn, you'll find that their responses are not as vivid or as enthusiastic.*
6	Rachel	*I've noticed that in this process, I'm giving them more skills; whereas in our usual daily lessons, I'm giving students more content. So, I think there's a fundamental difference there.*
7	Rachel	*In the short term, it's difficult for me to see their tangible, systematic learning outcomes. Although I may notice some improvements in their spoken language, it's challenging for*

The ideal self plays a crucial role in teachers' developmental process (Kubanyiova, 2012). In this study, Rachel's vision of who she aspires to become prompted her to focus on her personal growth and professional development as a language teacher. Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory applies to teachers as well, wherein the intrinsic motivation generated by teachers is driven by personal interest, curiosity, and a sense of satisfaction, independent of external rewards. Within the context of this study, the initial inclination of the teacher to engage in PBLL practices primarily stemmed from a desire to explore better teaching method and a positive anticipation of the impact on student learning (serial No. 1). Such motivation reflects a consciousness in her pursuit of personal and professional growth within educational practice. Findings of this research indicate that Rachel experienced positive changes in her professional development, including innovations in teaching methods and a deeper understanding of the student learning process (serial No. 3-6). These changes have the potential to bolster teacher confidence and, by enhancing often overlooked language skills might directly improve certain aspects of teaching effectiveness.

Henry (2020) highlighted that envisioning oneself in future professional scenarios aligned with intrinsic goals and personal values significantly contributes to sustained motivation and effective transformation in teaching approaches. In interview content with Rachel, reflections on shifts in teaching methods and attitudes through engagement in project-based practices are evident. Through PBLL, significant differences from traditional teaching models were experienced, primarily in the implementation of student-centred teaching philosophies (serial No. 4). Rachel observed heightened levels of student initiative, creativity and individuality, traits often subdued in conventional teaching approaches which overly rely on textbooks, limiting space for student exploration and innovation (serial No. 5). Rachel noted that PBLL allows students the opportunity to lead in learning content and approach, with Rachel's role shifting more towards a guide

and participant, offering advice rather than direct knowledge transmission (serial No. 6). Combining analyses from Chapter V and VI, this transformation, though presenting new challenges for the teacher and students, also resulted in positive changes such as increased student engagement, motivation, and enhancement of language skills not prioritised in their everyday English learning.

Rachel did not overlook the challenges and limitations encountered in adopting PBLL (serial No. 7). More specific teacher feedback on these challenges is discussed in subsequent sections to reveal the difficulties faced throughout the teaching process. Nonetheless, a blended strategy was adopted in everyday language classes after the PBLL practice, integrating the strengths experienced during the activity and teaching outcomes unachievable in traditional models, to adjust and improve everyday teaching methods (serial No. 2 & 3). Specific adjustments are elucidated in later sections.

Research on reflective practice indicates that sustained dialogue between teachers and researchers helps practitioners connect theory with action and generate situated pedagogical knowledge (Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021). A case in point emerged in our conversation about classroom language alternation:

Excerpt 7.2. Translation of Teacher-Researcher Discussion

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	Researcher	*I've noticed you and the students sometimes switch between Chinese and English in class, either entire sentences or just individual words. Could you share your thoughts on that?*
2	Rachel	*I think students usually switch languages because they don't know certain words in English or find something difficult to express. But for me, when I switch languages, it's often intentional…I'm thinking about which words students might not know and need explained in Chinese, or words they really should learn in English.*
3	Researcher	*So, language switching for the students is mostly unconscious, but for you, it's a conscious decision?*
4	Rachel	*Yeah…I think my switching is more deliberate. And it's actually quite challenging because I have to carefully consider what students need to learn and how best to help them understand.*

While Rachel was unfamiliar with the term translanguaging, she had long

employed the strategy; she recognised that teachers need to distinguish between student code switching/meshing driven by lexical gaps and teacher-initiated shifts designed to scaffold comprehension while securing new language intake. Such exchanges also led me to reconceptualise curricular and research success as the synergistic interplay of theoretical insight, teacher practical wisdom and collaboration between researchers and teachers. Initially, I may have noticed the practice of translanguaging, but I had not thoroughly considered the distinct purposes underlying the teacher's and students' use of it. However, engaging in this dialogue prompted me towards deeper reflection. Similar instances occurred frequently throughout this study. Continuous dialogues and exchanges of ideas between the teacher and myself during classroom implementation deepened my understanding of both student and teacher practices. At the same time, the discussions also encouraged Rachel to critically reflect on her existing instructional plans and identify areas for improvement.

7.1.2. Rachel's Perceptions of Project-based Language Learning's Influence on Students

Transitioning to the perspective of the teacher in this chapter, Rachel recognised these student changes during PBLL, including subtle shifts of which the students themselves might not have been aware. From the standpoint of Rachel, her evaluation of the impact of PBLL on students furnishes additional insights. Rachel's observations were not confined to the overt changes in student behaviour but also encompassed the implicit alterations in students' learning attitudes, engagement levels, and innovative capacities. These profound insights derive from her continuous attention to the students' learning processes and her deep understanding of pedagogical practices, enabling her to assess the efficacy of this PBLL activity from a unique perspective. Research indicates that the perception of a positive impact of one's teaching on students also fosters teaching motivation among educators (Ahn et al., 2021). Hence, Rachel's awareness of the changes in students throughout the PBLL process is significant. The manifestation of

predominantly positive transformations among students serves as one of the motivations for teachers to optimise the conventional English curriculum after the PBLL practice.

Excerpt 7.3. Translation of Teacher Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	Rachel	*As a teacher, I observe that the most apparent change in students may be in their spoken language skills. Oral expression is less commonly practised in these students' everyday English lessons.*
2	Rachel	*I didn't have high expectations for their oral performance. However, during this project, I was surprised by their spoken language abilities… I found that they exceeded my expectations in oral expression, demonstrating more potential than I had imagined.*
3	Rachel	*I allow them to switch between Chinese and English during the course. For example, if they find it difficult to express certain words or phrases in English, I let them know they can use Chinese instead. I don't require them to solely use English output.*
4	Rachel	*Although I provide them with some learning suggestions, they have a lot of freedom in both the content and the specific arrangements of their studies. Therefore, I haven't directly observed much in terms of listening, reading, and writing. I also haven't used language tests or similar methods to observe their changes.*
5	Rachel	*Every time I see them present in class, I notice they exhibit a more proactive and engaged attitude than during their regular learning process. They also tend to generate more questions about learning methods themselves, actively seeking my guidance, rather than solely asking about specific English language points.*
6	Rachel	*More specifically, I believe there's been significant improvement in students' fluency in spoken language. Initially, they experienced more hesitations during interim presentations, but by the final group presentations, members of each group could present very fluently. Their speaking abilities were captivating and managed to catch the attention of both myself and other classmates.*
7	Rachel	*I can feel the students' happiness and sense of achievement in experiencing their own progress and abilities. Moreover, they generally displayed a pleasant atmosphere of cooperation during these rare collaborative opportunities.*

Rachel has observed that providing students with greater opportunities for self-expression, particularly when allowing for switches between Chinese and English, has unveiled students' unexpectedly adept oral performance abilities (serial No. 1-3). This reveals that within the context of this PBLL, furnishing a translanguaging linguistic environment enables students to express themselves more naturally and

fluidly. García and Kleyn (2016) articulated that translanguaging embodies the process by which multilingual individuals employ multiple languages in linguistic practices to construct their linguistic worlds. In this study's PBLL process, both I and Rachel noted that students seamlessly switched between Chinese and English, integrating the process into a novel system of linguistic expression. Students effectively blended Chinese and English based on their existing language knowledge, achieving linguistic fusion and thereby facilitating comprehension of their expressed ideas by others. This study illustrates that such language switching promotes effective communication and enhances students' confidence and fluency in expression, reflecting advanced integrative capabilities and efficiency in cross-linguistic communication.

Research has voiced concerns and biases against using L1 in the process of learning a target language (Macaro et al., 2020). However, in this study, through classroom behaviour examples in Chapter V, an exploration into the specific practices of students employing translanguaging has been conducted, providing empirical support for the teacher's observations of its effectiveness. Additionally, research supporting the use of translanguaging in CLIL contexts exists, with Nikula and Moore (2019) suggesting that L1 should be regarded as a potentially valuable tool in bilingual learning environments. However, despite discussions on students' fluency in bilingual switching, this study did not employ a definitive method for comparing students' learning outcomes between solely using English for oral output and operating within a bilingual environment; moreover, such a comparison lay beyond the scope of this predominantly exploratory research.

In the specific context of oral performance, although Rachel provided intuitive assessments during interviews, noting a significant improvement in students' fluency in speech (serial No. 6), this study did not measure the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of students' oral expression in further detail. However, the teacher feedback still indicates that the project's requirements afforded students more opportunities for oral output; a gradual reduction in hesitations during

expression suggests that PBLL might not only enhance their linguistic capabilities but also boost their confidence. This observation aligns with Swain's (1993) "Output Hypothesis", which posits that the production of language is an indispensable part of language learning. Engaging in actual language use for communication allows students to advance in the internalisation and application of linguistic knowledge. Output not only facilitates learners' practice of linguistic knowledge but also encourages the development of cognitive mechanisms during the language learning process.

However, Rachel's observations on improvements in students' skills in listening, reading, and writing were less definitive (serial No. 4). This is partly because the PBLL model primarily focused on group collaboration and oral reporting, rendering it challenging for the teacher to assess specific changes in students' listening, reading, and writing skills directly. Despite these limitations, Rachel deemed PBLL's impact on enhancing students' oral skills as significant, noting that oral skills often receive insufficient attention in conventional teaching methods (serial No. 1). Since most students participating in PBLL lacked a strong foundation in oral expression, Rachel communicated that the focus of teaching at this stage should be on stimulating students' interest and confidence in oral expression. Combining the use of the mother tongue and second language, the strategy of encouraging students to express themselves freely effectively motivated them to articulate more fluently.

Furthermore, Rachel also observed an increase in students' engagement and investment in the project. By allowing students to choose their content for presentations and demonstrations on specific topics, the teacher noted a more proactive learning stance among students than is typically observed in everyday English learning processes (serial No. 5). This suggests that PBLL may inspire students' intrinsic motivation, fostering deep thinking and reflection on the learning content, and displaying higher levels of creativity and enthusiasm. Moreover, PBLL facilitated interactions between students and Rachel, with

students not only questioning knowledge points but also discussing how to access resources and solve specific problems encountered in the project (serial No. 5). PBLL emphasises a student-led learning process, with teachers acting as facilitators and resource providers, marking a stark contrast to traditional teaching models.

7.1.3.   Exploring Teaching driven by Education Policy

In Chapter I, I examine China's "Double Reduction" policy for secondary schools, which aims to alleviate students' academic burdens while encouraging schools to adopt more flexible and diverse teaching methods. In this context, Rachel indicated during the interview that engaging in experiments like PBLL allowed her to explore, within the framework of educational policy reforms, the potential for more effective teaching models, thereby providing insights for future improvements in teaching practices.

Implementing PBLL, Rachel found that despite the requirement for the project to be conducted during holidays, implying extra time commitment from both students and teacher, this teaching model could alleviate the pressure on students to complete traditional written assignments during vacations. It is believed to enhance their language skills (particularly oral skills) and learning enthusiasm. Students voluntarily participated in the PBLL practice, and the majority choosing this project over traditional written assignments suggest a preference for engaging and autonomous learning methods when given the option. However, this also places higher demands on the teacher. She must not only innovate in course design and execution but also provide necessary guidance and support throughout the project to ensure students can successfully complete the project and achieve learning objectives. Although this teaching practice demands extra effort from the teacher, it also offers valuable opportunities for professional development and pedagogical inspiration.

Upon completing the entirety of the PBLL process in this study, we can retrospectively assess whether it aligns with some of the expectations set forth by China's current Double Reduction educational policy. Under the PBLL framework, the teacher guided students through real-world project tasks, replacing traditional, mechanical, and repetitive English exercises with practical application of the language. This approach has potentially reduced the time spent consolidating language knowledge and skills through homework. However, it is noteworthy that students were still required to invest additional effort in post-class group discussions, raising the bar for their autonomous learning capabilities. From another perspective, students' participation in collaborative learning and progression through group cooperation did not solely rely on individual effort. During the collective project, team members collaborated, brainstormed, and pooled ideas, fostering creativity and enhancing communication among them. This process allowed for the swift sharing and integration of diverse viewpoints and ideas, facilitating complementarity and the exchange of strengths. Hence, from this angle, group collaboration not only saves time but also lightens the individual learning load for students. The co-construction of knowledge that occurs in such interaction is a hallmark of sociocultural learning theory, which views learning as fundamentally rooted in social activity (Lantolf, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978b).

Within the framework of the Double Reduction policy, which advocates for reducing the burden of extracurricular tutoring, this measure indeed lessens students' extracurricular learning pressures. However, it may also lead to increased responsibilities for school teachers during terms and in-school learning activities. For instance, students may rely on teachers' additional efforts during holidays to reinforce learning content, ensuring educational equity, which occupies teachers' rest time and may amplify their stress, representing one of the significant challenges faced by teachers under the Double Reduction policy. McIntyre et al. (2017) observed that intrinsic motivation is a primary driver of teachers' instructional efforts in the initial stages, yet the pressures of educational reforms could make it challenging for some teachers to sustain their

motivation. The ensuing discussion systematically analyses the challenges and difficulties faced by teachers.

7.2. Theme Seven: Challenges Faced by Rachel

Challenges are evident from interviews with Rachel and comparisons with regular English classes. They stem from various sources: firstly, the current knowledge levels, foundational abilities, and receptiveness to new concepts of both the teacher and students; secondly, the inherent characteristics of PBLL demand adaptability from both parties; and thirdly, unique difficulties may arise when implementing new methods within the specific educational context of China.

Kubanyiova (2009) argued that when teachers construct vivid representations of the practitioner they dread becoming, the feared self energises avoidance oriented motivation and encourages them to seek professional experiences that enhance instructional efficacy. Teachers whose "feared self" is central to their working self concept are markedly more likely to enrol in innovation oriented professional learning in order to address perceived competence gaps (Hiver, 2013). Within China's examination driven context, Rachel's anxiety about becoming a textbook bound instructor unable to foster authentic language use epitomises such a feared self. PBLL, with its emphasis on genuine tasks and tangible products, offers an arena for distancing herself from that negative image and aligns with current curriculum reforms that prioritise learner centred, comprehensive language development.

This theme conducts an analysis of the challenges faced by Rachel during this research process. These challenges have the potential to affect the effectiveness of teaching practice and impose new demands on the teacher's professional development. Although specific solutions to all possible challenges have not yet been proposed under this theme, identifying these issues is a critical first step.

This process reveals existing challenges and prompts relevant researchers and educators to consider how to avoid or mitigate these problems in the future. Recognising these challenges provides a foundation for seeking possible solutions. As will be seen in subsequent discussions, although some of these issues may be beyond Rachel's current capacity to resolve, she actively reflected and took corresponding actions to address some challenges through adjustments in teaching strategies and optimisation of daily teaching.

7.2.1. Challenges Based on Rachel's and Students' Existing Conditions

Before the formal initiation of PBLL in this study, I conducted an in-depth interview with Rachel. Part of the interview aimed to understand the potential challenges and issues she anticipated might arise during the implementation of PBLL. Based on this, I established this subtheme and extracted some key viewpoints she mentioned during the interview. These viewpoints are grounded in the teacher's assessment of her and the students' basic situation prior to the project. From the interview, it is evident that Rachel had a profound understanding of the possible challenges and could accurately grasp potential difficulties. Many of the issues she mentioned did manifest in practice, although some were resolved through various approaches during the project's implementation and learning process. This section, in conjunction with the content of the pre-project interview, explores these challenges themselves and relate them to some subsequent solutions that were implemented.

7.2.1.1. Lack of Systematic Training

> *Before this (PBLL), I had some understanding of it but I had not received systematic training. My knowledge of this method mainly comes from related books and hearing about practices in some foreign or domestic schools… Therefore, my grasp of this method is limited to the theoretical level and is neither comprehensive nor in-depth.*
> —Rachel

Firstly, Rachel mentioned that she has not formally received "systematic training" for PBLL, and her understanding of PBLL mainly derived from "related books" and sporadic information from others' practices. Consequently, her comprehension was "neither comprehensive nor in-depth". This lack of systematic training may lead to an inability to fully grasp the core concepts and implementation strategies of PBLL in actual teaching, thereby affecting teaching effectiveness.

> *Although I previously had some awareness, due to a lack of practical opportunities, I had not truly applied this method in daily teaching. This approach is a new challenge for both me and the students. While I have some theoretical understanding, there are many unknown factors in actual operation that I cannot anticipate in advance. —Rachel*

The practice of PBLL was novel for both Rachel and students. This novelty brought uncertainty and anxiety; Rachel worried about unforeseen classroom issues, and students might also feel unaccustomed to the new learning method.

Farrell and Sugrue (2021) pointed out that uncertainty is common in the process of educational change, and teachers need to possess the ability to adapt to and cope with changes. Research indicates that teachers' professional development and training are crucial for the successful implementation of new teaching methods and for enhancing student learning outcomes (Sancar et al., 2021). Without sufficient training, teachers may encounter difficulties in designing projects, guiding students, and evaluating outcomes. Therefore, systematic training is important for improving teachers' professional competence and teaching effectiveness.

In the methodology section, it is mentioned that I engaged in in-depth discussions with Rachel on how to implement this PBLL. We collaboratively devised the plan for this PBLL, which constituted some teacher training for Rachel and, to some extent, alleviated the pressure arising from her unfamiliarity with this teaching method.

7.2.1.2.   Challenges of Students' Learning Motivation

I am concerned about the students' state because this is during the holidays, and they may not be in their optimal learning condition. Holidays are usually meant for relaxation, and undertaking learning tasks during this period may weaken their motivation. Moreover, this method is novel to them… although other studies may show good results, I cannot be certain whether it will genuinely stimulate their interest… Therefore, our choice of topic becomes particularly important. It is indeed challenging to stimulate students' learning interest and initiative during the holidays. —Rachel

Rachel was concerned that teaching during the holidays might dampen students' learning motivation. Holidays are usually a time for students to rest, and adding learning tasks may cause resistance. To overcome this challenge, teachers may need to design engaging projects related to students' lives to enhance their participation. Self-Determination Theory suggests that when students are interested in the learning content, they are more likely to invest time and energy (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Therefore, the selection and design of the project needed to fully consider students' interests and potential practical needs.

Considering the data analysis and discussions in Chapter VI, Rachel's anticipation regarding student motivation was perceptive. In that chapter, the students' learning motivation during the actual course sessions was examined. Over the duration of this PBLL, most students demonstrated a process where external motivation gradually became internalised. Students' interviews indicates that this outcome was partly due to the careful consideration of the choice of the topic. We selected a topic that was relatively easy for students to engage with: travel. The project's final product was in the form of short videos, which students frequently encounter in their extracurricular life, closely related to their daily experiences. Students also reported in interviews that this combination of familiar and everyday content positively impacted their learning motivation, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter. Therefore, Rachel's concerns about student learning motivation were addressed to some extent in the subsequent course design.

However, the data analysis in Chapter VI also reveals that some students exhibited

a lack of motivation during the actual participation process. This is mainly because the online communication mode during the holidays might distract their attention, and the group collaboration introduced unfamiliarity and a sense of strangeness, which in turn affected some students' motivation.

7.2.1.3.   Challenge of Meeting Diverse Student Needs

Additionally, since it is the holiday period, I cannot overly intervene in their learning process or make excessive demands. This makes me worry that when communicating with students, I may not be able to understand their progress promptly, leading to a disconnect in teaching… Each student group may face completely different problems, which requires me to have strong adaptability. —Rachel

The diversity among students implied that Rachel needed to provide personalised support tailored to different requirements. Moreover, as students are given more freedom in this study, Rachel worried that she might not fully understand students' progress during holiday, potentially "leading to a disconnect in teaching". In PBLL, students exhibit a high degree of autonomy, but this does not diminish the teacher's role. On the contrary, effective PBLL requires continuous guidance and feedback from teachers (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). During the subsequent PBLL practice, Rachel generally responded to the various needs of students, as observed in classroom settings. The main student needs and the corresponding teacher strategies are summarised in the table below:

Table 7.1. Students' needs and Rachel's Responses

Student Needs	Teacher Responses
Need for learning resources	Provided relevant websites or e-books for students to reference.
Need for technical support	Offered guidance on video production techniques.
Need for guidance and feedback	Listened to students' weekly progress reports and provided appropriate feedback based on their progress.
Need for teamwork support	Gave guidance on strategies and skills for teamwork, such as setting common goals, establishing communication channels, and resolving team conflicts.

However, Rachel was not the direct solver of all student problems. In some cases, the questions raised by students required them to explore and think deeply on

their own. Rachel needed to encourage students to develop independent problem-solving abilities rather than allowing over-reliance on teacher guidance. Based on the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), when students encounter confusion, teachers can provide thinking cues or directional suggestions to guide them in autonomous inquiry (Xi & Lantolf, 2021). Rachel also adopted such strategies. For example, in the classroom scenario recorded below, a group of students engaged in an extended discussion with the teacher on a particular issue. Instead of providing direct answers, Rachel helped students gradually clarify their thoughts through questioning and guidance. Only when students were unable to solve the problem after independent attempts did Rachel offer more direct support.

Excerpt 7.4. Classroom Observation: Conversation between Rachel and Students

Serial No.	Speaker	Content	Note
1	S	*Rachel, do you have any resources on the Egypt tourism?*	
2	T	*I suggest you first try searching **Baidu** for information on it, or check **Bilibili** for some introductory videos. This will help you get a clearer picture of the information available.*	Provide channels for searching for information rather than directly offering tourism information about Egypt.
3		(One week later)	
4	S	*Rachel, last week after we find information online, we choose topic about Red Sea and think about to do a project related to those plants and animals are under the water. How do you think about this idea?*	
5	T	*I think it's a highly creative and fresh theme. If you feel the current information isn't enough, you can also search for additional sources from media outlets and news platforms. Alternatively, you could expand the theme beyond just the Red Sea and focus on a particular ocean feature. Both options are worth considering.*	Provide two options for students to consider, but they won't be required to choose either.
6		(Discussion process among students)	
7	S	*Rachel, since you are here, we would like to tell you our newest thought on our project. So we decide to make this project more specific on those… coral…reefs in Red Sea. Cause we learned that Red Sea has the most coral reefs on the world…*	In the end, the group can decide independently how to further develop the production

The dialogue above is an original excerpt from a classroom discussion between the teacher and students conducted in English. From the observed teacher behaviours in the above excerpt, Rachel employed a facilitative teaching strategy, focusing on cultivating students' autonomous learning and critical thinking abilities. When students asked for resources related to tourism in Egypt and the Red Sea, the teacher did not provide direct answers. Instead, she encouraged them to explore independently through various means, such as using Baidu (a Chinese online search engine similar to Google), Bilibili (a Chinese video-sharing website similar to YouTube), and media or news resources. This approach helps students develop information retrieval skills and broadens their horizons through diverse resources, leading to better multidimensional understanding. When faced with students' theme discussions, Rachel offered two options for them to consider, maintaining their autonomy while providing guiding suggestions on the discussion content. Overall, Rachel cultivated students' active learning awareness through open-ended answers and encouraging feedback: she did not force students to think in a fixed way but provided flexible solutions to guide them towards deeper exploration and discussion.

However, teachers cannot always fully meet all student needs, especially in providing support in certain specialised technical areas which they are not familiar with. For example, as is be discussed below, Rachel's limitations in video technology within this project exemplify her inability to completely help students resolve all difficulties during PBLL.

7.2.1.4. Challenge of Technical Abilities

> *I'm also concerned about whether I can solve all the students' issues, especially when it comes to video production. Although I possess some basic technical skills, if students wish to perform more advanced operations, I'm unsure whether I can meet their diverse learning needs. This is also a point of concern for me. —Rachel*

Rachel was concerned whether her technical abilities can meet student needs,

particularly in video production. In PBLL, due to the diversity of project formats, there may be higher requirements for students' multimedia production abilities, such as video production in this PBLL. However, Rachel's previous teaching experience mainly focused on language teaching, particularly textbook-centred English instruction. Although she possessed some skills in short video production, she is not a teacher specialised in this content. Therefore, she might also need to continue learning relevant knowledge and skills to better support students' learning needs. If students wish to learn complex operations, it may exceed her own capabilities, leading to an inability to provide comprehensive guidance. This limitation in technical ability affected the support Rachel can offer.

On the other hand, while video production is not mandatory in PBLL due to the diversity of project formats, recent advancements in educational technology have expanded the potential applications of PBLL (e.g., Joo & Jin, 2024; Shi et al., 2024). However, during the practice of this PBLL, the teacher involved in this study showed limited interest in exploring or developing educational technology skills. Even though main PBLL courses were conducted online, interviews revealed that both Rachel and students lacked enthusiasm about talking this delivery mode. In the current climate of widespread discussion about educational technology, it is important to pause and critically consider whether the integration of technology is genuinely necessary across different language learning approaches, rather than using technology merely for the sake of doing so.

7.2.2.   Challenges Arising from the Characteristics of PBLL

Some of these challenges potentially stem from differences between PBLL and traditional teaching methods. These differences necessitate corresponding adjustments from both Rachel and students. Therefore, many challenges can be considered to directly originate from the inherent characteristics of PBLL itself. The challenges inherent in PBLL are mainly discussed from two perspectives: limitations in time and resources, and difficulties in assessing PBLL.

7.2.2.1. Time and Resources Constraints

This subtheme explores the issues of time and resource constraints encountered during the PBLL implementation process. Regarding time constraints, the analysis is multi-dimensional, revealing its complexity. This involves not only the allocation and management of Rachel's time but also the occupation of students' time and the distinct challenges that holiday and term time allocations may pose for project implementation. In terms of resource limitations, the study also highlights the challenges students face in correctly utilising and finding resources.

Excerpt 7.5. Translation of Teacher Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	Rachel	*In the past, holiday tasks like this have been quite rare for us. I admit that doing this project did take up some holiday time. If we want to make it a regular thing during holidays in the future, I'd hope for some additional funding support and so on.*
2	Rachel	*Sometimes, students may need to use VPN to find English resources online, but in reality, this isn't compliant with regulations.*
3	Rachel	*During the semester, students have limited access to the school's computer labs for researching relevant materials, and the websites they can visit are also strictly restricted.*

In the preliminary and mid-stages of the PBLL process undertaken in this study, the projects were primarily scheduled during students' holidays, diverging from the traditional scenario where students only needed to complete written assignments without the necessity to maintain communication with English teachers. This alteration impacted the Rachel's originally planned holiday rest periods and imposed additional workloads, generating extra stress (serial No. 1). Fortuitously, Rachel involved in this project participated voluntarily and with an exploratory spirit. However, considering long-term sustainability, relying solely on teachers' intrinsic motivation may not suffice to ensure the continuous quality of the project. Therefore, if there is an aspiration to substitute holiday written assignments with PBLL, financial support from schools and the government might be requisite.

On the other hand, situating PBLL during the term also presents significant challenges concerning students' time management. Students are already encumbered with a heavy load of coursework during the term, not limited to English learning but also encompassing the study demands of other subjects, which occupy most of their weekday time. PBLL typically requiring lengthy durations and group cooperation, poses difficulties in coordinating all group members' free time for collaborative study within the term. Moreover, group discussions may necessitate continuous periods of an hour or longer, a substantial challenge for students during the term. Furthermore, during the PBLL process, students must use the limited time in each discussion to review, prepare, and proactively plan learning content (F. L. Stoller & Myers, 2019). Given that students must also tackle homework and assimilate knowledge from numerous other subjects, this could significantly increase the time students need to invest in preparing for each project discussion by reviewing previous progress and content.

Resource constraints represent another critical consideration. The flexibility of the project requires students to explore and perform autonomously. PBLL often demands that topics are closely related to students' real-life experiences (Beckett & Slater, 2019), enabling them to enrich their presentations using internet resources and personal experiences. However, when topics shift towards more complex areas, such as environmental issues, students might not find sufficient inspiration and information from their experiences. They may need to rely more on the internet to find relevant materials, not only increasing the complexity of learning but also imposing higher demands on their information retrieval skills. On one hand, students might struggle to identify key information accurately; on the other hand, if teachers cannot provide sufficient foundational materials, students may deviate from the main focus while searching for resources autonomously.

Additionally, Chinese students often face restrictions in accessing foreign internet resources during English learning projects (serial No. 2), potentially impeding

smooth access to necessary information and affecting learning motivation. The inadequacy of information sources and content limits students' ability to efficiently complete projects and might also further diminish their engagement and enthusiasm. Another significant aspect of resource constraints relates to students' use of electronic devices. During holidays, parents might more leniently allow the use of smartphones and tablets for accessing online resources. However, upon returning to term time, many Chinese schools' policies typically prohibit the use of smart devices or internet access on campus. Even if online resource searching is permitted, it is restricted to specific times in the school's computer lab, with content limitations (serial No. 3). This policy stems from concerns over students' potential over-reliance on and misuse of smart devices. However, this restriction might result in insufficient information access in PBLL, which demands high flexibility, thus posing challenges to implementing PBLL during the term.

7.2.2.2. Difficulty in Assessing Project-based Language Learning

The evaluation process of PBLL can be scrutinised from multiple dimensions. Foremost, this evaluation incorporates a self-assessment component by the students themselves, as we have discussed in the preceding chapter. During their journey through PBLL, students engaged in a process of self-reflection, assessing their own learning status and progress. Given that, for many students, this PBLL approach represents a novel endeavour, devoid of previous benchmarks and references, they often found it challenging to accurately evaluate their current learning situation and progress. Consequently, throughout the learning journey, it is imperative for students to engage in ongoing communication with their teachers to receive feedback, thereby gaining timely guidance and support.

Teacher feedback can be categorised into two forms: firstly, through listening to students' periodic presentations during weekly sessions and providing immediate feedback, including commentary on current progress and suggestions; and secondly, through a comprehensive evaluation conducted at the project's

conclusion, which typically includes an assessment of the students' project outcomes as well as an evaluation of each student's learning situation (Beckett & Slater, 2019). In this PBLL process, the provision of immediate feedback by Rachel was a continual practice. Feedback from students indicates that instructional guidance is immensely beneficial to them. However, a notable shortfall in this assessment was the absence of a summative evaluation following project completion. Rachel highlighted what she perceived as the main challenges in conducting evaluations in PBLL in the future, particularly concerning the provision of comprehensive evaluations to students after project completion. This section further elucidates the specifics of this evaluative component and the challenges faced by Rachel.

Excerpt 7.6. Translation of Teacher Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	Rachel	*In the past, student learning outcomes were typically assessed through written exam scores, focusing more on their listening, reading, and writing abilities.*
2	Rachel	*During this project, although I could visit various student discussion groups during class to check their discussions and help them with questions, I didn't participate in the main discussion sessions they had after class. Therefore, I'm unaware of their specific discussions and how each individual contributed.*

In contrast to the traditional English learning assessment methods employed by teacher Rachel, the evaluation content and strategies adopted in PBLL differ markedly. Within conventional learning settings, assessments often focus on foundational language learner abilities such as vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, utilising specific exercises to test students' reading, listening, and writing skills (serial No. 1). Moreover, schools typically prepare an extensive question bank based on the students' grade and the units being studied, to measure their English learning outcomes. However, in the PBLL context, the focus of language learning shifts towards productive language skills such as communicative ability and oral skills. This shift not only presents a challenge to a teacher's experience in assessing students' oral competencies but also highlights a lack of corresponding assessment standards within schools. The nature of PBLL

demands that assessment content be comprehensive, encompassing not only language learning but also extending to cognitive abilities, problem-solving skills, planning capabilities, and the practical production of project deliverables (Beckett & Slater, 2019). These multidimensional assessment contents transcend the scope of traditional language learning, complicating the evaluation of students' project outcomes for the teacher.

On the other hand, PBLL often relies on a cooperative learning model among students. However, in practice, the discussion process among students might not be fully monitored by the teacher (serial No. 2). Despite weekly presentations by groups, where representatives provide systematic progress reports, such reports often reflect the collective performance of the group rather than the specific contributions of individual members. This poses a challenge for the teacher in understanding students' personalised learning situations, leading to potentially less specific and detailed evaluations of individual students' learning states and project completion capabilities.

The comprehensive nature of these evaluations requires teachers to develop more detailed assessment standards for each category in the future. Achieving this goal may be challenging through the efforts of teachers alone. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to seek support and collaboration from peers and engage in professional discussions. Additionally, support from schools might make the evaluation process more thorough and authoritative. Such multifaceted collaboration and support are instrumental in establishing a more detailed and accurate assessment system, thereby effectively enhancing the quality and efficiency of PBLL evaluations.

7.2.3. Discrepancy between Exam Requirements and Project-based Language Learning Outcomes

In the previous discussion, I highlight that one of the principal challenges in

assessment arose from the emphasis on changes in students' English oral proficiency within the project. Assessing students' learning outcomes from the perspective of oral performance appears to be the most direct and effective method within the PBLL process. However, within the current Chinese secondary school system for the National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao), oral proficiency in English is not considered a core evaluative criterion, leading to a scenario where teachers do not place significant emphasis on assessing students' speaking skills in the daily educational process. Under these circumstances, teacher Rachel found it challenging to evaluate students' oral proficiency against the rigorous and detailed assessment criteria akin to those used by IELTS or TOEFL examiners, as these standards involve precise and detailed evaluation rules, presenting both a knowledge gap and a skill enhancement challenge (serial No. 1 in Excerpt 7.7.).

Excerpt 7.7. Translation of Teacher Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	Rachel	*Because our important exams don't assess students' oral skills, I admit I lack systematic experience in assessing students' speaking abilities. I can only roughly assess their oral proficiency based on my subjective judgment and experience.*
2	Rachel	*If oral skills were part of the exam, I'd certainly dedicate more time to improving students' speaking abilities. However, the reality is that oral skills aren't tested in exams, and there are many other things students need to learn during the semester. It's challenging to allocate a significant amount of time to improving students' oral skills. Moreover, parents and students find it difficult to support such efforts in the long term because exam scores, particularly in the highly competitive context of China's large student population, determine university admission.*

Should oral proficiency become a component of the Gaokao assessment criteria, Rachel expressed a willingness to undertake systematic training and learning to improve students' abilities in this domain. However, given that the current Gaokao system does not emphasise oral skills, both teachers and students may not prioritise it (serial No. 1). The investment of substantial time and energy into projects not directly related to Gaokao requirements may raise concerns among students, parents, and teachers (serial No. 2). They might perceive that projects

based solely on students' interests rather than examination needs not only consume valuable time but also require additional teacher effort, efforts that may not be reflected in the Gaokao outcomes, thus presenting several disadvantages. Therefore, although students reported positive experiences with the project, implementing such PBLL, which is not directly aligned with examination requirements, necessitates that they allocate time from their regular study schedules during the semester to complete it. This situation places additional pressure on teachers and parents, potentially eliciting their scepticism about the actual value of this method. Students, already immersed in a demanding academic environment, must spend extra time participating in these activities. Even if initially enjoyable, under the strain of academic pressures, these experiences may become burdensome.

7.3. Theme Eight: Communication and Creativity

The experiential and learning processes of teachers are not merely about translating knowledge and theory into practice but involve constructing new knowledge and theories through participation in a variety of teaching activities and processes within specific social contexts, thereby acquiring practical knowledge (Lantolf et al., 2020). The pedagogical practices of teachers are inextricably linked to the specific teaching contexts within which they operate. Rachel, through interaction with these environments and as a participant within PBLL activities, engaged not only in facilitating student learning but also in continual self-improvement. This theme demonstrates the dialectical reflection and implementation of teaching plans by Rachel during the course of teaching activities, as well as how Rachel integrated teaching inspirations acquired from new pedagogical activities (PBLL) into routine English language teaching, enhancing students' learning experiences.

In this study, Rachel demonstrated a pedagogical transformation through the

implementation of PBLL. Instead of mechanically following the predetermined PBLL framework, she flexibly adjusted teaching activities based on students' real-time needs, classroom feedback, and her own interpretations of PBLL. This transformation aligns closely with the findings of Potvin et al. (2021), who examined teachers' shifts in instructional practice through Project-based Learning in English language arts classrooms. Their study reveals that the deep and enduring transformation of teachers' pedagogical practices does not solely depend on external curriculum frameworks and support but importantly involves teachers' own initiative and adaptability in instructional practices. They describe teachers' autonomous adaptations and curriculum reinventions as a "shift in ownership", signifying a role transition from passive curriculum implementers to active curriculum creators. Specifically, Potvin et al. identified key drivers in teachers' implementation of project-based learning, such as building strong classroom relationships, increasing student engagement, gradually forming their personal philosophies of project-based instruction, and actively adapting and reinventing content and formats to respond effectively to students' needs and contexts.

These factors are also prominently reflected in Rachel's teaching practices. Rachel particularly emphasised learner autonomy, flexibly adjusted classroom content, and actively responded to student feedback. Through continual reflection and reinvention of her instructional strategies within the PBLL context, Rachel integrated inspirations from Project-based Teaching into her daily classroom practices. This approach exemplifies teachers' agency in achieving long-term pedagogical change and the sustainable scaling of curriculum innovation.

7.3.1. Rachel's Subjective Initiative

This subtheme focuses on Rachel's agency during the implementation of PBLL. Prior to commencing PBLL, discussions were held with Rachel to explore our understanding of this method, and relevant literature and case studies were provided for her study. Through this preparatory engagement, she developed an

understanding of PBLL and formed her own interpretations. Building on this foundation, Rachel did not mechanically adhere to the established PBLL frameworks and models. Upon organising and reviewing the data, Rachel's agency particularly reflected in three aspects: conceptualising learning progression, focusing on the learner, and rethinking scaffolding for learner development (Meyer, Halbach, et al., 2015). By reviewing excerpts from classroom observations and analysing data from interviews conducted with Rachel at different stages, I illustrated how she exercised her agency.

7.3.1.1. Conceptualising Learning Progression

In this study, conceptualising learning progression referred specifically to: the students' spoken interactions as they collaborated on tasks, often moving fluidly between Chinese and English to negotiate meaning; the written plans and notes they produced; and the final group presentations they created. These presentations, combining images, text, and speech, served as a key site for demonstrating their understandings of cultural diversity and Global Englishes. This process, where cognitive and linguistic abilities interact, is akin to building with Lego bricks; it allows students to express progressively deeper understanding through increasingly complex communicative forms (Meyer et al., 2015).

This progression was observed as an iterative process throughout the project in this study. Initially, in the early weeks, students' discussions and outputs established a preliminary framework. As the weeks advanced, their interactions showed growing sophistication. They began to refine and expand upon their group's goals and content, using their plurilingual resources more strategically to explain ideas and argue points. The development from scattered initial thoughts to a coherent final project deliverable exemplifies the journey of assembling fragments into a complete structure.

Before the commencement of this PBLL initiative, Rachel developed her own

understanding of this learning approach. In our discussions, I initially designed a series of activities based on existing PBLL literature, pre-planning different, progressively staged arrangements for each week. However, Rachel preferred to delegate more autonomy and decision-making power to the students, allowing them to direct their own progress. She monitored each group's actual learning progress by listening to their weekly reports and provided flexible, targeted advice accordingly. Below, I present a segment from our earlier discussions:

Excerpt 7.8. Translation of Teacher Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	Rachel	*After discussing the class structure with you, I have a clearer understanding of the process and objectives of this model. However, I must admit that I haven't implemented similar models frequently in previous classroom practices.*
2	Rachel	*I believe we don't necessarily have to adhere strictly to a predetermined course framework. We can use a process and timelines as general references and then provide targeted guidance to each group based on their actual weekly progress.*
3	Rachel	*What I mean is that during my weekly online interactions with the students, the main activity is for each group to report as a unit. This allows the groups to understand each other's progress, thereby reflecting on their own situation, while further handing over the classroom stage to the students. They can select a representative within their group each week to conduct the report, primarily in English. Of course, if they prefer to report in Chinese, that's acceptable as well. I will encourage them to use the target language to share their progress, but they can switch to Chinese whenever they feel they cannot express themselves clearly in more complex areas or when they can't recall certain expressions.*
4	Rachel	*The original course framework may appear somewhat idealistic. We can assume that most students will follow this implementation path, but there is no need to enforce perfect synchronisation of progress across all groups.*

Rachel made personalised adjustments to the implementation steps of PBLL. During the PBLL process, the participating teacher required students to deliver weekly progress reports and provided immediate feedback to ensure the effective implementation of the teaching plan. Initial course planning involved the teacher leading students in reviewing travel-related vocabulary and sentence structures, as well as instructing in video production and editing skills. However, communication with students revealed that, due to their extensive exposure to

smart devices like smartphones during holidays and their consumption of a considerable amount of online information and videos on popular platforms such as Douyin (TikTok), many students were already familiar with the use of smart devices and video production techniques. Students felt there was no need to dedicate classroom time specifically to learning these production techniques. Based on student feedback, the teacher adjusted the approach by eliminating the dedicated video production learning segment. Instead, she introduced a segment at the beginning of each class for each group to select a representative to deliver a progress report in English, not exceeding five minutes. This practice not only enabled Rachel to monitor the weekly progress of each group, ensuring that students could autonomously plan learning details and receive timely assistance but also provided additional opportunities for oral practice. This flexibility in teaching strategy demonstrates the teacher's respect for student feedback and the ability to adaptively adjust the teaching process, aiming to optimise learning outcomes and enhance student engagement.

Rachel chose not to predefine the tasks students needed to complete each week but allowed them to make more flexible adjustments based on their group's actual situation and focal points (serial No. 2 & 3). For instance, classroom observations revealed that some groups required more time in the early stages to collect materials because their projects involved discussions on certain aspects across multiple locations, possibly necessitating more than a week. Other groups might only introduce a small theme such as their hometown, spending less time gathering information initially. However, in the later stages, when focusing on phases like video production, they might need to invest more time to refine their work. Thus, Rachel took into account the potential differences between groups. Given that much of the content presentation was entrusted to the students, she believed there was no need to stipulate weekly tasks, as each group's circumstances varied.

Although Rachel did not follow the predetermined activity flow I initially designed,

she referred to conventional steps and timelines to guide the students (serial No. 4). When she found a group's progress lagging, she promptly provided support during weekly feedback, enquiring about the assistance they needed and helping them address shortcomings to catch up. Conversely, when she noticed a group progressing rapidly, she focused more on the refinement of their content, offering detailed guidance and suggestions. Based on their learning needs, she advised them to concentrate on specific aspects.

7.3.1.2. Focusing on the Learner

In the previous section on teacher agency, it has already become evident that Rachel placed the focus on her students. By adjusting the PBLL design, she fostered students' autonomous learning and critical thinking abilities, which aligns seamlessly with the student-centred emphasis of communicative language teaching and learning (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). While the earlier section primarily addressed the teacher's proactive adjustments to the classroom before the course began, aimed at making the learning process more flexible for students, this section concentrates on how the teacher responded to needs emerging during the students' learning process. Here, I analyse selected conversations between Rachel and me, connecting with the actual circumstances of this PBLL class.

Excerpt 7.9. Translation of Teacher Interview

Serial No.	Speaker	Content
1	Rachel	*Travel is an important theme in our textbooks, with relevant units almost every academic year. These units might cover various destinations worldwide or even students' hometowns. Given students' diverse personal experiences, I think it serves as a great starting point for introducing new learning modes.*
2	Rachel	*I can't predict what specific content students will share in class, so I listen attentively each time they share, allowing me to address their questions effectively. Also, unlike usual classes where I prepare in advance and know roughly what I'll say, this approach places higher demands on my own English communication skills.*

During the implementation of this project, the teacher made various adaptive adjustments to PBLL to meet the specific needs of the students in the participating

class. Having taught these students for a year, the teacher had a good understanding of their basic language learning situation and capabilities, providing a foundation for targeted adjustments. For example, as mentioned in previous sections, the topic of travel was selected based on its positive reception and enthusiastic attitude from the majority of students during interviews. Most students had rich personal experiences with the topic and found the content engaging, leading to the topic being determined through joint consultation between me and Rachel.

Rachel shared that the textbooks currently used by the students covered travel-related topics, such as global or local travel, in each academic year (serial No. 1). Selecting this theme not only aligned with regular course content but also aided students in revisiting past learning and preparing for future related units. From a research perspective, using topics that students are familiar with and that are emphasised in daily teaching materials as entry points can better persuade parents, as well as researchers and language teachers in related fields in China, to recognise the connection between this method and regular curricula, thereby promoting transformations in language teaching and learning methodologies.

Additionally, as previously discussed in Chapter VI, the students in this class were not very familiar with collaborative models and group learning methods. They expressed a desire to be grouped with peers they knew well and preferred smaller group sizes to facilitate clear work division. These requests were made during classroom discussions between Rachel and students. Rachel showed full respect and provided reasonable responses, reflecting her high level of attentiveness to the students. An analysis of the teacher–student interactions regarding the grouping process can be revisited in Chapter VI.

Furthermore, the earlier mentioned allowance for students to use translanguaging also exemplifies Rachel's consideration of student needs. Although PBLL is primarily a language course, in this instance, the teacher did not impose strict

standards on students' language expression. Instead, she focused on their personal articulation and performance, permitting and encouraging them to utilise the target language more flexibly, even combining with their mother tongue. Traditional classroom observations revealed that the teacher typically dominated daily communications with students, who offered limited feedback and responses. The traditional class was mainly teacher-led, involving guiding students through reading assigned materials, explaining teaching materials and illustrating knowledge points, and discussing exercises. However, within the PBLL environment, which required substantial student output, the teacher had to adopt a more listening-oriented role.

As previously analysed, the teacher recognised that in the PBLL process, allowing students' coherent oral output without interruption was more important than constantly correcting the accuracy of their content. This reflected a teaching philosophy that encouraged students to express themselves confidently; such continuous listening opportunities rarely occurred in regular teaching. Moreover, the teacher flexibly utilised both Chinese and English in the project, aiming to more effectively guide students, especially in project segments not directly related to English learning, such as video production guidance. This linguistic strategy helped students understand some of the more challenging aspects more quickly and put them into practice. Notably, PBLL required the teacher to improvise in response to different groups' performances in class, challenging her linguistic preparedness and promoting the development of her language skills and teaching strategies (serial No. 2).

7.3.1.3.   Rethinking Scaffolding for Learner Development

The final part of this subtheme discusses Rachel's reconsideration of providing scaffolding to students. As noted in the literature review, scaffolding is not merely about supplying sufficient materials; it encompasses a variety of activities and content, constituting a comprehensive process where the key lies in tapping into

students' potential (Meyer, Halbach, et al., 2015). In this study, after the students formally commenced PBLL, Rachel expressed during subsequent discussions with me:

> *Now, the weekly online interactions with them feel less like teaching and more like I have become a member of their groups, engaging in discussions and jointly completing the final project deliverables. I am delighted to witness the process of each group's work evolving step by step from initial conception into tangible final products, which has given me a great sense of accomplishment.* —Rachel

In addition to providing timely and targeted feedback each week based on the new situations students encountered, Rachel actively participated in the students' knowledge construction process. The teacher became more like a member of each group; as she herself stated, she felt she was indeed part of each team. She offered constructive suggestions to each group, observing their projects gradually take shape from initial frameworks to final presentations. She was not merely a facilitator but a co-builder alongside the students. This level of involvement brought her great joy; she felt that learning and progressing together with the students allowed her to provide effective scaffolding. Ultimately, the teacher found that once group members had clear ideas, they no longer required extensive assistance from her. At this point, she transitioned more into a listener, appreciating and enjoying students' products.

7.3.2. Everyday Classroom Transformation

This subtheme explores the changes in Rachel's daily instruction following the completion of PBLL. After the course ended and the students returned to their regular English classes, Rachel did not entirely retain her previous teaching model but implemented certain modifications. These adjustments were based on key points she identified as beneficial to students during the PBLL process, which she integrated with the actual teaching context to fine-tune her original daily English curriculum. This practice is theoretically grounded in the Postmethod Pedagogy

(Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006b). Rachel embraced the concepts of focusing on student development, valuing student achievements, and adopting a student-centred approach. Although Rachel could not completely overhaul the traditional classroom model, her attempts to adjust aspects of daily instruction through new teaching methods offer valuable insights for future language educators particularly in the Chinese context.

In practice, the teacher behaviours discussed in the previous subtheme were partially extended into her subsequent courses, leading to transformations in her daily teaching. After the PBLL course concluded, I continued to observe Rachel's regular English classes for a month and maintained ongoing discussions with her. Through classroom observations, I found that Rachel's curriculum adjustments were grounded in her rethinking of the students' learning processes and a heightened focus on the students themselves, aiming to cultivate their independent thinking and autonomous learning abilities.

Throughout the implementation of this PBLL initiative, both Rachel and students deeply experienced the challenges, difficulties, and issues encountered during the project learning process. It was evident that replicating the PBLL environment in regular teaching, given the various limitations previously discussed, posed a challenge. Nonetheless, Rachel endeavoured to incorporate the advantages of training students' language skills that she had learned from PBLL into her everyday lessons. This attempt not only showcased Rachel's adaptability and transformation following teaching practice but also provided an opportunity to observe how elements of project learning could be effectively integrated into traditional teaching models, thereby offering students a more dynamic and interactive learning environment.

A notable adaptation was Rachel's inclusion of a weekly session for student-selected topic presentations. Students continued to prepare autonomously in a collaborative manner, with each sharing session lasting approximately five to ten

minutes. Recognising the limited availability of extended periods for large-scale, long-term collaborative projects during the term, Rachel opted to replace them with smaller-scale projects, shortening the original month-long project duration. This approach aimed to continue preparing students in teamwork skills and allowed them weekly opportunities to select topics of interest for in-depth exploration and report preparation. This method maintained the opportunity for oral output and expanded their accumulation of English expressions related to real-life topics.

Although the production of tangible outcomes was not mandated, students were encouraged to create according to their preference, such as designing posters to introduce their chosen topics (like Figure 7.1), ensuring student agency. Students could select any topic of recent interest, including entertainment, social hotspots, and other diverse themes, aiming to spark student attention and discussion on current events and topics. Students were also free to decide whether to use PowerPoint (like Figure 7.3) or other aids for their presentations. The core of this classroom activity was to provide an open platform for students to share their chosen topics in the first five to ten minutes of the English class, enriching their knowledge and honing their oral skills. By allowing students to choose their research topics, the aim was to stimulate their intrinsic motivation and interest, thereby fostering more active participation and in-depth exploration in the learning process.

Figure 7.1. One of the Students' Weekly Report Product

Figure 7.2. Classroom Presentation Live Screenshot
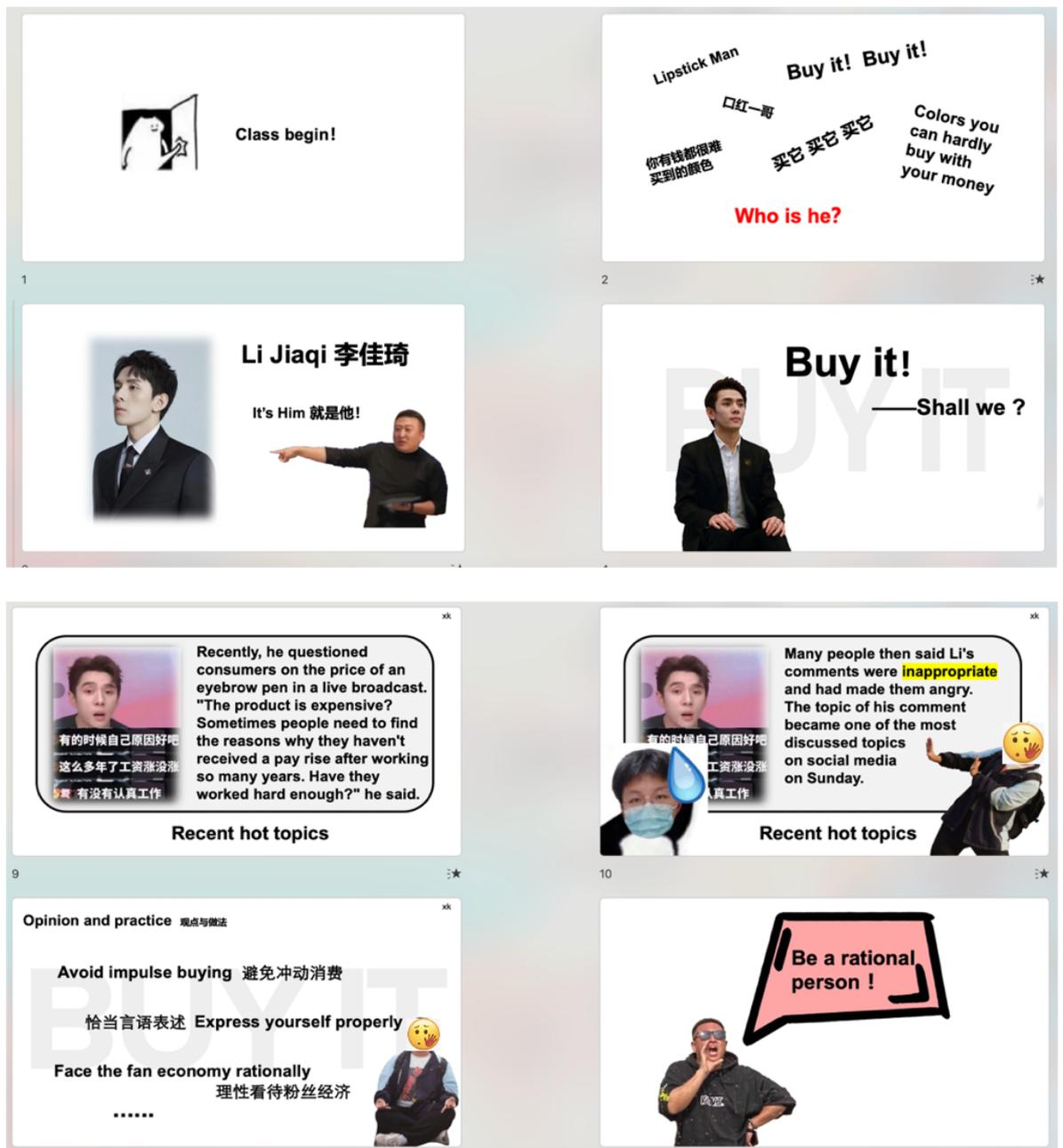
Figure 7.3. Excerpts from the PPT Content Created by Students

A scene depicted in Figure 7.2 showcases a moment from one of these student-led presentations before the class, where two students shared content with their classmates and teacher using a meticulously prepared PowerPoint. The topic revolved around a then-prominent internet celebrity in China, who had sparked public controversy with inappropriate remarks, drawing widespread attention. The students' presentation was not only engaging but also utilised an entertaining and lively PowerPoint, eliciting laughter and resonance from the audience. Figure 7.3 revealed their mastery of various presentation techniques, such as integrating

images with text and controlling the amount of text per PowerPoint slide to avoid overwhelming the audience.

They employed a combination of Chinese and English to facilitate better understanding among their peers, incorporating humorous images to capture their attention, exemplifying a successful approach to PowerPoint creation and presentation. According to Rachel, the students had not received formal training in PowerPoint creation. Therefore, it can be inferred that the students independently learned and accumulated these presentation skills through observing Rachel's regular demonstrations, self-exploration, and consulting relevant materials. This not only demonstrated the students' self-learning capability but also pleasantly surprised Rachel. These presentations not only provided the speaking students with new ways of expressing themselves in English but also offered a learning platform for other students and the teacher to gain valuable perspectives and target language expressions from the presentations.

Viewed through a translanguaging lens, Figure 7.3 illustrates how learners activated their entire linguistic and semiotic repertoires to construct meaning and foster collective knowledge building in class. The presenters shuttled between Chinese and English within the same slide, using bilingual titles to introduce the topic, while emojis, dynamic images and colour-blocked layouts function as multimodal cues that intensify affect and guide critical evaluation. This fluid interplay of the home language and the target language simultaneously lowered the audience's processing load and provided immediate cultural grounding for complex English concepts, exemplifying the integrated linguistic practice highlighted by García and Li (2014). The orchestration of multilingual text, visual representation and affective symbol not only extended individual discourse competence but also created a shared space for meaning negotiation within the classroom community.

Unlike the translanguaging practices of students analysed in Chapter V, the

translanguaging observed here was integrated into their daily classroom activities. In other words, changes have occurred not only in Rachel's instructional strategies but also within the students themselves. Unlike the perspective expressed by Rachel in Excerpt 7.2, who viewed students' translanguaging practices in the PBLL classroom as possibly unconscious language-switching aimed mainly at facilitating smoother communication, students in their current presentations consciously employed translanguaging strategies to enhance peer understanding and strengthen communicative effectiveness. Even though students may not consciously recognise translanguaging as a deliberate strategy, their active participation in its practice exemplifies their evolving linguistic agency.

Throughout this process, Rachel built upon the students' contributions to help other listeners deepen their understanding of key concepts, providing appropriate elaborations. By doing so, Rachel utilised student-generated content to offer scaffolding and learning references. This initiated a virtuous cycle: students independently sourced learning materials, and the teacher expanded upon them accordingly. On one hand, this approach allowed Rachel to save time that would otherwise be spent gathering supplementary extracurricular information; on the other hand, enabling students to select content autonomously enhanced their interest and motivation in completing these tasks.

This demonstrates that such adjustment is effective in daily teaching and learning and has initially received recognition from both Rachel and the students in the class. Although the total number of the teacher and students involved was only 57, we can extrapolate from this small scale to a broader context. In the future, we might consider expanding this method to involve more teachers or extending the observation period to determine whether it can yield significant improvements in language learning for learners at this stage.

7.4. Summary of This Chapter

This chapter examines the implementation of PBLL from the perspective of the teacher and explores the ensuing changes, particularly regarding shifts in teacher role perception, pedagogical practice, and professional development. Through classroom observation and interviews with the participating teacher, Rachel, this study elucidates how PBLL reshapes teacher–student interactions and promotes student-centred instruction.

The chapter first offers a discussion of the multifaceted changes in teacher's roles within PBLL contexts. In traditional classrooms, teachers often serve as transmitters of knowledge and managers of classroom activities. In the PBLL setting, however, Rachel increasingly acted as supporter and facilitator of student learning, granting learners greater autonomy and involvement. Such a role shift necessitates frequent adjustments and adaptability. Through specific examples, this chapter illustrates how Rachel reevaluated her pedagogical strategies.

The introduction of PBLL also generates novel avenues for professional growth. During the research process, Rachel refined teaching skills and domain knowledge through both practice and reflection. This chapter analyses how Rachel's implementation of PBLL exemplifies elements of Sociocultural Theory and possible selves theory, guiding her in clarifying professional aspirations and gradually bridging the gap between her ideal and actual selves. Her responsiveness to student needs manifested through flexible adaptations to instructional content and strategies.

Nonetheless, the chapter also candidly addresses the challenges inherent in putting PBLL into practice. Teachers lacking sufficient theoretical understanding or practical experience with PBLL may encounter uncertainties during implementation. Moreover, variations in students' motivation and abilities, along with constraints on resources and instructional time, can place substantial

pressure on educators. This chapter underscores that such challenges necessitate ongoing teacher reflection and adjustments, as well as more robust support from schools and educational policies to provide professional development opportunities and secure the necessary resources.

Finally, the chapter explores PBLL's influence on Rachel's routine instructional activities. Although PBLL does not entirely replace traditional methods, the participating teacher has integrated effective elements of PBLL into daily teaching, offering practice for educational reform. For instance, Rachel has adopted small-scale thematic presentations by students, extending several central concepts of PBLL: student-centeredness, more communication, and teamwork. These adjustments invigorate student interest and agency.

Overall, drawing on the experiences and reflections of Rachel, this chapter delves into the influence of PBLL on teacher professional growth, shifts in pedagogical models, and educational innovation. By elucidating both the potential and limitations of PBLL from a teacher's standpoint, the chapter provides insights for future instructional reforms and teacher training initiatives.

8. Chapter VIII: Conclusion

8.1. Review of the Research Questions and Introduction to This Chapter

At the outset, this study was motivated by the desire to investigate the feasibility of introducing Project-based Language Learning (PBLL) into Chinese senior-secondary English classes and to examine whether this approach would garner a positive reception and recognition among both teachers and learners under authentic classroom conditions. Drawing on this initial purpose, the research evaluated the potential of PBLL for enhancing students' language proficiency, fostering intercultural awareness, expanding their motivational scope, and informing teacher professional growth.

In the preceding chapters, this study has already offered an exploration of and response to the two research questions posed. This chapter begins by revisiting these questions and, building on the discussion so far, clarifies the relevant findings and how they answer the questions. The specific research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the feelings and perceptions of the participating Chinese senior-secondary school students in this Project-based Language Learning method?

RQ2: How does the participating teacher adapt to and cope with this student-centred language learning approach?

To address the above questions effectively, this thesis first reviewed the pertinent theoretical literature, integrating existing theories and practical experiences into the research design. In particular, it adopted a case study approach, gathering and analysing data from multiple perspectives to gain in-depth insights into

students' experiences and the teacher's adaptations. In this chapter, I revisit the entire research process, summarise the main findings and contributions, reflect on the limitations of the study, and highlight possible directions for future research.

8.2. Overview

The research questions set out above derive from the specific circumstances of current English teaching and learning practices in Chinese senior high schools, aiming to explore the possibility of deepening the use of PBLL in everyday teaching and learning activities. In this study, I selected a state high school in China's central–western region, collaborating with an English teacher Rachel (pseudonym) in one of her Grade 10 classes (aged between 16 and 18, most of them 16, and having generally studied English for around 7–8 years) to carry out a PBLL research project. By grounding the study in this authentic teaching and learning environment, the aim was to test more concretely the suitability and effectiveness of PBLL in the Chinese context. During the design process, I drew on the core concepts of Project-based Learning (Beckett, 2002; Gibbes & Carson, 2014) and incorporated elements from other widely used language teaching and learning methodologies—namely Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Coyle et al., 2010; Nunan, 2004), approaches under Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This diversity broadened the study's perspective to some extent and provided ample methodological support for the specific teaching and learning framework employed.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study was informed by Sociocultural Theory, focusing particularly on learners' experiences and language development in collaborative and interactive contexts. Sociocultural Theory posits that learning is a socially mediated process, wherein students consolidate their language and subject knowledge through meaningful, authentic tasks (Vygotsky, 1978a). During

the course implementation, Rachel and I intentionally applied the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), furnishing students with appropriate challenges and support to facilitate incremental progression of their abilities (Shabani et al., 2010).

Although video production was relatively unfamiliar to most students, it is arguably essential to acquire a certain level of video creation and editing skills in our digital era. Moreover, integrating these skills with English learning not only allows students to explore a wider array of technical and linguistic abilities through hands-on practice but also provides valuable opportunities to enhance broader competences. In developing such abilities, students progress in language skills while simultaneously fostering critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork, resonating with the principles of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Massuh et al., 2012).

This study employed PBLL initially selected for its potential to foster interdisciplinary skills as well. However, a compelling dynamic emerged during the project: there was a stark disparity between the pace at which students acquired technological skills and the pace of their language development. This observation reflects our current information-rich digital era. For most students in this study, learning the basics of video production was a surprisingly swift process, not a significant obstacle. In contrast, advancing their linguistic proficiency (particularly in their speaking skills), even after at least six years of prior target language study, proved to be a more gradual and complex undertaking. Consequently, as the project unfolded, the actual focus of the learning experience naturally shifted towards the more persistent challenge of language learning.

This same disparity also explained how translanguaging was utilised. It was not a pre-planned pedagogical mandate but rather a communicative practice that emerged organically. Although it was clarified that the project was not designed to be interdisciplinary, video production was a pre-determined learning objective

for the course in this study. Consequently, while students may have encountered fewer obstacles in this area, and indeed progressed rapidly, it nonetheless represented a novel field of study for them. When students' technical ideas and needs outpaced their ability to express them solely in English, both students and the teacher naturally resorted to mixing English and Chinese. This ensured that communication remained fluid, and the collaborative momentum of the project was maintained.

On the methodological front, I evaluated the study's trustworthiness by considering multiple paradigms, chiefly by combining constructivism and interpretivism in my examination of the data. First, to highlight the co-construction of meaning in the teaching and learning process, I adopted perspectives from constructivism, which accentuates the diversity of social realities (Berger & Luckmann, 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978a). Second, in order to appreciate more fully the subjective experiences and interactive processes of participating students and of Rachel within a real classroom setting, this research drew upon an interpretivist orientation (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Myers & Avison, 2002; Weber, 1978), collecting extensive qualitative data through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the teacher and students, and focus group discussions with students.

Practically speaking, this study was structured around weekly tasks: each group of students appointed a different member weekly to present an English progress report in class, adjusting their plans in real time according to the teacher's feedback. Dividing the large project into manageable, measurable sub-tasks enabled students to accumulate a series of successful experiences as they progressively completed each step. This process embodies TBLT's emphasis on gradual progression and ongoing feedback (Ellis, 2021), giving students the chance to build confidence in both English learning and video production by continuously reviewing their progress and outcomes. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory

research into learners' motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012), I also observed in classroom sessions and subsequent interviews that most students, over the course of the project, displayed a shift from external to intrinsic motivation. As a result, in the latter part of the project, they demonstrated higher levels of initiative and productivity, further reinforcing the overall effectiveness of this PBLL experience.

From the above discussion, it is clear that this study adopted a highly flexible approach in both theoretical elaboration and practical operation. Although PBLL was the focal point, I did not limit myself to this single method. Instead, guided by the concepts of Postmethod Pedagogy and Transformative Pedagogy, I drew on other relevant teaching theories and approaches. Postmethod Pedagogy highlights the importance of ongoing reflection by both teachers and students, who adapt their strategies according to dynamic classroom realities, and it posits that there is no universally applicable teaching model (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

Moreover, it is rarely practical to adopt a new method entirely divorced from the pre-existing teaching context. Should one attempt to move abruptly away from established teaching methods, both teachers and students may struggle to adapt in the short term, which could undermine teaching and learning effectiveness. Hence, in implementing this project, I took care to connect the process with the established teaching model already familiar to the participants. Consequently, despite being a case study focused on a particular teaching and learning environment, this research offers valuable lessons and insights, particularly concerning the way teacher–researcher collaboration can draw upon diverse learning theories.

Once the data collection phase was completed, I organised and analysed the qualitative data systematically using Thematic Analysis. Given the considerable volume and scope of the data, one advantage of Thematic Analysis lies in its operational flexibility, which allows researchers to direct focused attention on complex, multifaceted information (Braun & Clarke, 2022). At the same time, to

minimise the impact of any personal bias, I ensured that all potential data points relevant to each category were fully examined during the coding and analysis process, thereby avoiding excessive omission or selective interpretation. This comprehensive approach provided a solid foundation for drawing more trustworthy conclusions.

8.3. Main Research Findings

8.3.1. Student-centred Learning Experiences

In analysing the students' learning experiences in a PBLL environment, I primarily identified two key themes: progress centred on productive language skills and the manifestation of plurilingual skills in a PBLL context (Section 5.1 & 5.2).

Enhanced Speaking and Writing Skills

First of all, students appeared to demonstrate more prominent performance in speaking and writing than in their regular English classes. In contrast to their daily classroom instruction, which tends to emphasise listening and reading, PBLL provided learners with a more authentic and varied range of speaking opportunities, particularly in project presentations and group collaboration. Since both teacher and students in this study placed greater emphasis on effective communication rather than strict grammatical accuracy, learners gained confidence and autonomy in oral interaction through continual practice. Moreover, speaking and writing emerged as mutually reinforcing skills, many students drafted written outlines and rehearsed multiple times prior to formal presentations, resulting in more fluent oral delivery. As Swain (1993) argues in the Output Hypothesis, the production process is not merely a passive reproduction of language but an active engagement in modifying and reconstructing one's linguistic output. During this process, students identify shortcomings in their language use and employ reflection and feedback to make timely adjustments, thereby achieving greater precision. By drafting written material in advance, most

learners established a solid framework for oral communication, and this continual interplay between writing and speaking ultimately sharpened their linguistic awareness and flexibility.

Nevertheless, given the constraints of class time, there was limited scope for improvised question-and-answer sessions, resulting in less in-depth practice for listening and speaking. Students with weaker foundations in speaking or writing may have been motivated by PBLL tasks, but they might still require more targeted teacher questioning and feedback after presentations, lest their progress relies too heavily on their own abilities or the quality of peer support within the group— potentially depriving them of systematic guidance and precise feedback on their weaknesses, and thereby impeding sustained improvement in language skills. Furthermore, in this project-based approach, choosing reading materials to meet project goals played a vital role. By selecting reading texts that were closely aligned with the project topic in authentic contexts, students acquired both subject-matter knowledge and cultural background, thereby underpinning their project work with substantive content. Gibbes and Carson (2014) note that the success of PBLL depends on close integration between materials and activities; the reading practices observed in this study showed that learners were actively using textual information to refine their task design, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of both language use and thematic content. However, individual groups varied considerably in the scope and volume of materials they consulted, since the final project focus and chosen content differed from one group to another.

Plurilingual Integration and the Cultivation of Intercultural Competence
The study also highlights students' plurilingual competence within the PBLL process, encompassing not only the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) but also cultural awareness and cross-linguistic understanding (Oliveira & Ançã, 2009). Because the project outputs closely mirrored real-world contexts, students drew on diverse cultural and linguistic

resources when choosing project content, gathering information, and drafting video scripts. Some groups delved into English-language articles or video materials to explore the history, arts, and cultural practices of particular destinations, thus creating outputs enriched by intercultural perspectives. Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) suggest that intercultural communicative competence rests on respect for and understanding of cultural diversity. This research further demonstrates that, in a PBLL context, respect for cultural diversity is reflected in terms of content and in students' awareness and application of different forms of language use and social conventions. Particularly in tourism-focused projects, which may encompass the geography, history, customs, and social norms of various countries or regions, learners might acquire a more multifaceted and profound language and cultural experience by engaging in cross-cultural comparison.

Meanwhile, students' use of language often displayed a clear translanguaging dynamic: when encountering unfamiliar concepts or technical discussions, they would typically rely on their first language for rapid clarification, before later converting their insights and resources into English for presentations or project outputs. This seamless alternation between the mother tongue and the target language helped learners complete tasks more efficiently, allowing them to mobilise prior knowledge and build up new knowledge structures (Charamba, 2020). The findings show that many students initially articulated ideas in their first language, before converting the requisite information into English for oral or written output. In a plurilingual environment, such translanguaging is not merely a practical communication tool but can also foster more in-depth cognitive processing (Li, 2018). Beyond enhancing cognition and cultural understanding, this practice helps learners transcend the confines of a single language, reconstruct meaning, and exchange ideas in flexible, multilingual contexts (Wang, 2019; Wiley & García, 2016). This process also aligns with Cummins's (1979) recognition of the value of allowing the native language and the second language to coexist in the classroom. Doing so can alleviate learners' anxiety about foreign-language use and creates a more inclusive and creative language-learning ecosystem (Bruen & Kelly,

2017).

Overall, PBLL shows promise in cultivating students' oral and written production, intercultural awareness, and plurilingual competence. At the same time, its limitations in terms of listening practice and spontaneous interaction highlight potential areas for improvement in future teaching and learning design. First, although PBLL can enhance opportunities for practice in speaking and writing, teachers should continue to devise classroom structures that facilitate more spontaneous questions, discussions, and immediate feedback. This would give students a better chance to refine their oral and listening skills as they grapple with real-time communication. Secondly, in ensuring that all four language skills develop in tandem, emphasis should also be placed on building students' cultural awareness and intercultural competence. In other words, project topics and outcomes should extend beyond linguistic content, linking closely with students' real-life experiences, thereby fostering deeper and more sustained engagement. Lastly, translanguaging should be viewed as an asset rather than an obstacle. Whether researching background materials, brainstorming project ideas, or producing final outputs, students might reduce potential cognitive pressure and enhance learning efficiency by flexibly transitioning between their mother tongue and the target language. Teachers might then offer targeted guidance at key junctures, helping students gradually accumulate domain-specific vocabulary and expressions that match the project content.

8.3.2. Students' Learning Motivation and Strategies

To further address the first research question, I continued exploring why students exhibit learning experiences and strategies in a PBLL context that differ from those observed in regular English classrooms. As discussed in Chapter VI, when students shifted from conventional holiday assignments and teacher-centred tasks to group-based, project-oriented learning aimed at producing a video outcome, an immediate change emerged in their learning motivation. The data revealed a

range of motivational types, interaction patterns, and strategy uses within the PBLL environment.

The Process of Internalising Motivation

More specifically, external regulation initially served as the primary driving force, briefly focusing student attention on the learning tasks; however, its impact tended to be limited in duration and depth. Introjected regulation, mostly prompted by peer competition or teacher expectations, may yield short-term gains but generally lacks the capacity to sustain long-term intrinsic motivation, and can even lead to fatigue or anxiety. As students began to recognise the personal value and significance of the learning content or project activities, they entered the phase of identified regulation, gradually integrating externally set goals into their own sense of self, thereby willingly assuming greater responsibility and investing more effort. Ultimately, some students aligned their learning tasks with personal development, career planning, or self-actualisation goals at the level of integrated regulation. At this stage, they typically displayed high autonomy and an enduring commitment to learning, approaching it not merely as an imposed task but as an endeavour resonating with their own values (Boekaerts, 1997; Kormos & Csizér, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Initially, many students participated in the project for external reasons (such as substituting regular assignments or avoiding falling behind peers). However, once they experienced the greater flexibility in scheduling, topic content selection, and language use, they gradually recognised the project's inherent appeal, shifting from external regulation towards higher levels of internalisation or even intrinsic motivation. Correspondingly, although factors like competition pressure or teacher approval had at first driven some students to invest substantial effort, interviews indicated that, as they gained deeper insight into the project, they were more inclined to continue participating and produce higher-quality work. The autonomy and flexibility afforded by PBLL emerged as key stimulants for internal motivation. It is noteworthy, though, that internalisation is not a linear

process. While most students saw their motivation progressively internalised over time, external motives did not simply vanish once more internal modes became established. Rather, external and internal motivations may coexist and jointly shape how learners engage with tasks and make decisions at different points. This dynamic resonates with Dörnyei's (2009) discussion of the interplay between the "Ideal Self" and the "Ought-to Self", illustrating how students continually switch between social expectations and personal interests before arriving at a more deliberate level of learning commitment.

Collaboration and Conflict

Beyond the internalisation of motivation, the study also closely examined collaboration among teacher and students, as well as within student groups. The concept of group work aligns with the tenets of social constructivism, emphasising that language learning is not merely an individual cognitive endeavour but is also deeply influenced by group dynamics and cultural context (Dörnyei, 2003). The sense of responsibility sharing prompted students to divide tasks amongst their group and fostered a heightened awareness of meeting shared goals (Long & Porter, 1985; Oxford, 1997). In contrast to the unidirectional transfer of knowledge, students who clearly understand their own roles are more likely to feel a sense of being needed, thereby establishing a positive balance between autonomy and belonging (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). On the one hand, they become aware that their individual performance has a direct impact on overall quality, motivating them to maintain open communication and pool resources for complex sub-tasks such as video recording or information retrieval. On the other hand, as the interdependence among sub-tasks grows, groups become more susceptible to disagreements over goals, progress, or levels of commitment, potentially leading to conflict.

Expression and listening underscores the two-way nature of language production and reception: students had to learn to articulate their views clearly whilst also using attentive listening to gather feedback, a reciprocal dialogue that underpins

critical thinking and negotiation. In addition, when different groups presented their interim updates, observing one another's work and exchanging ideas subtly heightened both competition and opportunities for mutual learning, enabling them to influence each other in a more constructive way. Wang and Huang (2023) have shown that moderate competition can enhance both students' proactivity and group cohesion. Through repeated rounds of discussion and iterative improvements, students adopted a more open-minded approach to the task, offering constructive suggestions that addressed disparities in understanding or resource allocation. When conflicts emerged, some students opted for self-regulation or group votes, illustrating the subtle balance between external support and self-management (Räisänen et al., 2021). Where conflicts proved difficult to resolve, learners might approach the teacher for help; equally, the teacher might proactively step in upon observing problematic tensions and intervening to help resolve it. Nonetheless, a few students tended to avoid or compromise when confronted with conflict, and for them this collaborative model, rather than boosting motivation, sometimes contributed to a drop in engagement.

Reflective Practice

Alongside collaborative efforts, reflective practice continually played a pivotal role. Reflection on the learning process revealed how students actively monitored and adjusted their own engagement. In drawing up a study plan, for example, they typically created workable schedules and milestones to meet project timelines or their own targets. This planning stage involves not just external management but also introspection concerning personal study habits, time allocation, and priorities. In assessing learning progress, certain students embraced self-evaluation and peer assessment, which not only helped them pinpoint weaknesses and bottlenecks early on but also guided more targeted improvement strategies. As Wijnands et al. (2021) suggest, the impact of reflection on learning becomes most pronounced when it is rendered explicit and routine, allowing learners to diagnose problems and address them promptly. From the initial phases of forming project groups and assigning tasks through to weekly

online class sessions where each group shared updates and issues, students constantly revised or expanded on existing outputs at both individual and collective levels. If they detected inadequacies in content integration or language use, they would make relevant adjustments in the subsequent cycle.

This iterative evaluative process offered a structured route: observe other groups, scrutinise one's own work, and refine the subsequent steps, thereby nurturing continuous improvement. For more self-directed learners, PBLL even served as an opportunity to sharpen their metacognition and deepen their study skills: they monitored progress not only in listening, speaking, reading, and writing but also in areas such as team communication, video production techniques, and emotional investment. However, for the few with minimal intrinsic drive who focused solely on finishing the project, reflection remained more of a formality and rarely translated into practical, ongoing enhancement. Overall, the PBLL-based reflection element established here meaningfully promoted some students' self-awareness and self-assessment. It also, to some degree, transcended the limitations of traditional classrooms, which typically rely on end-of-term tests or teacher-led corrections, and thus provided a feasible framework for continuous, dynamic learning.

8.3.3.   Teacher's Perceptions, Experiences and Changes

To address the second research question, the discussion in Chapter VII shifts the focus from the student perspective to that of the teacher, concentrating specifically on how PBLL affects a frontline English teacher's role, professional thinking, and pedagogical adjustments (Section 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3). By emphasising students' inquiry and collaboration within authentic projects, PBLL no longer confines the teacher to the traditional role of knowledge transmitter, instead reorienting them as both facilitator and co-inquirer (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006). Drawing on extensive interviews and observations over the course of the project with Rachel, who has more than two decades of teaching experience, this study

collected insights into her initial expectations and concerns prior to PBLL, her observations and reflections during implementation, and the specific changes she made to her daily practice after the project ended.

Multiple Sources of Teacher Motivation and Initial Expectations

Rachel's narrative and my classroom observations reveal that she harboured multiple motivations for engaging in PBLL. On the one hand, she aimed to advance her own professional development, aspiring to approach her "ideal teacher self" (Kubanyiova, 2009) by organising lessons in a more flexible manner, guiding students more dynamically, and continually renewing her understanding of language education. On the other hand, she also felt external pressures from macro-level policies and her school context. In particular, under China's "Double Reduction" policy, she sought to create more meaningful learning experiences for students, lessen the burden of mechanical homework, and enhance both their interest in and their practical command of English (Meiling, 2022; Zhixin & Yi, 2023). Aside from these drivers, Rachel was candid about her reservations regarding project-based pedagogy, worried that her limitations in technical guidance and time management might impede progress and that students were not yet fully prepared for a learning model so reliant on autonomy and collaboration. This blend of motivations left her feeling both excited and cautious at the outset of PBLL, hoping ultimately to find a balance in her regular teaching between delivering knowledge and cultivating broader skills after the conclusion of the PBLL project.

Adjusting Teaching Strategies: From One-Way Transmission to Multipronged Facilitation

As the project progressed, Rachel recognised numerous practical divergences from a traditional classroom. Whereas previously, teaching was often a one-way transmission of content, PBLL demanded that the teacher devise more open-ended, reality-based learning tasks, encouraging self-exploration and peer collaboration through interim presentations and group discussions (Beckett, 2002). Observing

the students, she noted their fresh enthusiasm in speaking tasks and teamwork, which may have broadened their range of learning experiences and opportunities to use language. She realised that, when students were given greater choice and could integrate personal interests into the project, their creativity and initiative often exceeded her expectations. Some normally quiet learners became more confident in preparing short videos or group presentations, and willingly invested additional time outside class to source materials, practise speaking, divide writing tasks, or handle video production. In this sense, the teacher in PBLL is more than a manager; they also serve as a partner in the learning journey (Mergendoller et al., 2013). Throughout the process, Rachel gained a more concrete understanding of her students' capabilities—ranging from their familiarity with digital tools and their enthusiasm for cross-cultural topics to their attitudes towards peer collaboration—insights that might not have been as systematically observable in a daily English classroom.

Nevertheless, PBLL placed higher professional demands on Rachel. Data showed that, although she had some prior awareness of PBLL, she had not received systematic project-based teaching training; she therefore needed to explore and consult with me regarding matters such as continuous assessment, group allocation strategies, information resource management, and even the technicalities of video creation. She found that PBLL assessment differs markedly from conventional written tests or graded assignments: it must evaluate language use in tandem with problem-solving, information retrieval, and teamworking skills, making it impractical to rely solely on standardised exams or marking criteria. In practice, Rachel monitored the students' progress primarily through interim presentations and immediate feedback; she also addressed individual questions after class, such as how to use video-editing software or where to find relevant materials. While these tasks certainly tested and strengthened her flexible teaching competence, they also demanded additional time and energy. Moreover, constraints on accessing external online resources in Chinese schools, along with the limited communication time in class, affected both students' ability to gather

materials efficiently and the frequency of teacher–student interactions. Rachel thus remained cautious about fully implementing PBLL on a larger or more routine scale, noting that, without school support in terms of technology and scheduling, it would be difficult for a single teacher to sustain such a workload in the long run.

Reconciling Examination Demands and Project Outcomes

A more fundamental challenge lay in the mismatch between examination requirements and PBLL outcomes. Rachel was acutely aware that, within China's educational landscape, high school students are largely guided by university entrance exams (the Gaokao), in which English assessments lack a speaking component or measures for collaboration and creativity (Bai & Zhou, 2024; Deng, 2024). Parents and students often expect teachers to devote class time to exam-related content rather than to a project that does not directly contribute to test scores. Even if students perform well in PBLL, immediate gains in their marks may not be forthcoming. Rachel commented that if the Gaokao were to introduce speaking or integrated-skill assessments, she would be more inclined to commit fully to PBLL. However, under the present system, she must remain mindful of exam needs, integrating project work only in a limited fashion or breaking PBLL down into short-term, flexible weekly topics. For instance, devoting five to ten minutes each week to micro-presentations or poster sessions can help sustain interest in communicative, hands-on learning without disrupting the school's overall exam schedule. This approach also carries over the oral and independent-expression habits fostered through PBLL, ensuring that these gains do not simply disappear once the project ends.

Despite encountering numerous external challenges, Rachel still derived considerable satisfaction from her PBLL experience. Through reflection, she realised that she had taken on new roles during the project: guide, organiser, and co-learner, which enhanced her sensitivity to students' potential. She was pleasantly surprised by the often-overlooked creative and expressive talents they brought to the classroom, and she gained new insights into providing them with

sufficient and flexible opportunities to articulate their thoughts. In a traditional classroom, teachers typically plan lessons in advance and deliver them by unit; by contrast, in PBLL, much of the classroom content is generated on the spot. Students arrive with discoveries and questions, and the teacher must be ready to offer immediate feedback and adapt in real time (Stoller & Myers, 2019). Rachel therefore learned to encourage students to synthesise prior knowledge and resources independently instead of always supplying a predetermined answer. As the project unfolded, she gained experience in providing multi-stage scaffolding. For instance, when facing students' unfamiliar technical issues, she would share online resources or brief demonstrations so that students still had scope to explore without getting stalled for long periods.

After concluding the project, Rachel decided not to treat PBLL as a self-contained teaching experiment but rather to incorporate some of its proven-effective elements into her everyday English classes. She discovered that, even on a smaller scale, students could still maintain a degree of autonomy in presenting their work in class. For example, devoting a short portion of each week to sharing a "mini-topic" allowed them to form mini groups, prepare concise PowerPoint slides, and deliver brief presentations on news stories, cultural phenomena, or personal experiences that interested them. She also permitted moderate use of both Chinese and English, ensuring clear expression and uninterrupted thought. In this way, the motivation for oral communication sparked by PBLL did not dissipate, and students continued to practise language production in a regular classroom setting. These micro-collaborative tasks continued core PBLL elements (such as student-led content selection, teamwork, and authentic outputs) (Beckett, 2002; Gibbes & Carson, 2014), enabling students to develop creative thinking and hands-on experience beyond language learning alone. The general student response was positive, reinforcing the idea that, with well-considered curriculum design, PBLL and exam-oriented instruction need not be entirely at odds; they can be integrated through small-scale projects, gradually achieving a balance and synergy between the two.

8.4. Research Contributions

The study does not present PBLL as a universal solution or a fully standardised method. Instead, it demonstrates how PBLL can be made workable when it is designed as an organising core that is supported by complementary pedagogical perspectives that are already meaningful in this setting. In particular, sociocultural perspectives on mediated learning and scaffolding informed decisions about staged support and the teacher's facilitative role; communicative principles informed decisions about purposeful interaction and output; and a Global Englishes orientation supported a more inclusive view of language use for meaning making, which reduced the pressure to treat accuracy as the only indicator of success. By situating PBLL within this real classroom ecology, the thesis contributes a grounded understanding of what PBLL looked like in practice, what it demanded from participants, and what kinds of supports were necessary for it to function under constraints.

More directly in relation to research, the thesis offers a methodological contribution by demonstrating a collaborative research design that treated curriculum design as both a pedagogical process and a researchable object. The PBLL curriculum was not simply delivered and then evaluated. Rather, it was co constructed and progressively refined through sustained collaboration among the researcher, the teacher, and students over the course of planning, enactment, and reflection. This collaboration allowed the study to examine not only outcomes but also the processes through which classroom innovation emerged, including how decisions were negotiated, how challenges were addressed, and how supports were adjusted over time. In this way, the study strengthens the ecological validity of PBLL research because the analysis is closely tied to the realities of teaching, rather than being based on a highly controlled intervention detached from teachers' working conditions. It also adds a transparent account of teacher agency

as it developed through iterative decision making, as well as a fine-grained view of how student participation and group collaboration unfolded across project stages.

The most important point is that the replicability of this study does not lie in copying the same project materials or reproducing identical classroom activities. Instead, it lies in the collaboration process that enabled meaningful classroom activity to be designed, negotiated, and sustained in context. What can be replicated is a set of design principles and interactional routines that organise collaboration as an infrastructure for both pedagogy and research. Based on the collaborative process reported in this thesis, future studies can adopt a structured but adaptable collaboration cycle that includes the following components. First, partnership formation: researcher and teacher jointly clarify the purpose of the project, negotiate constraints and non-negotiables, and agree on roles and responsibilities, including how decisions will be made when curriculum demands conflict with project ideals. Second, co design of a feasible project: the theme, timeline, assessment points, and expected products are selected in ways that balance student interest with institutional requirements, ensuring that the project remains meaningful while still fitting the school schedule. Third, staged support planning: for each stage, the team anticipates typical barriers and plans supports for language use, collaboration, and participation, such as modelling, prompts, role structures, rehearsal opportunities, and feedback routines. Fourth, iterative adjustment during enactment: rather than treating the design as fixed, the teacher and researcher hold regular check ins to review evidence from lessons and student work, and then refine scaffolding, group structures, or task sequencing where needed. Finally, integrating students' perspectives: student voice is treated as an informative source for revising decisions, through interviews, reflective accounts, or feedback conversations, so that collaboration is not limited to adult stakeholders but becomes a multi-party ecology. These components define a replicable research design because they specify how collaboration functions as a mechanism for making classroom innovation feasible and analysable.

A second aspect of replicability concerns how collaboration can be strengthened to create meaningful classroom activity rather than remaining a general aspiration. The thesis suggests that effective multi-party collaboration depends on building shared ownership, shared tools, and predictable opportunities for negotiation. In addition, collaboration becomes stronger when it is routinised. Regular short planning and reflection meetings, even when brief, can create a consistent rhythm for reviewing what happened in class, identifying emerging needs, and deciding what to adjust. In online or blended contexts, collaborative routines can be further strengthened by using tools such as breakout rooms not only as spaces for student interaction but also as observable sites where participation patterns and language practices become visible. From a pedagogical perspective, meaningful classroom activity is more likely when student collaboration is structured rather than assumed. Replicable practices include setting clear group roles, designing tasks that require genuine interdependence, planning moments for peer feedback and rehearsal, and creating opportunities for students to present products to a real or imagined audience. These are not claims that collaboration automatically guarantees success. Rather, they are replicable principles for organising the conditions under which collaboration can more plausibly lead to meaningful participation and learning in PBLL.

Empirically, the thesis contributes a detailed portrayal of students' experiences of PBLL in a Chinese senior secondary setting where PBLL was relatively new for both students and the participating teacher. The findings provide evidence that students' learning experiences were reshaped through project work in several ways, including shifts in attention to particular skills across stages of the project, increasing reliance on peer interaction and rehearsal, and greater student involvement in selecting and evaluating materials for project purposes. The study also highlights how students incorporated cultural content into project products and how digital tools supported this process, which aligns with the reality that project work often requires learners to search, select, and transform information

rather than merely practise discrete language points. Importantly, these experiences are interpreted within the constraints of an exam-oriented environment. This allows the thesis to contribute to PBLL research not only by illustrating possible benefits but also by clarifying what kinds of support, sequencing, and classroom organisation may be necessary for PBLL to function in mainstream school conditions.

The thesis also contributes to research on language use and classroom interaction by showing how flexible bilingual practices supported collaboration and meaning making during project work. Within group interaction, students' language resources were used strategically to manage tasks, negotiate meaning, and prepare English output, rather than being treated as a problem to be eliminated. From a research perspective, this contribution lies in documenting how such practices were connected to project demands and interactional goals. In PBLL, students often need to coordinate ideas rapidly, resolve misunderstandings, and transform information from sources into presentable products. In these moments, flexible multilingual practices can function as a mediational resource that supports participation and helps maintain the momentum of group work. This does not imply that English production is unimportant. Instead, the study contributes a more nuanced account of how multilingual resources can support the process of moving towards English output, especially when tasks involve culturally embedded content and information transformation.

In addition, the thesis contributes to research and practice by examining motivational processes, collaboration, and reflective practice within PBLL. The findings suggest that project work can foster different learning experiences by offering an open-ended task framework while also creating concrete participation demands that require learners to take responsibility, collaborate with peers, and persist across stages. At the same time, the study acknowledges that PBLL may be unevenly experienced, particularly by learners who need more structure, confidence building, or guidance in self-management. This balanced account

contributes to PBLL research by highlighting conditions under which engagement may be fostered and conditions under which additional scaffolding is likely to be necessary. For practitioners, this study offers a transparent reference for how motivation and engagement can be supported through staged goals, collaborative norms, and feedback mechanisms.

Finally, by analysing the case of Rachel, the thesis contributes to research on teacher agency and professional learning by showing how co design can function as a realistic pathway for teacher development in constrained settings. The collaborative process encouraged the teacher to revisit assumptions about the aims of English learning, the role of interaction, and the relationship between assessment and pedagogy. It also created an ethically grounded space where tensions between established routines and student-centred approaches could be negotiated rather than simply framed as resistance or failure. The thesis further suggests that sustainable adoption may take an incremental form. Following the project, small scale practices such as micro presentations or shorter project cycles can offer teachers a feasible way to integrate elements of PBLL while still meeting exam related requirements. This contribution is modest but meaningful: it shows how innovation can be pursued as a gradual professional trajectory rather than as a one-time replacement of existing practice.

In summary, the thesis contributes to research by offering an evidence based and context sensitive account of PBLL implementation, and by articulating a collaborative research design whose replicability lies in the collaboration process that supports meaningful classroom activity. Future researchers can adapt this design by replicating its core principles of shared ownership, multi-party participation, routinised dialogue, and responsive adjustment, while tailoring specific materials and timelines to local constraints. In doing so, the thesis provides not only findings about PBLL in one setting but also a transferable way of studying and strengthening PBLL through collaboration in comparable educational contexts.

8.5. Limitations

Despite yielding important theoretical and practical insights, this study faces several limitations in its design and implementation.

First, as discussed in the methodology chapter, the observation and data-collection processes may have been influenced by the researcher paradox (Monahan & Fisher, 2010). During online group discussions, students were aware that either the teacher Rachel or I, as the researcher, might be present to monitor their activities. Similarly, after on-site teaching resumed, students recognised my presence in the classroom (taking notes and making observations at the back). In such circumstances, students may have adjusted their behaviour to meet perceived expectations from the teacher or researcher.

In addressing this issue, I discussed at length with Rachel, who also noted that student behaviour in a PBLL environment differed from what she was used to in a more traditional language-learning setting. On the one hand, this change could be attributed to the heightened intrinsic motivation and interest inspired by PBLL tasks; on the other hand, it may also reflect the potential impact of my presence as an observer. As the data-collection period lasted for nearly two months, during which students gradually adapted to my presence in the classroom, the influence of the researcher paradox may have diminished. Moreover, since interviews were conducted after the observational stage, by that time the students were more accustomed to my role, which might have helped them relax and offer more candid responses. One could argue that a longer research period could further reduce the effect of researcher paradox, yielding more reliable findings.

Second, while conducting the thematic analysis to present the research themes comprehensively, I subdivided some major themes for clarity. For example, under

the main theme of "The Internalisation Process of Student Learning Motivation", I identified four subthemes, including subtheme seven, "External Regulation as an Initial Motivational Catalyst", and subtheme nine, "Identified Regulation—Embracing Perceived Value". The limited number of student perspectives available in these two sub-themes meant that the discussion lacked depth and supporting evidence. Nevertheless, they remain integral parts of the overarching thematic structure and were therefore retained to ensure a thorough presentation of the framework.

Additionally, although this study explored multiple dimensions of teacher change within a relatively short period, certain emerging aspects identified during data analysis could have benefited from further conceptual exploration. Particularly during the later stages of data analysis, integrating specific theoretical constructs from Kubanyiova's (2009, 2012) framework could have provided additional perspectives for understanding the underlying reasons for the teacher's shifts. However, due to constraints on the scope of this thesis, a thorough discussion of Kubanyiova's concepts within the literature review and their systematic application to the current data set was beyond the study's remit. Such exploration remains valuable and will be my future research to further illuminate the processes of teacher change.

8.6. Future Research Directions

From a research perspective, PBLL holds considerable promise for shaping students' multifaceted competences, particularly regarding team collaboration, technology integration, and intercultural communication. However, the developmental trajectories in these areas still warrant further investigation.

Shortcomings observed in the development of listening, reading and spontaneous speaking skills might be addressed by refining project procedures. This would

allow researchers and educators to investigate whether improvements in productive language skills can be balanced with progress in listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and dynamic interaction, thereby building a genuinely learner-centred experience that integrates cultural awareness and cross-curricular thinking.

The PBLL practice in this study lasted approximately one month and included a form of reward (replacing students' holiday homework with the PBLL tasks) which likely boosted the initial sense of novelty. Should PBLL be integrated over a longer period, or multiple cycles, or fully embedded in the regular term curriculum, students might struggle to maintain their initial enthusiasm under greater academic pressure. Hence, longitudinal studies would be beneficial to examine PBLL's longer-term impact on language proficiency, motivation, and students' overall development. By conducting regular language assessments, interviews, and gathering teacher feedback at key intervals, researchers could build a more comprehensive picture of how PBLL influences student performance over time and thus support refinements to its design and implementation.

Although the present study included video-production elements in the projects, it remained largely focused on language learning. Its interdisciplinary potential was not fully realised, and only the students' regular English teacher participated. Future work may focus more closely on cross-curricular applications, investigating how to involve teachers from other subject areas to foster a more holistic development of students' competences. By inviting additional subject specialists to co-design and guide project content, learners would receive multiple disciplinary perspectives. This has the potential to expand their knowledge base and further stimulate the ability to apply language and subject knowledge when tackling real-world problems.

Further avenues for research also include probing more deeply into how teachers adapt to PBLL and the ways in which it shapes their professional development.

Comparative studies could explore the experiences of teachers at different career stages, revealing the specific challenges they face in task design and implementation. Additionally, investigating how systematic teacher training might enhance teachers' competence in PBLL practice would be an important contribution to curriculum reform.

Looking ahead, research could be broadened to cover a wider range of regions and schools. For instance, PBLL could be implemented in urban centres along China's eastern seaboard, in rural areas, and in international schools, enabling an assessment of its applicability and efficacy in various educational contexts. Moreover, expanding the sample size to include more students and teachers would help elucidate the potential of PBLL for widespread adoption, as well as the possibilities for teacher collaboration and mutual professional development.

Appendix A. Initial PBLL Implementation Plan

LESSON PLAN

STUDENT LEVEL	No. IN CLASS	LOCATION
Senior High (Ages 16 to 17)	35 (Expected)	Chongqing, China

WEEKLY PROGRAMME

Week 1: Introduce the project and group up; learn and discuss words, phrases and sentences related to the topic.

Week 2: Learning about the software needed to complete the work; group discussion.

Week 3: Learn how to present project in a presentation; group discussion.

Week 4: Question and answer, monitoring progress; project presentation.

Lesson 1: Study and discuss article related to the topic of travel (week one)

Stage Time	Task/Procedure	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse	Rationale (purpose of this stage/learning objective)
9.00 **Lead in**	Project session aims, and go through them orally with ss. Show ss pictues of popular travel spots and draw from these pictures a conclusion that many people like travelling during their vacation.	**T- Ss**		To warm ss up to the topic and activate their schemata ahead of later tasks and ultimately, the lecture. Help ss to understand the short, medium and longer-term relevance of today's tasks.
	Ask ss to discuss in pairs: *Why do people like travelling?* (2 min)	**S-S**	Sharing and justifying personal opinions; listening to and understanding the views of others.	To reinforce the importance of a prediction stage / working hypothesis approach prior to any research activity.
	T takes some quick feedback and notes on board.	**T-Ss**		
9.05 **Critical evaluation: Stage 1**	Give ss 5 min to listen to the first part of the travel journal and find out what it is about. Read the passage once again to put the event at the Indian wedding in the correct order.	**S / Ss-Ss**	Autonomy and critical evaluation.	To give ss practice of working rapidly on their own. To help develop skimming and scanning skills to identify relevant information from sources.

lessonplan

Stage Time	Task/Procedure	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse	Rationale (purpose of this stage/learning objective)
9.15 Critical thinking: Stage 1	Divide class in two. Focus half on the differences between the Indian wedding and Chinese weddings, and the rest the similarities. Give ss 5 min to discuss and note down: *How is the Indian wedding different from and similal to Chinese weddings?* T monitors, then elicits some suggestions.	S-S T-Ss	Identifying the customs of wedding ceremony. Speculation.	To promote critical thinking skills and encourage speculation based on evidence found in sources.
9.20 Pair feedback	Pair students to work with sb who looked at the opposite. Share opinions with each other. T monitors, but does not take plenary feedback at this stage.	S-S	Information and resource sharing.	To reinforce to ss the importance of using one another as a resource, build confidence and independence from 'teacher'.
9.25 Analysis of travel journal	Inform ss they are going to focus on the key elements of travel journal. Use visual aids to introduce the definition of travel journal. Briefly elicit what ss know about it, if anything: benefits of keeping a journal when travelling and journal prompts. Check ss understand vocabulary eg 'prompts'. Invite ss to read material, and underline the key ideas.	T-Ss	Introduction of new content and lecture case study.	To get ss ready for the central case study of the Guest Lecture. To further activate schemata.

Stage Time	Task/Procedure	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse	Rationale (purpose of this stage/learning objective)
9.30 **Critical evaluation: Stage 2**	Give ss 5 min to listen to the first part of the travel journal and find out what it is about. Read the passage once again to try to find the sentences in travel journal that describe the scenes before and during the street party at the Rio Carnival. T elicits whole-class feedback as appropriate.	S-S T-Ss	Comparing and contrasting content.	To further practise and hone skills developed in critical evaluation stage 1, and further promote critical thinking based on evidence.
9.35 **Critical thinking: Stage 2**	T focuses ss on final discussion questions, and they discuss in pairs (2 min): **What rhetorical devices does the writer use here? What's the purpose of using such devices?** If time is short, T may skip this stage or invite individual ss to comment briefly.	S-S	Critical evaluation of future contexts.	To further promote critical thinking and prepare ss for one of the claims the lecturer may make.
9.40 **Preparing questions**	Remind ss that there will be an opportunity for Q&A after the lecture. Invite ss to devise one or two questions they hope to have answered. T monitors, before taking one or two examples from the class. If anyone is unfinished, encourage ss to write down a question at home.	T-S S / S-S	Preparing to listen with a purpose during lectures.	To promote critical engagement with lecture content.
9.45 **Wrap up session & reflection on session aims**	T displays final slide showing date, time and location of Guest Lecture 2. T reminds ss to take notes during the lecture, and to be ready to discuss these notes in the follow-up class (immediately afterwards).	T-Ss	Reflection on work completed thus far, and anticipation of next steps.	To give ss the opportunity to reflect on session aims achieved, and prime them for follow-on tasks in the near future.

281

lessonplan

Stage Time	Task/Procedure	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse	Rationale (purpose of this stage/learning objective)
	T projects final slide, showing session aims completed (if time, recaps orally with ss).			

Lesson 3: Learn how to present project in a presentation (week three)

Stage Time	Task/Procedure	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse	Rationale (purpose of this stage/learning objective)
9.00 Lead in	Review expressions about travelling and customs. Project session aims, and go through them orally with ss. Show ss a clip of the vedio "Spingapore Vacation Travel Guide".	T- Ss		To warm ss up to the topic and activate their schemata ahead of later tasks and ultimately, the lecture. Help ss to enlarge their range of vocabulary and longer-term relevance of today's tasks.
	Ask ss to discuss in pairs: *How much do you know about Singapore?* (2 min)	S-S	Sharing and justifying personal opinions; listening to and understanding the views of others.	To reinforce the importance of a prediction stage / working hypothesis approach prior to any research activity.
	T takes some quick feedback and notes on board.	T-Ss		
9.05 Critical evaluation: Stage 1	Give ss 5 min to watch the whole vedio "Spingapore Vacation Travel Guide" and make an outline of what it is about. Have students read after the voiceover to improve their outlines.	S / Ss-Ss	Autonomy and critical evaluation.	To give ss practice of working rapidly on their own. To help develop listening and speaking skills to identify relevant information from sources.
9.15	Pair students to work together to their ideas	S-S	Information and resource	To reinforce to ss the importance of using

Stage	Task/Procedure	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse	Rationale (purpose of this stage/learning objective)
Time				
Pair feedback	about this travel guide vedio. Compare the outlines with each other, and discuss: *What are the elements of the travel guide? How to introduce your country or city to a strange people in a proper way?*		sharing.	one another as a resource, build confidence and independence from 'teacher'.
	T monitors, but does not take plenary feedback at this stage.			
9.20 Critical thinking: Stage 1	Invite two or three ss to share their opinions and do a brief presentation to the vedio "Spingapore Vacation Travel Guide". Others note down put forward their advice.	**S-S**	Identifying the contents of teaching material. Speculation.	To promote travel English speaking skills and encourage speculation based on evidence found in sources.
	T monitors, then elicits some suggestions.	**T-Ss**		
9.25 Critical evaluation: Stage 2	Give ss 10 min to watch the whole vlog "Sanne Vloet | Travel vlog" and make an outline of what it is about. Have students pay attention to the vocabulary, sentence pattern and grammar. Discuss the following questions, briefly: *What features do you expect in your project?*	**S-S**	Critical evaluation of future contexts.	To further promote critical thinking and prepare ss for one of the claims the lecturer may make.
	T elicits whole-class feedback as appropriate.	**T-Ss**		

283

Stage Time	Task/Procedure	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse	Rationale (purpose of this stage/learning objective)
9.35 **Critical thinking: Stage 2**	T focuses ss on final discussion questions, and they discuss in pairs (2 min): **What type of camerawork does the vlogger use here? What's the purpose of using such camerawork?** If time is short, T may skip this stage or invite individual ss to comment briefly.	**S-S**	Comparing and contrasting content.	To further practise and hone skills developed in critical evaluation stage 1, and further promote critical thinking based on evidence.
9.40 **Preparing questions**	Remind ss that there will be an opportunity for Q&A after the lecture. Invite ss to devise one or two questions they hope to have answered. T monitors, before taking one or two examples from the class. If anyone is unfinished, encourage ss to write down a question at home.	**T-S** **S / S-S**	Preparing to listen with a purpose during lectures.	To promote critical engagement with lecture content.
9.45 **Wrap up session & reflection on session aims**	T reminds ss to take notes during the lecture, and to be ready to finish their projects and presentation (immediately afterwards). T projects final slide, showing session aims completed (if time, recaps orally with ss).	**T-Ss**	Reflection on work completed thus far, and anticipation of next steps.	To give ss the opportunity to reflect on session aims achieved, and prime them for follow-on tasks in the near future.

284

Reading

Travelling is a way to learn about other cultures. The travel journal below was written by Alex Zhang, a travel writer. He shares his experiences of attending an Indian wedding and the Rio Carnival. Before you read the travel journal, think about the following questions:

- How can you learn about foreign customs and traditions?
- Describe a festival you have experienced. What happened? What was it like?

Alex around the world
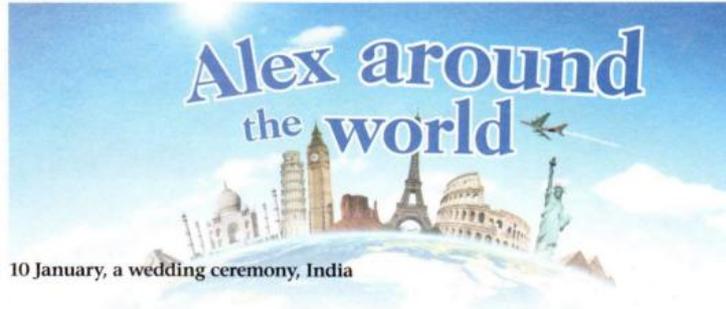
10 January, a wedding ceremony, India

When Nadim invited me to his sister's wedding, I knew it would be the opportunity of a lifetime. I was definitely not wrong!

The wedding ceremony took place in a brightly decorated hotel room. There were
5　hundreds of guests, all dressed up in formal, colourful clothes. According to tradition, the bride was wearing an eye-catching red silk sari.

I did not understand all of the traditional customs, but a few made a deep impression on me. One was the bridegroom's entrance on a beautiful white horse. I had never seen that back home! Another was the part when Nadim's father proudly led his daughter
10　through the rows of seats to her husband. It reminded me of my sister's wedding. Although our cultures are so different, the smiling faces are the same.

not at all , definitely not

The customs that followed were anything but ordinary. The couple joined hands and walked around a small fire four times. Then they took seven steps together by the fire, and with each step made a different promise about how they were going to support
15　each other and live together happily. It was very romantic!

After the ceremony, it was time for the celebrations. That is a story for another day, but let's just say there was a lot of dancing. Now I know I have two
20　left feet ... and both of them hurt!

to be very clumsy (esp. in dancing)

26 February, Rio Carnival, Brazil

The summer heat hit me as soon as I got off the flight. No wonder people from Rio take a week off for this happy occasion. I could feel it already—the Carnival was in the air!

felt by people

To experience the spirit of the Carnival for myself, I went to a street party. Luckily,
25 I arrived just in time—the show was about to begin as I took my place in the merry crowd. I could see a group of around 20 Brazilian dancers and a band in fancy costumes standing in the street. Some of them carried flags, which blew in the wind. The crowd waited with excitement. *before*

Then there was an explosion of bright colours and lively music, and the group jumped
30 into action. The band started playing an energetic samba beat, the dancers twisted and turned, and the crowd began to cheer, clap and sing. The whole group started marching down the street. The Carnival current carried us through the ever-growing sea of people, dancing all the way. Iceboxes of soft drinks and beer lined the narrow streets, and the smell of roasted meat filled the air as we passed wave after wave of street
35 stands. I was so caught up in the party fever that I hardly noticed five hours fly by! *during*

Even as I lay in bed that evening, the bright colours and lively music were still swimming all around me. What an amazing first day in Rio!

Festivals and customs 31

Appendix B. Excerpts from Raw Data and Data Notes

Teacher-Researcher Communication before the Course (excerpt)

Original Manuscript (Translation Version)	Interpretation
phase before the courses start?	
19:49:45 I think when we assign tasks, we could have them submit a plan. Try to have students roughly allocate tasks in advance, like student A is responsible for one area, student B for another. That way, at least I'll have an expectation, and after it's approved, they can execute.	The reason for having students create a plan in advance
19:50:11 And that way, we can proactively avoid unreasonable division of labor. Additionally, I can introduce a reward system or group peer assessment at the end. Like, "Hey, how do you think your friend did?" That way, we can compare the actual division of labor with the initial plan.	Compare the practical execution with the plan formulated by students before the class
19:50:26 Alternatively, we can have anonymous evaluations within the group, where each member gives feedback anonymously. That could motivate them to engage more seriously to avoid complaints from their peers. So, definitely no punitive mechanisms, but a reward system could be set up.	The reasons for conducting anonymous evaluations
19:50:44 How do you plan to reward them in the end?	
19:50:55 For instance, we could award the best-performing group comprehensively and recognize individual standout performances within a group.	Implement rewards for outstanding groups and individuals
19:51:09 And maybe some small tangible rewards, like giving a book or something?	
19:51:13 But that might have to come from the teacher's end.	
19:51:34 That's fine, anyway. Initially, I might ask them to create an Excel sheet or a similar table to outline their plans, like who's doing what. Then, when they're making the video, I'll insist that they start by writing everyone's names and their roles, right at the beginning of the video.	How to make the initial plan. Illustrating the division of labor within the video production
19:52:00 Okay, that sounds good. How many students do you think would be ideal	

Original Manuscript (Translation Version)	Interpretation
20:06:51 In the other class sessions, is it up to them to conscientiously use English while discussing in their groups? Because, I feel that if the teacher isn't present, we might tend to opt for comfortable Chinese discussions.	
20:06:58 Absolutely, I'm sure they'll mostly discuss in Chinese. But considering the complexity of the task they're working on, using Chinese is fully understandable. It might even be necessary to ensure the project progresses smoothly.	
20:07:18 I don't think you need to worry about this.	
20:07:22 Actually, in every class session, students will have the opportunity to use English. They will have to articulate their thoughts in English, and I will do the same.	English language skills improve through various phases of the project.
20:07:41 In the technical class, we might not emphasize English, but in at least two other class sessions, there will be a substantial amount of English.	
20:07:52 So, how do you help students with their English learning?	
20:08:04 For instance, in the third session where you guide them through a sample project, I might lack the practical experience. I wonder if it's like starting English conversation from the very beginning of the class?	
20:08:26 What I mean is that their English abilities might not be up to having a very specific conversation on a particular topic like travel. It's not like you can provide them with specific phrases, and they'll be able to communicate entirely in English, is that right?	
20:08:48 There could be some common phrases that they might know. From high school onwards, they've been exposed to basic expressions like "I plan to go to..." or "stay at..." and "for how many days," and "my goal is..." and so on. They have a foundational grasp of certain key phrases.	Vocabulary related to travel, planning, describing experiences, and more is essential. And students have acquired a considerable amount of relevant vocabulary.
20:09:13 Do you think that, throughout this project, their English proficiency will	

Presentation (class observation) (excerpt)

Students take the stage (there is laughter from the audience, possibly due to the more popular students).	The entire class atmosphere is very lively.
In the form of a scene play, imagine two customers (students A and B) visiting a travel agency to inquire if a particular destination is worth traveling to. The travel agency staff (students C, D, and E) use a video presentation to provide information. Video starts (group project presentation).	Students exhibit independent creativity with fresh ideas. Subsequently, this group's presentations consistently take the form of role-playing, which both the teacher and I find pleasantly surprising. The students in the audience are also deeply engaged.
Student C, playing the role of the head of the travel agency, begins by summarizing the video content. He is very expressive with his body movements, and there are occasional bursts of laughter from the class during his performance.	Student C's performance is captivating, and he is deeply immersed. The positive response from the audience enhances his focus.
Students A and B ask questions about the "travel agency," including inquiries about the duration of the trip and the daily itinerary. Students C, D, and E take turns answering the questions posed by the "customers".	This approach allows them to elaborate on the video content in English. They employ a novel Q&A format to advance their presentation. (Students B, C, and E are relatively more confident and can present without reading from a script.)
During the presentation, students have prepared a PowerPoint presentation to assist with their English explanations. When one student is presenting, the assisting students quickly switch the slides based on the content being discussed. In addition to this, they use body language and point to specific parts of the PowerPoint to help their classmates understand the content better.	They are well-versed in the presentation content and make good use of supporting tools.
Student D is not as fluent in English during their presentation and occasionally checks his notes. When he encounters English words he is unsure about, he switches to Chinese. The teacher in the audience reacts promptly and immediately translates the Chinese phrase back into English for Student D. (Student D: "We recommend that you 乘坐飞机 to reach this city." Teacher: "Take a flight." Student D: "Yes, take a flight.") Furthermore, the teacher supplements explanations for any unfamiliar vocabulary mentioned.	The teacher continuously observes their performance and responds as needed, providing language support and enhancements when appropriate.
Minor grammar and pronunciation errors that do not impede comprehension are not interrupted during the presentation. However, the teacher occasionally asks further questions about content she doesn't quite understand.	Effective communication takes precedence over linguistic accuracy.
As Students A and B had fewer opportunities to express	Roles are clearly defined, with Student

288

Daily Course (class observation) (excerpt)

Unit 2 Travel around the World	The content covered in their textbook for this unit happens to be related to travel.
Student Presentations (5 mins) One student introduce his MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) in English, using PowerPoint for assistance.	This is a new addition to the teacher's curriculum for this semester. In the interview, the teacher mentioned that she thinks understanding the students' MBTI information can help her better understand each student individually. It can provide teachers with some basic information to grasp students' personalities, enabling the discovery of personalized learning plans tailored to each student and improving communication with students. The student expresses themselves fluently and has a humorous language style.
Homework Review (5 mins) Review the areas where students had the most mistakes, highlighting common errors and challenging points.	Due to the tight schedule and heavy workload of the students, the teacher only selected a portion of the homework for explanation in this section. Students can consult the teacher separately during self-study time to inquire about other unaddressed questions. This approach helps save time for most students.
Bilingual Teaching Approach During Class The teacher seamlessly combines both Chinese and English during the class.	Translanguaging
Reading Unit Text (15 mins) Presentation of learning objectives, with the use of images for vocabulary introduction and English pronunciation practice.	The overall pace is relatively fast.
If the teacher makes an occasional mistake, it is promptly corrected.	The teacher has extensive teaching experience.
Students take turns answering questions or translating the text to involve as many classmates as possible. The teacher also poses questions for the students to answer together during the class.	The teacher strives to involve as many students as possible in classroom interactions and question-and-answer sessions in an equitable manner, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to speak.
Answering Questions Based on Video (15 mins) The teacher plays an extracurricular English video related to the unit content (without Chinese subtitles) while students discuss quietly in the audience. After watching, the teacher calls on students to answer questions related to the video. Upon receiving student responses, the teacher summarizes and expands on their answers while encouraging and guiding those who may not know the answers. This process continually	The chosen video content aligns with the unit's requirements. Although the listening text's difficulty level is slightly higher than what is covered in the unit, the video itself is engaging and quickly captures students' attention. It further reinforces the knowledge points related to this unit. The segment where students answer questions after watching the video allows them to focus on both the video content and the English information it provides, thereby enhancing their listening and speaking skills.

Student Interview (excerpt)

…	
We've had some similar activities before, but they were not quite like the project the teacher mentioned. Back then, we were only required to present news and introduce it, sometimes adding our personal opinions and viewpoints. We weren't asked to create products like brochures or videos.	
…	
In this project, we do spend more time because we have to make a video. However, with a relatively large group and about a month's time, it doesn't feel burdensome for us.	The allotted time for this project is sufficient, so students feel that the pressure to complete it is not significant.
…	
The main work is done during the holidays when we can use electronic devices, including phones and computers. So, it's relatively convenient to do these tasks during the break. After school starts, our use of electronic devices may be limited. During the semester, we only have weekends to use electronic devices. So, if we have to do similar projects in the future, it might be quite challenging during the semester. Doing something like the News report format we did between semesters would be simpler.	Searching for information using electronic devices during the holidays is convenient for students. However, it becomes challenging after the school year starts.
…	
I find the process quite enjoyable because it's different from our regular English classes. Usually, in our classes, the teacher provides a lot of content. While this project has specific requirements, meaning the theme is travel, there is a lot of room for us to be creative.	Students are more interested in projects that offer a lot of creative freedom.
…	
I discuss and search for information with other group members. In this process, I think we can pretty much complete the task without the teacher's help. To be honest, when looking for information, we might directly search for some Chinese sources because it's quicker, especially for information we are not very familiar with. If there are questions related to video production, we would search for Chinese information because it's easier for us to understand. After gathering and organizing the information, we then work with the English information for the presentation, including translating the information presented in our video into English and thinking about how to present it in English during the final presentation. This is roughly how we go about searching for information. I actually really enjoy doing the research ourselves. We can incorporate elements we like, including our personal interests. I think we still have a lot of creative freedom. When discussing with other group members, it's quite enjoyable. The content we find ourselves resonates with everyone because we are all peers. Everyone is interested in the things we find. Based on this interest, we are more motivated to achieve and do it well. I think that's how it is.	There is minimal reliance on the teacher during the preparation process. They may consult Chinese sources, especially when dealing with unfamiliar areas.

The group discussion atmosphere is good. Everyone shares similar interests and is motivated to complete the project. |
| … | |
| In this process, there were sometimes challenges. For example, sometimes we couldn't find enough or complete information. For instance, when we wanted to search for foreign sources, sometimes foreign websites loaded slowly or couldn't be accessed. However, we | In cases where certain information cannot be found, alternative solutions are sought. |

Teacher Interview (Excerpt)

... Today, I had a class discussing genetically modified foods. Do you support or oppose, or something else? I divided the entire class into two major groups, one in support and the other against. There were specific time limits because, as you know, once they start discussing, it can get quite noisy, and if we give them too much time, they might end up discussing what to have for lunch today. So, most of the discussions took place within 3 to 5 minutes. You mentioned discussing topics like genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Do students really engage in English conversations on such topics when reading? Because the English spoken aspect of such topics can be quite challenging for them.	In the classroom, if students are given too much time for free discussion, the topics of their discussion may gradually deviate from the main theme.
Yes, especially for our school's students, oral proficiency is indeed a challenge. However, we still encourage them to express themselves in English in the classroom. In most cases, they may not be able to express themselves in complete sentences or paragraphs, but they can still convey some points. Basically, the first 30 minutes of each class is dedicated to preparing them for speaking after reading. We provide them with additional vocabulary. When discussing the details of the article, we also explain vocabulary, which helps them build a small vocabulary repository for the final discussion. So, they can usually say something by the end. Is it okay for them to have English conversations on various topics during regular sessions? I believe constructing complete sentences is still challenging. Formulating their Chinese thoughts into full sentences is still quite difficult for them. …	Students have relatively weak oral skills, but simple oral output is feasible.
In fact, I think there is too much teacher guidance in the classroom now. Because once there's guidance, it can limit their thinking. In the last public class we attended, the teacher was explaining the final question, which seemed to involve sportsmanship. The teacher made the task quite specific by asking whether winning or losing was important. Then, during the after-class discussion, we realized that, if we don't restrict the answers to just winning or losing, there can be other responses. I think sometimes excessive guidance can limit their thinking. They might focus only on "yes" or "no" and not explore other possibilities. …	Currently, excessive teacher guidance in the classroom may limit students' thinking space.
They are not necessarily interested in every unit topic. For instance, I teach a liberal arts class, and they may not be very interested in biochemistry. When asked to discuss such topics, they might feel compelled. It's as if they're discussing it to complete the task for that English class. However, if we talk about something like poetry and literature, they can say a lot. So, I think it has to do with the theme of the unit, as well as the students' interest in that area. …	Students may not necessarily be interested in the content of every unit.

Appendix C. Initial Construction of the Thematic Framework for Data Analysis

Middle School Project in PBLL

Learning Outcomes

Language Skills

Speaking
- Improved **fluency** in English expression
- Prioritizes accurate expression techniques secondary to fluency
- Approach: Pre-prepared scripts and oral practice before presentations, rather than impromptu speaking

Writing
- **Improvement** alongside speaking skills
- Preparation: Writing drafts for the group's presentation
- Development: Continuous refinement and oral practice based on the written drafts

Listening
- Involves absorbing classmates' English presentations
- Encounters different speeds, intonations, and content
- Challenges: Attention may waver due to varying performance of different groups

Reading
- Generally, **weaker outcomes** reported by most students
- Reliance on native language materials when searching for information
- **Critical selection** process during research

Cultural Understanding through "Travel"
- The theme of "travel" provides students with opportunities to experience various cultural aspects.
- Specific cultural learning content **varies across groups** due to their different choices of focus within the theme.

Language Triptych

Language of Learning
- Curricular Vocabulary: The **specific vocabulary related to travel**, like "itinerary, destination, tourist, accommodation" and so on.

Language for Learning
- **Functional** Language Use:" for instance, on the other hand, however, to summarize…"

Language through Learning
- Using English in **real-life communication** scenarios, such as one group simulating a situation where they seek travel information in a travel agency.

Strategy Use

Social Interaction

Cooperation & Collaboration
- Information & Resource Sharing
- Task Collaboration: Division of work to complete different segments.
- Challenges: Occasional disputes and uncoordinated task division.

Dialogue
- Expressing & Listening: Sharing own views and listening to others.
- Adjusting Communication: Tailoring language style across different contexts (peer-to-peer, student-to-teacher, presentations).

Non-Verbal Communication
- Body Language: Active use of gestures, **contrasting with the typical stillness in daily class**. Overall more active participation due to expressive body language.

Problem Solving
- Issue Identification & Resolution: Recognizing and addressing problems during communication.
- Reaching Consensus: Coordinating different views to achieve a common goal.
- Pace of Resolution: **Varied among groups** but generally successful outcomes.

Technology Use

Mobile Phones
- Convenience: Easy access for information searching via websites, social media, and online dictionaries.
- Proficiency: Most students skilled in using mobiles for learning.
- Limitation: Usage is **restricted after the start of school.**

Computers
- Usage: For online classes, group discussions, and creating presentations (PPT & Video).
- Skill Level: Most students proficient; group collaboration resolves lack of knowledge **without much teacher intervention.**

Electronic Dictionaries
- Specialized Devices: A minority of students utilize electronic dictionary devices to enhance English language information.

Translanguaging
- Skillful Integration: Both students and teachers use this skill, substituting unknown or complex English words with Chinese to maintain communication flow.

Metacognition
- Self-Awareness in Learning: After understanding the learning objectives, students can focus on key areas and discern when to seek teacher assistance and when it's unnecessary.

Student Emotional Factors

Learning Motivation

Extrinsic Factors
- Homework Requirement: Fulfilling English subject requirements for the holiday (as a substitute for regular written homework).

Intrinsic Factors
- Interest: Finds the project assignment **more engaging than written homework**.
- Opportunity: Sees it as a rare chance to **improve spoken English skills**.

Learning Attitude
- Increased Proactivity: On the whole, there is an increase in student initiative.
- Acceptance of Challenge: Embraced the new learning model and its challenges.

Learning State
- Engagement: Most discussions are active and lively.
- They display **more confidence** during oral expression than when answering English questions in regular classes.
- Preference for tangible tasks leads to **potential inattentiveness** when the discussion is not about their assigned segment.

Teacher Experience

Attitude

Agreement
- Student Engagement: Recognizes improved student engagement and initiative compared to regular classes.
- Oral Expression: Affirms the increase in students' proactive use of English for oral communication.

Opposition
- Relevance to Testing: Believes that the main area of language skill improvement is **not what's currently needed for language examinations**.
- Guidance Challenge: Difficult to predict and grasp students' learning content accurately, making targeted language guidance during the process challenging.
- Assessment Challenge: It is difficult to establish criteria for judging the outcomes of each group.

Subsequent Impact
- Teaching Adaptation: Alters some aspects of regular English teaching practices. Dedicates the first 5 minutes of class for students to autonomously choose and report on news, **inspired by PBLL principles**.

Implementation Challenges

Time Constraints
- Limited Student Availability: Students have very limited time to allocate during the term.
- Project Duration: The implementation period for projects is lengthy.

Resource Limitations
- Restricted Use of Electronics: Students face restrictions on electronic device usage during the term.
- Access to Foreign Resources: Some international resources are difficult to obtain for students.

Varied Student Abilities
- Unequal Opportunities: Students may have unequal chances to express themselves within their groups.

Lack of Support
- There is a lack of backing from parents and stakeholders, affecting teacher motivation. (Student-Centered Learning vs. Exam Preparation)

Assessment Uncertainties
- Grading Standards: There is ambiguity surrounding evaluation and grading criteria.

Appendix D. Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title:
A Case Study on Project-based Language Learning in Chinese High School English Education: Student Experiences, Teacher Transformation, and Pedagogical Implications

Researcher Details:
Yuhan Huang, PGR student at the University of Glasgow
Email: y.huang.6@research.gla.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

As you can see from the title of the study, the main objective of this study is to find out about your experiences and perceptions of learning English in an online format using a combination of project-based learning and educational technology. The discussions and results of this practice will be presented in the form of the researcher's doctoral thesis. Before you learn more about the study and the interviews that will take place after the course, it is important to note that participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to work in a group with others from your class to complete a project about travel and produce a short video on the topic.

In order to compensate you for the time you have to spend on this project during the holidays, if you choose to take part in this practical course, you will not have to complete the written English holiday work that the school would have given you. By participating in this study, you will be doing the same amount of work that you would be doing normally for the English holiday work, but the difference is

that you will be able to use your holiday time to try new ways of learning English and review and update your current English language skills. This project will not be a completely new learning environment, as your English teacher will be joining you, and you will be working with peers from your class.

The lessons are expected to last for around a month and will be delivered in an online format. It is expected that one to two hours per week will be spent with your English teacher leading the online lessons. In addition, you will be required to work together in a small group and collaborate on the final product and presentation required for the course practice. At the end of all the activities, the researcher will ask some of you to take part in one-to-one online interviews or a focus group interview to gain your views of the project. The one-to-one interview is expected to last between 40 and 50 minutes, and the focus group interview is expected to last between 40 and 60 minutes. With your consent, the process of attending class and all interview sessions will be recorded in video or audio format.

Your personal and school information will not be published in the researcher's thesis, although there will be some discussion and analysis of the course and interviews in the researcher's thesis. Subject being referred to will be used by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research. Samples are de-identified (i.e., a reversible process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which only the researcher retains the key). After the interviews have been completed, the researcher will provide you with a transcript of the discussion so that you can check that the class and conversations have been accurately recorded and interpreted. After the completion of the researcher's thesis or any related publications, the researcher will proactively send these materials in electronic format to your teacher involved in this project, who will then distribute them to you. You can also inquire about the research progress and request research outputs directly from the researcher.

The course and all interviews will be recorded in video or audio form, which will be securely stored in the encrypted UofG One Drive, and you will be given video/audio access to watch the lesson recordings and your own interview. All research data collected from you will be stored securely in the researcher's One Drive for ten years for possible future relevant research and related publications. All personal data or anything that could be used to identify you or the school will be deleted as soon as the research has been completed. Please note that complete confidentiality may not be guaranteed. For instance, even though the specific name of the school will not be disclosed, the researcher may mention the general geographic location of your school in the thesis; besides, in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to participants or others, confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee.

All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. It will be stored in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/dpfoioffice/policiesandprocedures/dpa-

policy/#d.en.37470). Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

You may also choose to withdraw from this study at any point after the course has started. If you choose not to take part in the course or withdraw in the middle of the project, you do not need to give any explanation, and this will not have any negative impact on your regular academic performance or teacher evaluation. If you withdraw at any point during the study, any personal information and interviews collected about you will be immediately and securely deleted. The school has a dedicated counselling room and offers online anonymous counselling services as well. If you experience any psychological discomfort during class or the interview process, you can seek counselling. If you choose to withdraw from the course midway, the school will determine whether you need to complete or partially complete the original English holiday homework based on your current progress.

If you have any questions during participation, you can contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor. The researcher's contact details have already been mentioned above, and the following are the name of the researcher's supervisor and his email address:

Dr David Morrison-Love (PGR Principal Supervisor): david.morrison-love@glasgow.ac.uk

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee. To pursue any complaint about the conduct of this research, please contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Lead via socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you again for your patience in reading.

_____End of Participant Information Sheet_____

Appendix E. Consent Form

University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: A Case Study on Project-based Language Learning in Chinese High School English Education: Student Experiences, Teacher Transformation, and Pedagogical Implications

Name and Email of Researcher:
Yuhan Huang: Email: y.huang.6@research.gla.ac.uk

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my grades arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

* All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised and as soon as the research study is completed, will be deleted.
* The research material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
* The research material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research.
* The research material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
* I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
* I understand that other authenticated researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.
* I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.

I agree to take part in this research study   ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study   ☐

I agree to have classroom observations audio-recorded   ☐

I disagree to have classroom observations audio-recorded   ☐

I agree to have classroom observations video-recorded   ☐

I disagree to have classroom observations video-recorded   ☐

I consent to interviews being audio-recorded   ☐

I do not agree to have the interviews I participate being audio-recorded ☐

I consent to interviews being video-recorded   ☐

I do not agree to have the interviews I participate being video-recorded ☐

I agree to have focus group interviews audio-recorded.   ☐

I do not agree to have focus group interviews audio-recorded.   ☐

I agree to have focus group interviews video-recorded.   ☐

I do not agree to have focus group interviews video-recorded.   ☐

Name of Participant ………………………. Signature ………………………………………

Date …………………………………

Name of Researcher ………………………. Signature ………………………………………

Date …………………………………

References

Abuhassna, H., Adnan, M. A. B. M., & Awae, F. (2024). Exploring the synergy between instructional design models and learning theories: A systematic literature review. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, *16*(2), ep499.

Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: A reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *22*(4), 431–447.

Ahn, I., Chiu, M. M., & Patrick, H. (2021). Connecting teacher and student motivation: Student-perceived teacher need-supportive practices and student need satisfaction. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *64*, 101950.

Akbar. (2018). English as an international language and implication on English teacher's roles and student English learning. *Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, *6*(2), 137–144.

Akki, F., & Larouz, M. (2021). Speaking and writing interconnections: A systematic review. *Journal of Translation and Language Studies*, *2*(2), 19–33.

Akramy, S. A., Habibzada, S. A., & Hashemi, A. (2022). Afghan EFL teachers' perceptions towards grammar-translation method (GTM). *Cogent Education*, *9*(1), 2127503.

Alan, B., & Stoller, F. (2005). Maximizing the benefits of project work in foreign language classrooms. *English Teaching Forum*, *43*, Article 4.

Alasal, M. S. (2025). Exploring the role of task-based language teaching in enhancing communicative competence. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, *8*(2), 48–59.

Alessandri, G., Borgogni, L., Latham, G. P., Cepale, G., Theodorou, A., & De Longis, E. (2020). Self-set goals improve academic performance through nonlinear effects on daily study performance. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *77*, 101784.

Alharahsheh, H. H., & Pius, A. (2020). A review of key paradigms: Positivism VS interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *2*(3), 39–43.

Ali, T., Nasmilah, & Pammu, A. (2023). The influence of the audio-lingual method in improving the students' vocabulary at SMA negeri 21 Makassar. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, *6*(4), 836–844.

Al-Mahrooqi, R., & Tuzlukova, V. (2011). Negotiating meaning in the EFL context. *Pertanika Journal of Social Science & Humanities*, *19*, 183–196.

Alshamrany, A. A. G. (2019). The role of motivation and attitudes in improving Saudi EFL students' speaking skill. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and Translation*, *5*(2), 26–35.

Alvira, R., & González Doria, Y. L. (2018). Content- and language-integrated learning based strategies for the professional development of early childhood education pre-service teachers. *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, *23*(1), 45–64.

Amini, R., Setiawan, B., Fitria, Y., & Ningsih, Y. (2019). The difference of students learning outcomes using the project-based learning and problem-based learning model in terms of self-efficacy. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, *1387*(1), 012082.

Anazifa, R. D., & Djukri, D. (2017). Project-based learning and problem-based learning: Are they effective to improve student's thinking skills? *Jurnal Pendidikan IPA Indonesia*, *6*(2), 346–355.

Anderson, R. C., Shirey, L. L., Wilson, P. T., & Fielding, L. G. (2021). Interestingness of

children's reading material. In *Aptitude, learning, and instruction* (pp. 287–300). Routledge.

Arasaratnam, L. A., & Doerfel, M. L. (2005). Intercultural communication competence: Identifying key components from multicultural perspectives. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *29*(2), 137–163.

Arnold, L. R. (2020). "Now I don't use it at all … it's gone": Monolingual ideology, multilingual students, and (failed) translingual negotiation strategies. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *54*(4), 318–341.

Attard Montalto, S., Walter, L., Theodorou, M., & Chrysanthou, K. (2015). *The CLIL Guidebook*. European Commission.

Aubrey, S. (2025). The relationship between task-specific anxiety, enjoyment, and use of planned content across discourse stages of second language learners' spoken task performances. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *120*, 102677.

Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing* (1st edn). Oxford University Press.

Bai, B., & Zhou, H. (2024). Standards, Instruction and Assessment of EFL Writing in Schools: Lessons From China's Basic Education. *European Journal of Education*, *59*(4), e12747.

Bajec, M. L., Štemberger, T., & Bratož, S. (2025). Enhancing intercultural competences with the CulCLIL model. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1–21.

Baker, M. J. (2015). Collaboration in collaborative learning. *Interaction Studies. Social Behaviour and Communication in Biological and Artificial Systems*, *16*(3), 451–473.

Ball, P., Kelly, K., & Clegg, J. (2016). *Putting CLIL into Practice*. Oxford University Press.

Banegas, D. L., & Hemmi, C. (2021). CLIL: Present and future. In C. Hemmi & D. L. Banegas (Eds), *International Perspectives on CLIL* (pp. 281–295). Springer International Publishing.

Banerjee, R., & Halder, S. (2021). Amotivation and influence of teacher support dimensions: A self-determination theory approach. *Heliyon*, *7*, e07410.

Barbour, R. S. (2005). Making sense of focus groups. *Medical Education*, *39*(7), 742–750.

Bates, E., & MacWhinney, B. (2014). Competition, variation, and language learning. In *Mechanisms of language acquisition* (pp. 157–193). Psychology Press.

Bauler, C. V., & Scalzo, J. (2016). Interdisciplinary project design: Integrating language, content, and technology for working with English learners. *Issues in Teacher Education*, *25*(2), 69–88.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(4), 544–559.

Beckett, G. H. (2002). Teacher and student evaluations of project-based instruction. *TESL Canada Journal*, *19*(2), 52–66.

Beckett, G. H. (2005). The project framework: A tool for language, content, and skills integration. *ELT Journal*, *59*(2), 108–116.

Beckett, G. H. (2009). *Project-based instruction in a Canadian secondary school's ESL classes: Goals and evaluations*.

Beckett, G. H., Beck, J., Lestari, F., Yang, J., & Jean Lim, H. (2025). Qualitative research synthesis of project-based (language) learning and teaching in east and southeast Asia: 2002–24. *Language Teaching Research*, *0*(0), 1–26.

Beckett, G. H., & Slater, T. (2018). Project-based learning and technology. In J. I. Liontas

(Ed.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (1st edn, pp. 1–7). Wiley.

Beckett, G., & Slater, T. (Eds). (2019). *Global Perspectives on Project-Based Language Learning, Teaching, and Assessment: Key Approaches, Technology Tools, and Frameworks*. Routledge.

Belland, B. R. (2014). Scaffolding: Definition, current debates, and future directions. In J. M. Spector, M. D. Merrill, J. Elen, & M. J. Bishop (Eds), *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology* (pp. 505–518). Springer.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (2016). The social construction of reality. In W. Longhofer & D. Winchester (Eds), *Social Theory Re-Wired* (pp. 110–122). Routledge.

Bidenko, L., & Bespalova, H. (2017). Implementing audio-lingual method to teaching Ukrainian as a foreign language at the initial stage. *Advanced Education*, 7, 23–27.

Blackie, M. A. L., Case, J. M., & Jawitz, J. (2010). Student-centredness: The link between transforming students and transforming ourselves. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *15*(6), 637–646.

Blumenfeld, P. C., Soloway, E., Marx, R. W., Krajcik, J. S., Guzdial, M., & Palincsar, A. (1991). Motivating project-based learning: Sustaining the doing, supporting the learning. *Educational Psychologist*, *26*(3–4), 369–398.

Blumenfeld, P., Fishman, B. J., Krajcik, J., Marx, R. W., & Soloway, E. (2000). Creating usable innovations in systemic reform: Scaling up technology-embedded project-based science in urban schools. *Educational Psychologist*, *35*(3), 149–164.

Boekaerts, M. (1997). Self-regulated learning: A new concept embraced by researchers, policy makers, educators, teachers, and students. *Learning and Instruction*, *7*(2), 161–186.

Boer, I., Hornstra, L., Van De Pol, J., & Bakx, A. (2025). Teacher expectations: Associations with need supportive teaching and students' need satisfaction. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *40*(3).

Boonsuk, Y., & Karakaş, A. (2025). Future directions for pedagogy in Global Englishes. In Y. Boonsuk & A. Karakaş, *Global Englishes and Language Policy* (pp. 189–218). Springer Nature.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, *36*(2), 81–109.

Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System*, *39*(3), 370–380.

Borrego, M., & Newswander, L. K. (2010). Definitions of interdisciplinary research: Toward graduate-level interdisciplinary learning outcomes. *The Review of Higher Education*, *34*(1), 61–84.

Boyle, F. A., Buchanan, F. M., Ritchie, D., & Gamage, K. A. A. (2024). Exploring staff–student partnership in curriculum design. *Education Sciences*, *14*(1), 61.

Bozkurt, A., Karakaya, K., Turk, M., Karakaya, Ö., & Castellanos-Reyes, D. (2022). The impact of COVID-19 on education: A meta-narrative review. *TechTrends*, *66*(5), 883–896.

Branden, K. V. den. (2008). Negotiation of meaning in the classroom: Does it enhance reading comprehension? In J. Philp, R. Oliver, & A. Mackey (Eds), *Second Language Acquisition and the Younger Learner: Child's Play?* (pp. 149–169). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Brassler, M., & Dettmers, J. (2017). How to enhance interdisciplinary competence—Interdisciplinary problem-based learning versus interdisciplinary project-based learning. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, *11*(2), 1–15.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative Psychology*, *9*(1), 3–26.

Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *1*(3), 185–216.

British Educational Research Association. (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research* (4th edn). BERA.

Brown, H. D. (2008). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th edn). Pearson Longman.

Brown, H. D., & Lee, H. (2015). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (Fourth edition). Pearson Education.

Bruen, J., & Kelly, N. (2017). Using a shared L1 to reduce cognitive overload and anxiety levels in the L2 classroom. *The Language Learning Journal*, *45*(3), 368–381.

Brundiers, K., & Wiek, A. (2013). Do we teach what we preach? An international comparison of problem- and project-based learning courses in sustainability. *Sustainability*, *5*(4), 1725–1746.

Cai, Y., & Lönnqvist, A. (2022). Overcoming the barriers to establishing interdisciplinary degree programmes: The perspective of managing organisational innovation. *Higher Education Policy*, *35*(4), 946–968.

Camacho-Morles, J., Slemp, G. R., Pekrun, R., Loderer, K., Hou, H., & Oades, L. G. (2021). Activity achievement emotions and academic performance: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, *33*(3), 1051–1095.

Campbell, A., & Jacques, K. (2003). Best practice researched: Teachers' expectations of the impact of doing research in their classrooms and schools. *Teacher Development*, *7*(1), 75–90.

Canagarajah, S. (2006). The place of world Englishes in composition: Pluralization continued. *College Composition & Communication*, *57*(4), 586–619.

Canagarajah, S. (2013). Negotiating translingual literacy: An enactment. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *48*(1), 40–67.

Canagarajah, S. (2012). *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*. Routledge.

Canagarajah, S., & Matsumoto, Y. (2017). Negotiating voice in translingual literacies: From literacy regimes to contact zones. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *38*(5), 390–406.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, *1*(1), 1–47.

Carless, D. (2009). Revisiting the TBLT versus P-P-P debate: Voices from Hong Kong. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, *19*, 49–66.

Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2017). Spoken grammar: Where are we and where are we going? *Applied Linguistics*, *38*(1), 1–20.

Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). Language teaching approaches: An overview. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (3rd edn, pp. 3–11). HEINLE

& HEINLE.

Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, *6*(2), 5–35.

Cenoz, J. (2015). Content-based instruction and content and language integrated learning: The same or different? *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *28*(1), 8–24.

Chang, C.-C., & Yang, S.-T. (2023). Interactive effects of scaffolding digital game-based learning and cognitive style on adult learners' emotion, cognitive load and learning performance. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, *20*(1), 16.

Chang, P., Zhou, L., & Zhang, L. J. (2024). The roles of task-specific self-efficacy and enjoyment in EFL learners' development of speaking CALF: A longitudinal study. *System*, *127*, 103539.

Chang, S.-C. (2011). A contrastive study of grammar translation method and communicative approach in teaching English grammar. *English Language Teaching*, *4*(2), 13–24.

Charamba, E. (2020). Translanguaging in a multilingual class: A study of the relation between students' languages and epistemological access in science. *International Journal of Science Education*, *42*(11), 1779–1798.

Chau, S., & Ren, L. (2024). How does educational travel promote lifelong learning? *International Journal of Tourism Research*, *26*(4), e2731.

Chen, Q., & Wright, C. (2017). Contextualization and authenticity in TBLT: Voices from Chinese classrooms. *Language Teaching Research*, *21*(4), 517–538.

Chen, W. (2024). The impact of flipped classroom on English proficiency of first-year Chinese urban and rural pre-service teachers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*, 1347826.

Cheon, S. H., & Reeve, J. (2015). A classroom-based intervention to help teachers decrease students' amotivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *40*, 99–111.

Chiang, C. L., & Lee, H. (2016). The effect of project-based learning on learning motivation and problem-solving ability of vocational high school students. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, *6*(9), 709–712.

Chimwayange, C. (2024). Promoting student engagement using project-based learning as service-based skills development. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, 1–18.

China Daily. (2025, February 12). *Path laid out for education reform*. English.Gov.CN.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax* (50th Anniversary Edition). The MIT Press.

Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of language: Its nature, origin, and use*. Praeger.

Clark, H., & Tree, J. E. F. (2002). Using uh and um in spontaneous speaking. *Cognition*, *84*(1), 73–111.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th edn). Routledge.

Condliffe, B., Quint, J., Visher, M. G., Bangser, M. R., Drohojowska, S., Saco, L., & Nelson, E. (2017). *Project-based learning: A literature review. Working paper*. MDRC.

Conteh, J. (2018). Translanguaging. *ELT Journal*, *72*(4), 445–447.

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.

Courville, T. (2015). *The effect of teacher vs. Student-set performance goals on academic*

achievement in a middle school science classroom [Master of Natural Sciences, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College].

Coyle, D. (2007). Content and language integrated learning: Towards a connected research agenda for CLIL pedagogies. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *10*(5), 543–562.

Coyle, D. (2015). Strengthening integrated learning: Towards a new era for pluriliteracies and intercultural learning. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, *8*(2), 84–103.

Coyle, D., Halbach, A., Meyer, O., & Schuck, K. (2018). Knowledge ecology for conceptual growth: Teachers as active agents in developing a pluriliteracies approach to teaching for learning (PTL). *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *21*(3), 349–365.

Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning*. Cambridge University Press.

Coyle, D., Meyer, O., & Staschen-Dielmann, S. (Eds). (2023). *A Deeper Learning Companion for CLIL: Putting Pluriliteracies into Practice* (1st edn). Cambridge University Press.

Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2015). Translanguaging and identity in educational settings. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *35*, 20–35.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed). SAGE Publications.

Crichton, M., Crichton, H., & Colville, G. (2022). Students' perceptions of problem-based learning in multidisciplinary groups when seeking to solve an engineering grand challenge. *Journal of Problem Based Learning in Higher Education*.

Cross, J. (2018). Collaborative Listening. In J. I. Liontas (Ed.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (1st edn, pp. 1–6). Wiley.

Crotty, M. J. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage Publications.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). The Conditions of Flow. In *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (pp. 99–127). Penguin.

Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research*, *49*(2), 222–251.

Cummins, J. (2000a). Academic language learning, transformative pedagogy, and information technology: Towards a critical balance. *TESOL Quarterly*, *34*(3), 537.

Cummins, J. (2000b). Biliteracy, empowerment, and transformative pedagogy. In *The Power of Two Languages* (pp. 9–19).

Dabbagh, N. (2003). Scaffolding: An important teacher competency in online learning. *TechTrends*, *47*(2), 39–44.

Dalton-Puffer, C. (2011). Content-and-language integrated learning: From practice to principles? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *31*, 182–204.

Dalton-Puffer, C., Llinares, A., Lorenzo, F., & Nikula, T. (2014). 'you can stand under my umbrella': Immersion, CLIL and bilingual education. A response to Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter (2013). *Applied Linguistics*, *35*(2), 213–218.

Darani, L. H., Moghaddam, M. M., & Murray, N. (2023). The effect of student-led small-group discussion as a pre-writing task on the development of EFL students' writing. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, *32*(5), 605–614.

Darounkola, E. R., Yaqubi, B., & Khonamri, F. (2024). Cultivating active engagement in pair work through peer modelling. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *34*(3), 972–990.

De Boer, H., Donker, A. S., Kostons, D. D. N. M., & Van Der Werf, G. P. C. (2018). Long-term effects of metacognitive strategy instruction on student academic performance: A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, *24*, 98–115.

Deci, E. L., Olafsen, A. H., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-Determination Theory in work organizations: The state of a science. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *4*(1), 19–43.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Conceptualizations of intrinsic motivation and self-determination. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (pp. 11–40). Springer US.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Self-determination theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds), *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 416–436). SAGE Publications Ltd.

DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2019). Semi structured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigour. *Family Medicine and Community Health*, *7*(2), e000057.

Deng, M. (2023). An analysis of the grammar translation method in the 20th century and the inevitability of its application in China. *The Educational Review*, *7*(3), 305–308.

Deng, T. (2024). The interdependence of educational alienation and equality: Rethinking China's examination-oriented education system. *Cogent Education*, *11*(1), 2385770.

Derakhshan, A., Khalili, A. N., & Beheshti, F. (2016). Developing EFL learner's speaking ability, accuracy and fluency. *English Language and Literature Studies*, *6*(2), 177.

Dewaele, J.-M., & Meftah, R. (2024). How motivation and enjoyment spread their wings during English Foreign Language learning: A pseudo-longitudinal investigation into Moroccan learners. *Learning and Motivation*, *85*, 101962.

Dewey, J. (1913). *Interest and Effort in Education*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Dhawan, S. (2020). Online learning: A panacea in the time of COVID-19 crisis. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, *49*(1), 5–22.

Díaz Pérez, W., Fields, D. L., & Marsh, D. (2018). Innovations and Challenges: Conceptualizing CLIL Practice. *Theory Into Practice*, *57*(3), 177–184.

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, *40*(4), 314–321.

Dillenbourg, P. (1999). What do you mean by collaborative learning? In *Collaborative-learning: Cognitive and computational approaches.* (pp. 1–19). Oxford: Elsevier.

Dong, L., Liu, M., & Yang, F. (2022). The relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety, enjoyment, and expectancy-value motivation and their predictive effects on Chinese high school students' self-rated foreign language proficiency. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 860603.

Dooly, M. (2013). Promoting competency-based language teaching through project-based language learning. In M. L. Pérez Cañado (Ed.), *Competency-based Language Teaching in Higher Education* (Vol. 14, pp. 77–91). Springer Netherlands.

Dooly, M., & Sadler, R. (2016). Becoming little scientists: Technologically-enhanced project-based language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, *20*(1), 54–78.

Dörnyei, Z. (1990). Conceptualizing motivation in foreign-language learning*. *Language*

Learning, *40*(1), 45–78.

Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, *78*(3), 273–284.

Dörnyei, Z. (Ed.). (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press. www.cambridge.org/978052179029

Dörnyei, Z. (2003). Attitudes, orientations, and motivations in language learning: Advances in theory, research, and applications. *Language Learning*, *53*, 3–30.

Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds), *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self* (pp. 9–42). Multilingual Matters.

Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (Eds). (2009). *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*. Multilingual Matters Bristol.

Dos Santos, L. M. (2020). The Discussion of Communicative Language Teaching Approach in Language Classrooms. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, *7*(2), 104–109.

Dubek, M., DeLuca, C., & Rickey, N. (2021). Unlocking the potential of STEAM education: How exemplary teachers navigate assessment challenges. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *114*(6), 513–525.

Duff, P. (2008). *Case study research in applied linguistics*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Duff, P. A. (2000). Repetition in foreign language classroom interaction. *Second and Foreign Language Learning Through Classroom Interaction*, 109–138.

Duff, P. A. (2014). Case study research on language learning and use. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *34*, 233–255.

Ebrahimi, F., & Elahifar, M. (2021). Teaching speaking and listening skills through audio-lingual versus conventional methods of instruction: Which method is more effective? *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, *4*(11), 72–81.

Eerdemutu, L., Dewaele, J.-M., & Wang, J. (2024). Developing a short language classroom engagement scale (LCES) and linking it with needs satisfaction and achievement. *System*, *120*, 103189.

Elleuch, D. (2024). Applying the MSMLP model in advancing language teaching and learning: A longitudinal case study on soft skills development. *Frontiers in Education*, *9*, 1355952.

Ellis, N. C., & Wulff, S. (2019). Chapter 8: Second language acquisition. In E. Dąbrowska & D. Divjak (Eds), *Cognitive Linguistics – A Survey of Linguistic Subfields* (pp. 182–207). De Gruyter Mouton.

Ellis, R. (2017). Position paper: Moving task-based language teaching forward. *Language Teaching*, *50*(4), 507–526.

Ellis, R. (2018). *Reflections on Task-Based Language Teaching*. Multilingual Matters.

Ellis, R. (2021). Task-based language teaching. In H. Mohebbi & C. Coombe (Eds), *Research Questions in Language Education and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 133–136). Springer International Publishing.

Ellis, R. (2024). Task-based and task-supported language teaching. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, *6*(4), 1–13.

Ellis, R., & Shintani, N. (2014). *Exploring language pedagogy through second language acquisition research* (1st edn). Routledge.

Engeström, Y. (2004). New forms of learning in co-configuration work. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *16*(1/2), 11–21.

English, M. C., & Kitsantas, A. (2013). Supporting student self-regulated learning in problem- and project-based learning. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, *7*(2), 128–150.

Ennis, R. H. (2018). Critical thinking across the curriculum: A vision. *Topoi*, *37*(1), 165–184.

Esposito, N. (2001). From meaning to meaning: The influence of translation techniques on non-English focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research*, *11*(4), 568–579.

Essen, A. W. M., Smit, N., Pol, J. V. D., & Hornstra, L. (2025). What students need from their teacher: Need satisfaction as mediator of the association between perceived cognitive adaptive support, and student outcomes. *Social Psychology of Education*, *28*(94), 1–27.

Evans, N., & Levinson, S. C. (2009). The myth of language universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *32*(5), 429–448.

Evans, P., Vansteenkiste, M., Parker, P., Kingsford-Smith, A., & Zhou, S. (2024). Cognitive load theory and its relationships with motivation: A self-determination theory perspective. *Educational Psychology Review*, *36*(1), 7.

Facione, P. A. (2011). Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts. *Insight Assessment*, *1*(1), 1–30.

Fang, F. (Gabriel), & Ren, W. (2018). Developing students' awareness of global Englishes. *ELT Journal*, *72*(4), 384–394.

Farrell, R., & Sugrue, C. (2021). Sustainable teaching in an uncertain world: Pedagogical continuities, un-precedented challenges. *Teacher Education in the 21st Century-Emerging Skills for a Changing World*.

Farrell, T. S. C., & Macapinlac, M. (2021). Professional development through reflective practice: A framework for TESOL teachers. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *24*(1), 1–25.

Farren, P. (2020). 'Transformative pedagogy' in language teacher education. In C. Savvidou (Ed.), *Second Language Acquisition—Pedagogies, Practices and Perspectives*. IntechOpen.

Fitriani, S. (2017). Student's learning: Instrumentally, integratively or personally motivated? *Register Journal*, *10*(2), 140–156.

Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive–developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, *34*(10), 906–911.

Fries, C. C. (1947). *Teaching and learning English as a foreign language*. University of Michigan Press.

Fryer, C. E. (2019). An approach to conducting cross-language qualitative research with people from multiple language groups. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences* (pp. 1653–1674). Springer Singapore.

Gallimore, R., Goldenberg, C. N., & Weisner, T. S. (1993). The social construction and subjective reality of activity settings: Implications for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *21*(4), 537–559.

Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing global Englishes*. Routledge.

Gan, Z. (2013). Understanding English speaking difficulties: An investigation of two Chinese populations. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *34*(3), 231–248.

García, O., & Kleyn, T. (Eds). (2016). *Translanguaging with multilingual students: Learning*

from classroom moments. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

García, O., & Li, W. (2014). Translanguaging in Education: Principles, Implications and Challenges. In O. García & W. Li, *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education* (pp. 119–135). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

García, O., & Li, W. (2015). Translanguaging, bilingualism, and bilingual education. In W. E. Wright, S. Boun, & O. García (Eds), *The Handbook of Bilingual and Multilingual Education* (1st edn, pp. 223–240). Wiley.

García, O., Johnson, S. I., Seltzer, K., & Valdés, G. (2017). *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*. Caslon.

Gardner, R. C. (1968). Attitudes and motivation: Their role in second-language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, *2*(3), 141–150.

Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation* (H. Giles, Ed.). Edward Arnold.

Gardner, R. C. (1988). The socio-educational model of second-language learning: Assumptions, findings, and issues. *Language Learning*, *38*(1), 101–126.

Gardner, R. C. (1991). Attitudes and motivation in second language learning. In A. G. Reynolds (Ed.), *Bilingualism, Multiculturalism, and Second Language Learning*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gardner, R. C. (2000). Correlation, causation, motivation, and second language acquisition. *Canadian Psychology*, *41*(1), 10–24.

Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1959). Motivational variables in second-language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, *13*(4), 266–272.

Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and Motivation in Second-Language Learning*. Newbury House Publisher.

Gardner, R. C., & Smythe, P. C. (1975). Motivation and second-language acquisition. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, *31*(3), 218–233.

Gerstenberg, R., Hassenzahl, M., & Laschke, M. (2024). Designing for Autonomy: A Process-Oriented Approach Based on Organismic Integration Theory. *Interacting with Computers*, *iwae022*, 1–12.

Geurts, E. M. A., Reijs, R. P., Leenders, H. H. M., Jansen, M. W. J., & Hoebe, C. J. P. A. (2024). Co-creation and decision-making with students about teaching and learning: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Educational Change*, *25*(1), 103–125.

Gevers, J. (2018). Translingualism revisited: Language difference and hybridity in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *40*, 73–83.

Ghorbani Asl, H. (2024). Comparing extrovert/introvert EFL learners in terms of using socio-affective strategies in developing four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing [Application/pdf]. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, *17*(34), 1–24.

Giacumo, L. A., & Savenye, W. (2020). Asynchronous discussion forum design to support cognition: Effects of rubrics and instructor prompts on learner's critical thinking, achievement, and satisfaction. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, *68*(1), 37–66.

Gibbes, M., & Carson, L. (2014). Project-based language learning: An activity theory analysis. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *8*(2), 171–189.

Gillies, R. M. (2016). Cooperative learning: Review of research and practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, *41*(3), 39–54.

Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, *40*(2), 97–118.

Gonzales, J. (2021). Learning English in a virtual set-up: Motivations and amotivations among language learners. *Journal of Learning and Development Studies*, *1*(1), 18–33.

González-Lloret, M., & Ortega, L. (2014). Chapter 1 towards technology-mediated TBLT: An introduction. In M. González-Lloret & L. Ortega (Eds), *Technology-mediated TBLT* (pp. 1–22). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Goyal, M., Gupta, C., & Gupta, V. (2022). A meta-analysis approach to measure the impact of project-based learning outcome with program attainment on student learning using fuzzy inference systems. *Heliyon*, *8*(e10248), 1–10.

Gras-Velázquez, A. (Ed.). (2019). *Project-based learning in second language acquisition: Building communities of practice in higher education* (1st edn). Routledge.

Green, L. (2024). Teacher collaboration for student-centered project-based curriculum development in the supplementary school: What do teachers need? *Journal of Jewish Education*, *90*(4), 330–346.

Gu, C. (2021). Research on the application of participatory teaching in junior middle school English teaching under the policy of Double Reduction. *Learning & Education*, *10*(6), 14–17.

Gu, M. M., Jiang, G. L., & Chiu, M. M. (2024). Translanguaging, motivation, learning, and intercultural citizenship among EMI students: A structural equation modelling analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *100*, 101983.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Vol. 2, pp. 105–117). California, Sage Publications.

Gumperz, J. J. (1977). The sociolinguistic significance of conversational code-switching. *RELC Journal*, *8*(2), 1–34.

Guo, R., & Tuo, H. (2023). The Exploring of the Effects of Unit Integral Teaching on Junior High School English Homework Based on the Background of the "Double Reduction" Policy. *The Educational Review*, *7*(5), 630–642.

Guo, Y., & Li, X. (2024). Regional inequality in China's educational development: An urban-rural comparison. *Heliyon*, *10*(4), e26249.

Hammersley, M. (2015). Observation, participant and non-participant. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (1st edn). Blackwell Publishing.

Harmer, J. (2015). *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th edn). Pearson Longman.

Haukås, Å. (2025). 'It's about seeing the connections': Exploring teacher collaboration across the school's language subjects. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1–11.

He, J., & Van De Vijver, F. (2012). Bias and Equivalence in Cross-Cultural Research. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, *2*(2), 1–19.

Heath, S., Charles, V., Crow, G., & Wiles, R. (2007). Informed consent, gatekeepers and go-betweens: Negotiating consent in child and youth-orientated institutions. *British Educational Research Journal*, *33*(3), 403–417.

Helle, L., Tynjälä, P., & Olkinuora, E. (2006). Project-based learning in post-secondary education – theory, practice and rubber sling shots. *Higher Education*, *51*(2), 287–314.

Henry, A. (2020). Possible selves and personal goals: What can we learn from episodic future thinking? *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *6*(3), 479–498.

Henry, A., & Liu, M. (2024). L2 motivation and self regulated learning: An integrated model.

System, *123*, 103301.

Hesse, F., Care, E., Buder, J., Sassenberg, K., & Griffin, P. (2015). A Framework for Teachable Collaborative Problem Solving Skills. In P. Griffin & E. Care (Eds), *Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills* (pp. 37–56). Springer Netherlands.

Hidi, S. (1990). Interest and its contribution as a mental resource for learning. *Review of Educational Research*, *60*(4), 549–571.

Hirvela, A. (2004). *Connecting Reading & Writing in Second Language Writing Instruction*. University of Michigan Press.

Hitchcock, D. (2017). Critical Thinking as an Educational Ideal. In D. Hitchcock, *On Reasoning and Argument* (Vol. 30, pp. 477–497). Springer International Publishing.

Hiver, P. (2013). The interplay of possible language teacher selves in professional development choices. *Language Teaching Research*, *17*(2), 210–227.

Hmelo-Silver, C. E. (2004). Problem-based learning: What and how do students learn? *Educational Psychology Review*, *16*(3), 235–266.

Holley, K. A. (2009). Interdisciplinary strategies as transformative change in higher education. *Innovative Higher Education*, *34*(5), 331–344.

Holubova, R. (2008). Effective teaching methods—Project-based learning in physics. *US-China Education Review*, *5*(12), 27–36.

Hossain, K., & Younus, A. A. (2025). Fostering collaboration in PBL: Teachers' perceptions of peer and student roles in secondary level English classrooms in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Educational Reform*.

Howard, J. L., Bureau, J., Guay, F., Chong, J. X. Y., & Ryan, R. M. (2021). Student motivation and associated outcomes: A meta-analysis from self-determination theory. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *16*(6), 1300–1323.

Howatt, A. P. R. (1984). *A history of English language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Howe, C., & Mercer, N. (2010). Children's social development, peer interaction and classroom learning. In R. Alexander, C. Doddington, J. Gray, L. Hargreaves, & R. Kershner (Eds), *The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys* (pp. 170–194). Routledge.

Hu, G. (2005). 'CLT is best for China'—An untenable absolutist claim. *ELT Journal*, *59*(1), 65–68.

Hu, Y., & Shu, J. (2025). The effect of drama education on enhancing critical thinking through collaboration and communication. *Education Sciences*, *15*(5), 565.

Huang, L. (2023). Developing intercultural competence through a cultural metacognition-featured instructional design in English as a foreign language classrooms. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*(1126141), 1–11.

Humes, W. (2013). Curriculum for excellence and interdisciplinary learning. *Scottish Educational Review*, *45*(1), 82–93.

Hung, B. P., & Nguyen, L. T. (2022). Scaffolding language learning in the online classroom. In R. Sharma & D. Sharma (Eds), *New Trends and Applications in Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data Analytics* (Vol. 221, pp. 109–122). Springer International Publishing.

Hymes, D. (2009). Models of the interaction of language and social life. In N. Coupland & A. Jaworski (Eds), *The New Sociolinguistics Reader* (pp. 583–597). Macmillan Education UK.

Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Penguin.

Ivanitskaya, L., Clark, D., Montgomery, G., & Primeau, R. (2002). Interdisciplinary learning: Process and outcomes. *Innovative Higher Education*, *27*(2), 95–111.

Jacobs, G. M., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2003). Understanding and Implementtng the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) Paradigm. *RELC Journal*, 34(1), 5–30.

Jang, H., Reeve, J., & Deci, E. L. (2010). Engaging students in learning activities: It is not autonomy support or structure but autonomy support and structure. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *102*(3), 588.

Jarvis, S., Bowtell, J., Bhania, L., & Dickerson, C. (2016). Supporting professional learning and development through international collaboration in the co-construction of an undergraduate teaching qualification. *Professional Development in Education*, *42*(3), 403–422.

Jenkins, J. (2014). *Global Englishes*. Routledge.

Jenkins, J., Baker, W., & Dewey, M. (Eds). (2018). *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Ji, Y., & Pham, T. (2020). Implementing task-based language teaching (TBLT) to teach grammar in English classes in China: Using design-based research to explore challenges and strategies. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *14*(2), 164–177.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1999). Making cooperative learning work. *Theory Into Practice*, *38*(2), 67–73.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2005). New developments in social interdependence theory. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, *131*(4), 285–358.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2009). An educational psychology success story: Social interdependence theory and cooperative learning. *Educational Researcher*, *38*(5), 365–379.

Johnson, K. E. (2015). Reclaiming the relevance of L2 teacher education. *The Modern Language Journal*, *99*(3), 515–528.

Joo, C. S., & Jin, C. L. (2024). Expanding horizons: Fostering creativity and curiosity through spherical video-based virtual reality in project-based language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, *58*(4), 1786–1800.

Jordan, B., & Henderson, A. (1995). Interaction analysis: Foundations and practice. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, *4*(1), 39–103.

Jung, J. (2024). Reading tasks as a pathway for embracing TBLT in Asia: A response to Ellis (2024). *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, *6*(4), 55–61.

Ju-Zaveroni, Y., & Lee, S. (2023). Online language learning in participatory culture: Digital pedagogy practices in the post-pandemic era. *Education Sciences*, *13*(12), 1217.

Kahng, J. (2020). Explaining second language utterance fluency: Contribution of cognitive fluency and first language utterance fluency. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *41*(2), 457–480.

Kakunta, K., & Kamanga, W. (2020). Microteaching: Audio-lingual method. *Journal Educational Verkenning*, *1*(1), 25–30.

Kallio, H., Pietilä, A., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *72*(12), 2954–2965.

Karatsareas, P. (2022). Semi-structured interviews. In R. Kircher & L. Zipp (Eds), *Research Methods in Language Attitudes* (1st edn, pp. 99–113). Cambridge University Press.

Kato, Y., Bolstad, F., & Watari, H. (2015). Cooperative and collaborative learning in the

language classroom. *The Language Teacher*, *39*(3), 22.

Kelsen, B. (2018). Target language use and performance in project-based language learning (PBLL). *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, *15*(1), 199–207.

Khaliliaqdam, S. (2014). ZPD, scaffolding and basic speech development in EFL context. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *98*, 891–897.

Khoiriyah, K., Idris, M. F. B., Rahma, A. P., & Ulhaq, A. H. D. (2024). Teaching science through English: Pre-service teachers' implementation of CLIL approach in primary school. In S. Arifin, A. Fauzi, T. Wiraatmaja, E. F. Andalas, & N. Muthohirin, *Strengthening Professional and Spiritual Education through 21st Century Skill Empowerment in a Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Era* (1st edn, pp. 89–96). Routledge.

Kilpatrick, W. H. (1918). The project method. *Teachers College Record*, *19*(4), 1–5.

Kingston, S. (2018). Project based learning & student achievement: What does the research tell us? *Pbl Evidence Matters*, *1*(1), 1–11.

Kirschner, P. A., & Van Merriënboer, J. J. G. (2013). Do learners really know best? Urban legends in education. *Educational Psychologist*, *48*(3), 169–183.

Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: Introducing focus groups. *BMJ*, *311*(7000), 299–302.

Klapp, A., & Jönsson, A. (2021). Scaffolding or simplifying: Students' perception of support in swedish compulsory school. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *36*(4), 1055–1074.

Kokotsaki, D., Menzies, V., & Wiggins, A. (2016). Project-based learning: A review of the literature. *Improving Schools*, *19*(3), 267–277.

Kormos, J., & Csizér, K. (2014). The interaction of motivation, self-regulatory strategies, and autonomous learning behavior in different learner groups. *TESOL Quarterly*, *48*(2), 275–299.

Krajcik, J., & Blumenfeld, P. (2006). Chapter 19 project-based learning. In R. Keith Sawyer (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences* (pp. 317–333). Cambridge University Press.

Kramsch, C. (1993). Language study as border study: Experiencing difference. *European Journal of Education*, *28*(3), 349.

Krashen, S. (1994). The input hypothesis and its rivals. In N. Ellis (Ed.), *Implicit and Explicit Learning of Languages* (pp. 45–77). Academic Press.

Krashen, S. D. (1984). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (Reprinted). Pergamon Press.

Kubanyiova, M. (2009). Chapter 16: Possible selves in language teacher development. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds), *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self* (pp. 314–332). Multilingual Matters.

Kubanyiova, M. (2012). *Teacher Development in Action*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The postmethod condition: (E)merging strategies for second/foreign language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, *28*(1), 27–48.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2001). Toward a postmethod pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, *35*(4), 537–560.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003a). A postmethod perspective on English language teaching. *World Englishes*, *22*(4), 539–550.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003b). *Beyond methods: Macrostrategies for language teaching*. Yale University Press.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006a). TESOL methods: Changing tracks, challenging trends. *TESOL Quarterly*, *40*(1), 59–81.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006b). *Understanding language teaching: From method to postmethod*. Routledge.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012). Individual identity, cultural globalization, and teaching English as an international language: The case for an epistemic break. In *Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language* (pp. 9–27). Routledge.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2016). The decolonial option in English teaching: Can the subaltern act? *TESOL Quarterly*, *50*(1), 66–85.

Kurt, G., & Akoglu, K. (2023). Project-based learning in science education: A comprehensive literature review. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, *19*(3), e2311.

Labov, W. (1972). Some principles of linguistic methodology. *Language in Society*, *1*(1), 97–120.

Lantolf, J. P. (2006). Language emergence: Implications for applied linguistics--a sociocultural perspective. *Applied Linguistics*, *27*(4), 717–728.

Lantolf, J. P. (2007). Sociocultural source of thinking and its relevance for second language acquisition. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, *10*(1), 31–33.

Lantolf, J. P. (2013). Sociocultural theory: A dialectical approach to L2 research. In *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 57–72). Routledge.

Lantolf, J. P., Kurtz, L., & Kisselev, O. (2017). Understanding the revolutionary character of L2 development in the ZPD. *Language and Sociocultural Theory*, *3*(2), 153–171.

Lantolf, J. P., Poehner, M. E., & Thorne, S. L. (2020). Sociocultural theory and L2 development. In B. VanPatten, G. D. Keating, & S. Wulff (Eds), *Theories in Second Language Acquisition* (3rd edn, pp. 223–247). Routledge.

Larmer, J., Mergendoller, J., & Boss, S. (2015). *Setting the standard for project-based learning: A proven approach to rigorous classroom instruction*. ASCD.

Larsen-Freeman, D., & Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (3rd edn). Oxford University Press.

Lasabaster, D. (2013). The use of the L1 in CLIL classes: The teachers' perspective. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, *6*(2), 1–21.

Lattuca, L. R. (2001). *Creating interdisciplinarity: Interdisciplinary research and teaching among college and university faculty* (1. ed). Vanderbilt University Press.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Le Fevre, D. M. (2014). Barriers to implementing pedagogical change: The role of teachers' perceptions of risk. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *38*, 56–64.

Lee, M.-K. (2017). To be autonomous or not to be: Issues of subsuming self-determination theory into research on language learner autonomy. *TESOL Quarterly*, *51*(1), 220–228.

Legault, L., Green-Demers, I., & Pelletier, L. (2006). Why do high school students lack motivation in the classroom? Toward an understanding of academic amotivation and the role of social support. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *98*(3), 567–582.

Lei, M., & Medwell, J. (2022). The changing role of Chinese English-as-foreign-language teachers in the context of curriculum reform: Teachers' understanding of their new role. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 904071.

Li, A., Bilgic, E., Keuhl, A., & Sibbald, M. (2022). Does your group matter? How group

function impacts educational outcomes in problem-based learning: A scoping review. *BMC Medical Education*, *22*(1), 900.

Li, C., & Xu, J. (2023). The sustainability of form-focused instruction in classrooms: Chinese secondary school EFL teachers' beliefs and practices. *Sustainability*, *15*(6109), 1–15.

Li, J., King, R. B., & Lee, V. W. (2024). Distinct trajectories of EFL motivation: A self-determination theory perspective. *System*, *126*, 103441.

Li, W. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, *39*(1), 9–30.

Li, W. (2024). Transformative pedagogy for inclusion and social justice through translanguaging, co-learning, and transpositioning. *Language Teaching*, *57*(2), 203–214.

Li, W., & García, O. (2022). Not a first language but one repertoire: Translanguaging as a decolonizing project. *RELC Journal*, *53*(2), 313–324.

Li, Y., Sueb, R., & Said Hashim, K. (2025). Basic psychological needs and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in China: The mediating role of autonomous motivation and academic engagement. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, *Volume 18*, 527–549.

Liang, W. (2024). The effects of student-centered teaching methods on the motivation of English language learning. *Communications in Humanities Research*, *32*(1), 78–83.

Liddicoat, A. J., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning*. John Wiley & Sons.

Lin, A. M. Y. (2015). Conceptualising the potential role of L1 in CLIL. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *28*(1), 74–89.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Littlewood, W. (2014). Communication-oriented language teaching: Where are we now? Where do we go from here? *Language Teaching*, *47*(3), 349–362.

Liu, C., Huang, T., Lin, H., & Mao, X. (2024). Research on the application of the "cross-cultural role play" into "sitcom-based" English teaching methodology from the perspective of speech act theory. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, *12*(05), 105–119.

Liu, H., & Fang, F. (2022). Towards a Global Englishes-aware National English Curriculum of China. *ELT Journal*, *76*(1), 88–98.

Liu, P., Zhang, Y., & Liu, D. (2022). Flow experience in foreign language writing: Its effect on students' writing process and writing performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 952044.

Liu, Y. (2020). Translanguaging and trans-semiotizing as planned systematic scaffolding: Examining feeling-meaning in CLIL classrooms. *English Teaching & Learning*, *44*(2), 149–173.

Liu, Y., Mohamad, M., & Sulaiman, N. A. (2025). A systematic literature review about project-based learning in English classroom in China. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, *7*(4), 684–702.

Llaban, J., & Protacio, A. (2025). Language learning investment and students' communicative competence in English. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, *38*(8), 854–860.

Loh, R. S. M., Kraaykamp, G., & Van Hek, M. (2025). Plugging in at school: Do schools nurture digital skills and narrow digital skills inequality? *Computers & Education*, *226*,

105195.

Long, M. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching* (1st edn). Wiley Blackwell.

Long, M. H., & Porter, P. A. (1985). Group work, interlanguage talk, and second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, *19*(2), 207–228.

Lou, M. (2021). Classroom activities in Chinese secondary EFL classes: Teachers' uptake of the learner-centred curriculum reform. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, *3*(2), 168–186.

Lu, C., Gu, M. M., & Lee, J. C.-K. (2025). A systematic review of research on translanguaging in EMI and CLIL classrooms. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *22*(2), 1033–1053.

Lu, H. (2020). Effects of Global Englishes-informed pedagogy in raising Chinese university students' Global Englishes awareness. *PASAA*, *60*(4), 97–133.

Lu, J., Liu, Y., An, L., & Zhang, Y. (2022). The cultural sustainability in English as foreign language textbooks: Investigating the cultural representations in English language textbooks in China for senior middle school students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 944381.

Luo, X., & Sun, P. P. (2025). Greater complexity and higher efficiency: Effects of translanguaging during collaborative pre-task planning on EFL learners' speaking performance. *Language Teaching Research*, *00*(0), 1–26.

Lyster, R., Loewen, S., & Sato, M. (2017). Content-based language teaching. In *The Routledge Handbook of Instructed Second Language Acquisition* (1st edn, pp. 87–107). Routledge.

Macaro, E., Tian, L., & Chu, L. (2020). First and second language use in English medium instruction contexts. *Language Teaching Research*, *24*(3), 382–402.

MacLeod, M., & Van Der Veen, J. T. (2020). Scaffolding interdisciplinary project-based learning: A case study. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, *45*(3), 363–377.

MacMath, S., Sivia, A., & Britton, V. (2017). Teacher perceptions of project-based learning in the secondary classroom. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, *63*(2), 175–192.

Magyar, A., Habók, A., & Molnár, G. (2022). Exploring the role of English as a foreign language receptive skills and learning strategy usage in the ability to acquire and apply knowledge at the beginning of higher education. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 808546.

Maican, M.-A., & Cocoradă, E. (2021). Online foreign language learning in higher education and its correlates during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability*, *13*(2), 781.

Mannix, E., & Neale, M. A. (2005). What differences make a difference?: The promise and reality of diverse teams in organizations. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *6*(2), 31–55.

Marsh, D., & Frigols Martín, J. M. (2012). Content and language integrated learning. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* (1st edn). Wiley.

Massuh, E. M. de L. L., Torres, P. M. S., Torres, M. A. S., Ochoa, S. K. M., Blacio, J. J. V., & Mora, M. G. A. (2012). *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)—An Educational and Communicative Approach for Ecuatorians*. Mawil Publicaciones de Ecuador.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (V. Knight & L. Habib, Eds; 3rd edn). SAGE.

McIntyre, T. M., McIntyre, S. E., & Francis, D. J. (Eds). (2017). *Educator Stress*. Springer

International Publishing.

Meiling, W. (2022). How to Construct Efficient English Classes in Junior Middle School under the Influence of 'Double Reduction' Policy. *International Journal of New Developments in Education*, *4*(4), 42–45.

Meisani, D. R., & Rambet, R. D. B. (2017). Teachers' beliefs regarding language learner autonomy and practices of project-based education: A case study of an indonesian EFL teacher. *NOBEL: Journal of Literature and Language Teaching*, *8*(2), 141–149.

Meng, H., Tang, M., & Wu, M. (2021). Current situation on exam-oriented education in China and the outlook for quality-oriented education. *Proceedings of the 2021 3rd International Conference on Literature, Art and Human Development (ICLAHD 2021)*, *594*, 325–331.

Mercer, N., & Howe, C. (2012). Explaining the dialogic processes of teaching and learning: The value and potential of sociocultural theory. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, *1*, 12–21.

Mergendoller, J. R., Markham, T., Ravitz, J., & Larmer, J. (2013). Pervasive management of project-based learning: Teachers as guides and facilitators. In *Handbook of Classroom Management* (pp. 593–626). Routledge.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th edn). John Wiley & Sons.

Meyer, O., & Coyle, D. (2024). Recalibrating the language classroom for deeper learning: Nurturing creative, responsible global citizenship through pluriliteracies. *Nordic Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, *11*(3), 233–254.

Meyer, O., Coyle, D., Halbach, A., Schuck, K., & Ting, T. (2015). A pluriliteracies approach to content and language integrated learning – mapping learner progressions in knowledge construction and meaning-making. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *28*(1), 41–57.

Meyer, O., Halbach, A., & Coyle, D. (2015). *A Pluriliteracies Approach to Teaching for Learning: Putting a Pluriliteracies Approach into Practice*. The European Centre for Modern Languages.

Meyers, S. A. (2008). Using transformative pedagogy when teaching online. *College Teaching*, *56*(4), 219–224.

Mihić, M., & Završki, I. (2017). Professors' and students' perception of the advantages and disadvantages of project-based learning. *International Journal of Engineering Education*, *33*(6), 1–14.

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2017). *General Senior High School Curriculum Standards*. People's Education Press.

Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2021). *Opinions on Further Easing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Tutoring for Students in Compulsory Education*.

Moeller, A. J., Theiler, J. M., & Wu, C. (2012). Goal setting and student achievement: A longitudinal study. *The Modern Language Journal*, *96*(2), 153–169.

Monahan, T., & Fisher, J. A. (2010). Benefits of 'observer effects': Lessons from the field. *Qualitative Research*, *10*(3), 357–376.

Moore, P. J. (2018). Task-based language teaching (TBLT). In J. I. Liontas (Ed.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (1st edn, pp. 1–7). Wiley.

Munthe, R. G., Abbas, M., Fernandez, R., & Ulita, N. (2024). The impact of educational

information systems on learning accessibility in higher education. *International Transactions on Education Technology*, *3*(1), 94–103.

Murata, K., & Jenkins, J. (2009). Introduction: Global Englishes from global perspectives. In K. Murata & J. Jenkins (Eds), *Global Englishes in Asian Contexts* (pp. 1–13). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Murphy, L., Eduljee, N. B., Croteau, K., & Parkman, S. (2017). Extraversion and introversion personality type and preferred teaching and classroom participation: A pilot study. *Journal of Psychosocial Research*, *12*(2), 437–450.

Musa, F., Mufti, N., Latiff, R. A., & Amin, M. M. (2011). Project-based learning: Promoting meaningful language learning for workplace skills. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *18*, 187–195.

Myers, M. D., & Avison, D. (Eds). (2002). *Qualitative Research in Information Systems: A Reader*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Ni, A., Cheung, A. C. K., & Shi, J. (2022). Effects of educational technology on reading achievement for Chinese K-12 English second language learners: A meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 1025761.

Nikoopour, J., Salimian, S., Salimian, S., & Farsani, M. A. (2012). Motivation and the choice of language learning strategies. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *3*(6), 1277–1283.

Nikula, T., & Moore, P. (2019). Exploring translanguaging in CLIL. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *22*(2), 237–249.

Nisha, P. R. (2024). Comparing grammar translation method and communicative language teaching in EFL context: A qualitative literature review. *FOSTER: Journal of English Language Teaching*, *5*(1), 40–48.

Noels, K. A., Pelletier, L. G., Clément, R., & Vallerand, R. J. (2000). Why are you learning a second language? Motivational orientations and self-determination theory. *Language Learning*, *50*(1), 57–85.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1), 1–13.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Oliveira, A. L., & Ançã, M. H. (2009). 'I speak five languages': Fostering plurilingual competence through language awareness. *Language Awareness*, *18*(3–4), 403–421.

Omland, M., Hontvedt, M., Siddiq, F., Amundrud, A., Hermansen, H., Mathisen, M. A. S., Rudningen, G., & Reiersen, F. (2025). Co-creation in higher education: A conceptual systematic review. *Higher Education*.

Oxford, R., Crookall, D., Cohen, A., Lavine, R., Nyikos, M., & Sutter, W. (1990). Strategy training for language learners: Six situational case studies and a training model. *Foreign Language Annals*, *22*(3), 197–216.

Oxford, R. L. (1997). Cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and interaction: Three communicative strands in the language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, *81*(4), 443–456.

Panitz, T. (1999). *Collaborative versus cooperative learning: A comparison of the two concepts which will help us understand the underlying nature of interactive learning*.

Papandreou, A. P. (1993). *Tee projects strategy in curriculum and instruction*. 1–14.

Paramole, O. C., Adeoye, M. A., Arowosaye, S. A., & Ibikunle, Y. A. (2024). The impact of

active listening on student engagement and learning outcomes in educational settings. *International Journal of Universal Education*, *2*(2), 77–89.

Parker, C. A., & Bickmore, K. (2012). Conflict management and dialogue with diverse students: Novice teachers' approaches and concerns. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *8*(2), 47–63.

Parsons, S. (2021). The importance of collaboration for knowledge co-construction in 'close-to-practice' research. *British Educational Research Journal*, *47*(6), 1490–1499.

Pascale, J., Lineback, J. F., Bates, N., & Beatty, P. (2022). Protecting the identity of participants in qualitative research. *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*, *10*(3), 549–567.

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2006). Critical thinking: The nature of critical and creative thought. *Journal of Developmental Education*, *30*(2), 34–35.

Pitikornpuangpetch, C., & Suwanarak, K. (2021). Teachers' beliefs and teaching practices about communicative language teaching (CLT) in a Thai EFL context. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, *14*(2), 1–27.

Pitura, J., & Berlińska-Kopeć, M. (2018). Learning English while exploring the national cultural heritage: Technology-assisted project-based language learning in an upper-secondary school. *Teaching English with Technology*, *1*, 37–52.

Potvin, A. S., Boardman, A. G., & Stamatis, K. (2021). Consequential change: Teachers scale project-based learning in English language arts. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *107*, 103469.

Pourfeiz, J. (2016). A cross-sectional study of relationship between attitudes toward foreign language learning and academic motivation. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *232*, 668–676.

Punplub, A. (2019). *Motivation in selecting study Korean language of students and working-age people in Thailand* [Master of Arts, Chulalongkorn University].

Puntambekar, S. (2022). Distributed scaffolding: Scaffolding students in classroom environments. *Educational Psychology Review*, *34*(1), 451–472.

Qasserras, L. (2023). Systematic review of communicative language teaching (CLT) in language education: A balanced perspective. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, *4*(6), 17–23.

Rahadianto, P., Huda, Moh. C., & Hadaad, M. A. (2022). Students' instrumental and integrative motivation in learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia. *Journal of English Language Teaching Learning and Literature*, *5*(1), 1–11.

Räisänen, M., Postareff, L., & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2021). Students' experiences of study-related exhaustion, regulation of learning, peer learning and peer support during university studies. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *36*(4), 1135–1157.

Rajaram, K. (2021). Learning interventions: Collaborative learning, critical thinking and assessing participation real-time. In *Evidence-Based Teaching for the 21st Century Classroom and Beyond: Innovation-Driven Learning Strategies* (pp. 77–120). Springer Singapore.

Rajendram, S. (2023). The cognitive-conceptual, planning-organizational, affective-social and linguistic-discursive affordances of translanguaging. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *14*(5), 1185–1218.

Reeve, J. (2023). Competition can enhance motivation—But typically undermines it. In M. Bong, J. Reeve, & S. Kim (Eds), *Motivation Science* (1st edn, pp. 165–170). Oxford

University PressNew York.

Reeve, J., & Cheon, S. H. (2021). Autonomy-supportive teaching: Its malleability, benefits, and potential to improve educational practice. *Educational Psychologist*, *56*(1), 54–77.

Richards, J. C. (2005). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (Eds). (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice* (1st edn). Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (Third edition). Cambridge University Press.

Richardson, J. C., Caskurlu, S., Castellanos-Reyes, D., Duan, S., Duha, M. S. U., Fiock, H., & Long, Y. (2022). Instructors' conceptualization and implementation of scaffolding in online higher education courses. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, *34*(1), 242–279.

Rodríguez-Peñarroja, M. (2022). Integrating project-based learning, task-based language teaching approach and YouTube in the ESP class: A study on students' motivation. *Teaching English with Technology*, *1*, 62–81.

Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. Oxford University Press.

Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2019a). *Global Englishes for Language Teaching* (1st edn). Cambridge University Press.

Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2019b). Global Englishes language teaching. In *Global Englishes for Language Teaching* (pp. 3–27). Cambridge University Press.

Rose, H., McKinley, J., & Galloway, N. (2021). Global Englishes and language teaching: A review of pedagogical research. *Language Teaching*, *54*(2), 157–189.

Ryan, R. M. (1995). Psychological needs and the facilitation of integrative processes. *Journal of Personality*, *63*(3), 397–427.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, *55*(1), 68–78.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *61*, 101860.

Sabarun, Widiastuty, H., Ajahari, Asmawati, & Azhari Azman, M. N. (2024). The relationship between instrumental and integrative motivation on the students' writing ability. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, *6*(10), 2024166.

Sancar, R., Atal, D., & Deryakulu, D. (2021). A new framework for teachers' professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *101*, 103305.

Sánchez-García, R., & Pavón-Vázquez, V. (2021). Students' perceptions on the use of project-based learning in CLIL: Learning outputs and psycho-affective considerations. *Latin American Journal of Content & Language Integrated Learning*, *14*(1), 69–98.

Savignon, S. J. (1991). Communicative language teaching: State of the art. *TESOL Quarterly*, *25*(2), 261–277.

Savignon, S. J., & Sysoyev, P. V. (2002). Sociocultural strategies for a dialogue of cultures. *The Modern Language Journal*, *86*(4), 508–524.

Schachter, J. (1988). Second language acquisition and its relationship to universal grammar. *Applied Linguistics*, *9*(3), 219–235.

Schiefele, U. (1991). Interest, learning, and motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, *26*(3–4),

299–323.

Schraw, G., & Dennison, R. S. (1994). Assessing metacognitive awareness. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *19*(4), 460–475.

Schreiber, B. R., & Watson, M. (2018). Translingualism ≠ code-meshing: A response to Gevers' "Translingualism revisited" (2018). *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *42*, 94–97.

Seidlhofer, B. (2005). English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal*, *59*(4), 339–341.

Seidlhofer, B. (2013). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford University Press.

Shabani, K., Khatib, M., & Ebadi, S. (2010). Vygotsky's zone of proximal development: Instructional implications and teachers' professional development. *English Language Teaching*, *3*(4), 237–248.

Shamsi, E., & Bozorgian, H. (2024). Collaborative listening using multimedia through metacognitive instruction: A case study with less-skilled and more-skilled EFL learners. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, *9*(25), 1–18.

Shao, J., Chen, Y., Wei, X., Li, X., & Li, Y. (2023). Effects of regulated learning scaffolding on regulation strategies and academic performance: A meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*(1110086), 1–15.

Shawaqfeh, A. T., Jameel, A. S., Al-adwan, L. A. Y., & Khasawneh, M. A. S. (2023). Interaction as a mechanism to enhance English language proficiency in the classroom. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *15*(1), 229–234.

Shelton-Strong, S. J. (2025). Promoting learner flourishing and well-being beyond the classroom: The role of advising in language learning from a self-determination theory perspective. *Learning and Motivation*, *90*, 102127.

Sheth, T. (2016). Expressive communication skills in English: A criterion for non-native L2 students. *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education*, *3*(12), 43–47.

Shi, J., Sitthiworachart, J., & Hong, J.-C. (2024). Supporting project-based learning for students' oral English skill and engagement with immersive virtual reality. *Education and Information Technologies*, *29*(11), 14127–14150.

Shin, M.-H. (2018). Effects of project-based learning on students' motivation and self-efficacy. *English Teaching*, *73*(1), 95–114.

Shin, N., Bowers, J., Krajcik, J., & Damelin, D. (2021). Promoting computational thinking through project-based learning. *Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Science Education Research*, *3*(7), 1–15.

Shuo, Z. (2025, May 19). Pressure of gaokao success looms over students' new weekend freedom. *China Daily*, 2.

Sıswono, T. Y. E., Hartono, S., & Kohar, A. W. (2018). Effectiveness of project based learning in statistics for lower secondary schools. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *18*(75), 197–212.

Skehan, P. (2018). *Second language task-based performance: Theory, research, assessment* (1st edn). Routledge.

Skinner, B. F. (1957). *Verbal behavior*. Appleton-century-crofts.

Snigdha, S. S. & Moriom Akter. (2023). Effectiveness of audio-visual materials in teaching reading for young EFL learners in Bangladesh: An experimental study. *Journal of Effective Teaching Methods*, *1*(4), 65–82.

Spada, N. (2007). Communicative language teaching: Current status and future prospects.

In J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds), *International Handbook of English Language Teaching* (pp. 271–288). Springer US.

Spikol, D., Ruffaldi, E., Dabisias, G., & Cukurova, M. (2018). Supervised machine learning in multimodal learning analytics for estimating success in project-based learning. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, *34*(4), 366–377.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Squires, A. (2009). Methodological challenges in cross-language qualitative research: A research review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *46*(2), 277–287.

Stake, R. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. SAGE.

Stefanou, C. R., Perencevich, K. C., DiCintio, M., & Turner, J. C. (2004). Supporting autonomy in the classroom: Ways teachers encourage student decision making and ownership. *Educational Psychologist*, *39*(2), 97–110.

Stentoft, D. (2017). From saying to doing interdisciplinary learning: Is problem-based learning the answer? *Active Learning in Higher Education*, *18*(1), 51–61.

Stoller, F. (2002). Project work: A means to promote language and content. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 107–119).

Stoller, F. L. (2002). *Content-based instruction: A shell for language teaching or a framework for strategic language and content learning?* 1–22.

Stoller, F. L., & Myers, C. C. (2019). Project-based learning: A five-stage framework to guide language teachers. In A. Gras-Velazquez (Ed.), *Project-Based Learning in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 25–47). Routledge.

Sun, X. (2021). Revisiting postmethod pedagogy: Adopting and adapting Socratic circle to secondary EFL teaching. *TESOL Journal*, *12*(e601), 1–17.

Sun, X., & Zhu, P. (2023). Implementing project-based language teaching to develop EFL high school students' key competences. *Sustainability*, *15*(1658), 1–19.

Suratin, N., & Sribayak, V. (2025). Factors contributing to speaking anxiety and anxiety reduction techniques in Thai adult EFL learners. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, *18*(1), 294–319.

Surji, A. L., & Ulker, V. (2021). Undergraduate foreign language learners perspective on project based learning. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, *8*(4), 254–267.

Suryasa, I. W., Prayoga, I. G. P. A., & Werdistira, I. W. A. (2017). An analysis of students' motivation toward English learning as second language among students in Pritchard English academy (PEACE). *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (IJSSH)*, *1*(2), 43–50.

Suter, E., Arndt, J., Arthur, N., Parboosingh, J., Taylor, E., & Deutschlander, S. (2009). Role understanding and effective communication as core competencies for collaborative practice. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, *23*(1), 41–51.

Swain, M. (1993). The output hypothesis: Just speaking and writing aren't enough. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, *50*(1), 158–164.

Sweller, J. (2011). Cognitive load theory. In *Psychology of Learning and Motivation* (Vol. 55, pp. 37–76). Elsevier.

Tabrizi, S., & Rideout, G. (2017). Active learning: Using bloom's taxonomy to support critical pedagogy. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education*, *8*(3), 3202–3209.

Tangney, B., Sullivan, K., & Lawlor, J. (2024). Online collaborative PBL – The Bridge21 approach. *Computers and Education Open*, *7*, 100224.

Tehrani, A. R., Barati, H., & Youhanaee, M. (2013). The effect of methodology on learning vocabulary and communication skills in Iranian young learners: A comparison between audiolingual method and natural approach. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *3*(6), 968–976.

Temple, B., & Young, A. (2004). Qualitative research and translation dilemmas. *Qualitative Research*, *4*(2), 161–178.

Teng, L. S., & Zhang, L. J. (2018). Effects of motivational regulation strategies on writing performance: A mediation model of self-regulated learning of writing in English as a second/foreign language. *Metacognition and Learning*, *13*(2), 213–240.

Ter, T. C., Peng, C. F., Hutagalung, F., & Hamid, Z. (2019). Integrative and instrumental motivation among the Chinese language pre-service teachers. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *9*(6), Pages 1216-1227.

Tharp, R. G., & Gallimore, R. (1991). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*. Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, J. W. (2000). *A review of research on project-based learning*. 1–46.

Thomas, M. (2017). *Project-based language learning with technology: Learner collaboration in an EFL classroom in Japan* (1st edn). Routledge.

Tin, T. B. (2024). Finding constraints to foster creativity in language learning tasks: An autoethnographic approach. *TESOL Journal*, *15*(3), 1–17.

Tomasello, M. (Ed.). (2003). *Constructing a language: A usage-based theory of language acquisition*. Harvard University Press.

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *16*(10), 837–851.

Tsiplakides, I., & Fragoulis, I. (2009). Project-based learning in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Greek primary schools: From theory to practice. *English Language Teaching*, *2*(3), 113–119.

Urhahne, D., & Wijnia, L. (2023). Theories of motivation in education: An integrative framework. *Educational Psychology Review*, *35*(45), 1–35.

Vallerand, R. J., & Bissonnette, R. (1992). Intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivational styles as predictors of behavior: A prospective study. *Journal of Personality*, *60*(3), 599–620.

Van Nes, F., Abma, T., Jonsson, H., & Deeg, D. (2010). Language differences in qualitative research: Is meaning lost in translation? *European Journal of Ageing*, *7*(4), 313–316.

Vanamali, S. (2023). *Personality development and communication skills*. Academic Guru Publishing House.

Vandercruysse, S., Vandewaetere, M., Cornillie, F., & Clarebout, G. (2013). Competition and students' perceptions in a game-based language learning environment. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, *61*(6), 927–950.

Vansteenkiste, M., Aelterman, N., De Muynck, G.-J., Haerens, L., Patall, E., & Reeve, J. (2018). Fostering personal meaning and self-relevance: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *86*(1), 30–49.

Velardo, S., & Elliott, S. (2021). Co-interviewing in qualitative social research: Prospects, merits and considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *20*, 1–7.

Vermes, A. (2010). Translation in foreign language teaching: A brief overview of pros and cons. *Eger Journal of English Studies*, *10*, 83–93.

Villabona, N., & Cenoz, J. (2022). The integration of content and language in CLIL: A challenge for content-driven and language-driven teachers. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *35*(1), 36–50.

Vireak, K., & Bunrosy, L. (2024). Exploring language teaching methods: An in-depth analysis of grammar translation, direct method, and audiolingual method: a literature review. *International Journal of Advance Social Sciences and Education*, *2*(2), 151–168.

Vitai, Z., & Benke, M. (2021). Motivation to learn? An advanced exploratory study of learning motivation of central-east European business students. *Marketing & Menedzsment*, *55*(2), 27–35.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978a). Interaction between Learning and Development. In *Mind in society: The development of higher mental processes* (pp. 79–91). Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978b). *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds). Harvard university press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language.* (A. Kozulin, Ed.). MIT press.

Wageman, R. (1995). Interdependence and group effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *40*(1), 145–180.

Wang, C.-C. (2024). Using design thinking for interdisciplinary curriculum design and teaching: A case study in higher education. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *11*(1), 307.

Wang, D. (2019). Translanguaging in Chinese foreign language classrooms: Students and teachers' attitudes and practices. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *22*(2), 138–149.

Wang, D.-C., & Huang, Y.-M. (2023). Exploring the influence of competition and collaboration on learning performance in digital game-based learning. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, *71*(4), 1547–1565.

Wang, F., Zhou, X., Li, K., Cheung, A. C. K., & Tian, M. (2025). The effects of artificial intelligence-based interactive scaffolding on secondary students' speaking performance, goal setting, self-evaluation, and motivation in informal digital learning of English. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 1–20.

Wang, H., Song, Y., Zhu, X., & Cao, M. (2022). Revisiting the digital divide in online teaching—An analysis of urban-rural differences in online learning among middle school students. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, *10*(11), 34–50.

Wang, X., Zhang, Q., Chen, H., Neitzel, A. J., & Davis, M. H. (2024). The effects of language learning strategy instruction on college students' English achievement and learner autonomy in mainland China: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *127*, 102442.

Wang, Y. (2024). An interactive online educational environment to reduce anxiety, improve emotional well-being, and critical thinking for college students. *Acta Psychologica*, *248*, 104347.

Wang, Y., Wang, H., Wang, S., Wind, S. A., & Gill, C. (2024). A systematic review and meta-analysis of self-determination-theory-based interventions in the education context. *Learning and Motivation*, *87*, 102015.

Warden, C. A., & Lin, H. J. (2000). Existence of integrative motivation in an Asian EFL setting. *Foreign Language Annals*, *33*(5), 535–545.

Warkentien, S., Goeking, J., Dilig, R., Knapp, L., & Stanley, R. (2022). *Interdisciplinary*

Education: Literature Review and Landscape Analysis. RTI International.

Warr, M., & West, R. E. (2020). Bridging academic disciplines with interdisciplinary project-based learning: Challenges and opportunities. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, *14*(1).

Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (Vol. 1). University of California press.

Wei, Y. (2022). Toward technology-based education and English as a foreign language motivation: A review of literature. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 870540.

Welch, C., & Piekkari, R. (2006). Crossing language boundaries: Qualitative interviewing in international business. *Management International Review*, *46*(4), 417–437.

Wenz, A., Al Baghal, T., & Gaia, A. (2021). Language proficiency among respondents: Implications for data quality in a longitudinal face-to-face survey. *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*, *9*(1), 73–93.

Wertsch, J. V. (1985). The Semiotic Mediation of Mental Life: L. S. Vygotsky and M. M. Bakhtin. In E. Mertz & R. J. Parmentier (Eds), *Semiotic Mediation: Sociocultural and Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 49–71). Academic Press.

Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Wiek, A., Xiong, A., Brundiers, K., & Van Der Leeuw, S. (2014). Integrating problem- and project-based learning into sustainability programs: A case study on the school of sustainability at arizona state university. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *15*(4), 431–449.

Wijnands, A., Rijt, J. V., & Coppen, P.-A. (2021). Learning to think about language step by step: A pedagogical template for the development of cognitive and reflective thinking skills in L1 grammar education. *Language Awareness*, *30*(4), 317–335.

Wijnia, L., Noordzij, G., Arends, L. R., Rikers, R. M. J. P., & Loyens, S. M. M. (2024). The effects of problem-based, project-based, and case-based learning on students' motivation: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, *36*(29), 29.

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2008). The management of confidentiality and anonymity in social research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *11*(5), 417–428.

Wiley, T. G., & García, O. (2016). Language policy and planning in language education: Legacies, consequences, and possibilities. *The Modern Language Journal*, *100*(S1), 48–63.

Williams, M., & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for Language Teachers* (Vol. 224). Cambridge university press.

Wolters, C. A. (1999). The relation between high school students' motivational regulation and their use of learning strategies, effort, and classroom performance. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *11*(3), 281–299.

Wolters, C. A., & Rosenthal, H. (2000). The relation between students' motivational beliefs and their use of motivational regulation strategies. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *33*(7–8), 801–820.

Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *17*(2), 89–100.

Woods, C. (2007). Researching and developing interdisciplinary teaching: Towards a conceptual framework for classroom communication. *Higher Education*, *54*(6), 853–866.

Wu, D., & Dong, X. (2024). Autonomy support, peer relations, and teacher-student interactions: Implications for psychological well-being in language learning. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*(1358776), 1–16.

Wu, X., Yang, Y., Zhou, X., Xia, Y., & Liao, H. (2024). A meta-analysis of interdisciplinary teaching abilities among elementary and secondary school STEM teachers. *International Journal of STEM Education*, *11*(38), 1–20.

Xi, J., & Lantolf, J. P. (2021). Scaffolding and the zone of proximal development: A problematic relationship. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *51*(1), 25–48.

Xin, J. J., Fung, D., & Tavares, N. J. (2025). The 4Cs in action: Evaluating language-driven CLIL materials for holistic learning experiences. *The Language Learning Journal*, 1–20.

Yamagami, T. (2023). The impact of L2 motivational self system and students' perceptions of English proficiency on attitudes toward translanguaging. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, *3*(1), 154–170.

Yang, C. D. (2004). Universal grammar, statistics or both? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *8*(10), 451–456.

Yi, D. (2021). Grammar translation and its use in present-day China: Challenges and issues. *Journal of Arts & Humanities*, *10*(5), 28–35.

Yildiz, Y., & Celik, B. (2020). The use of scaffolding techniques in language learning: Extending the level of understanding. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, *7*(3), 148–153.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (Sixth edition). SAGE.

Young, M. F. (1993). Instructional design for situated learning. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, *41*(1), 43–58.

Young, V. A. (2010). Should writers use they own English? *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, *12*(1), 110–118.

Yu, B., & Downing, K. (2012). Determinants of international students' adaptation: Examining effects of integrative motivation, instrumental motivation and second language proficiency. *Educational Studies*, *38*(4), 457–471.

Yüksel, H. G., Solhi, M., Özcan, E., & Giritlioğlu, N. B. (2025). The associations between EFL learners' L2 class belongingness, emotion regulation strategies, and perceived L2 proficiency in an online learning context. *The Language Learning Journal*, *53*(3), 306–322.

Yung, K. W.-H. (2023). Engaging exam-oriented students in communicative language teaching by 'packaging' learning English through songs as exam practice. *RELC Journal*, *54*(1), 280–290.

Zaafour, A., & Ramiro, M. S. S. (2022). Implementing cooperative project-based learning: Difficulties and innovative solutions. *World Journal of English Language*, *12*(5), 425.

Zeivots, S., Hopwood, N., Wardak, D., & Cram, A. (2025). Co-design practice in higher education: Practice theory insights into collaborative curriculum development. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *44*(3), 769–783.

Zenouzagh, Z. M., Admiraal, W., & Saab, N. (2023). Learner autonomy, learner engagement and learner satisfaction in text-based and multimodal computer mediated writing environments. *Education and Information Technologies*, *28*, 14283–14323.

Zhang, D., Li, X., & Xue, J. (2015). Education inequality between rural and urban areas of

the people's republic of China, migrants' children education, and some implications. *Asian Development Review*, *32*(1), 196–224.

Zhang, L., & Ma, Y. (2023). A study of the impact of project-based learning on student learning effects: A meta-analysis study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*(1202728), 1–14.

Zhang, R., & Hope, J. (2021). What factors most impact on Chinese students' performance in the IELTS academic reading sub-test? *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, *11*(06), 955–966.

Zhang, X. (2024). English language assessment practices in Chinese universities: A critical examination of testing methods and their implications for student learning. *SHS Web of Conferences*, *199*, 01005.

Zhang, Y., Li, M., Chieh, Y., & Han, S. (2022). On a path to becoming more self-regulated: Reflective journals' impact on Chinese English as a foreign language students' self-regulated writing strategy use. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 1042031.

Zhao, R., Zhuang, Y., Xie, Z., & Yu, P. L. H. (2024). Facilitating self-directed language learning in real-life scene description tasks with automated evaluation. *Computers & Education*, *219*, 105106.

Zhao, Z., & Kou, Y. (2024). Effects of short video addiction on college students' physical activity: The chain mediating role of self-efficacy and procrastination. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*, 1429963.

Zheng, X., & Borg, S. (2014). Task-based learning and teaching in China: Secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices. *Language Teaching Research*, *18*(2), 205–221.

Zhixin, W., & Yi, P. (2023). A review on English homework design in compulsory education under the "Double Reduction" policy. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, *8*(4), 139–146.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview. *Theory Into Practice*, *41*(2), 64–70.

Zuo, X. (2024). Enhancing fluency through fun: The role of interactive activities in enhancing adult language proficiency. *Advances in Social Behavior Research*, *14*(1), 57–62.