JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching
https://e-journal.undikma.ac.id/index.php/jollt
Email: jollt@undikma.ac.id
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v14i2.17714

April 2026. Vol. 14, No.2
p-ISSN: 2338-0810
e-ISSN: 2621-1378
pp. 582-595

INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING (PBL) IN A TEFL COURSE: A CASE STUDY IN INDONESIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Article Info
Article History
Received: September 2025
Revised: December 2026
Accepted: March 2026
Published: April 2026
Keywords
Project-based learning;
TEFL courses;
Collaborative learning;
Student perception;

Abstract

This study explores the implementation of Project-Based Learning in a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, the research aims to answer two primary research questions: (1) How is TEFL class instruction changed from individual-oriented project learning to group-oriented project learning? and (2) How is the PBL-infused TEFL class instruction perceived by the students? Data were collected through course documentation, classroom observation, and questionnaires distributed to 13 students enrolled in the TEFL course at a faculty of teacher education. Using ADDIE model, the one-semester TEFL course originally constructed with individual-oriented approach was reshaped to emphasize collaborative learning tasks and authentic project outputs. The findings suggest that integrating PBL into the TEFL course provided more diverse learning opportunities for the students to increase their engagement with real-world issues and foster their autonomy, creativity, and active participation. As the transformed course outline gives more time and opportunities for group work, iterative feedback, and authentic assignments, the students perceived collaboration more positively, improved problem-solving skills, and developed professional identity as future educators. Thus, PBL is seen as an alternative pedagogical framework that can support both cognitive and social aspects of the students' learning. The future implementation of PBL is to be equipped with clear scaffolding strategies to maintain students' comprehension of the learning processes and maximize the PBL-based instructions. Not only for pedagogical classes, other courses teaching English language skills and components can also implement PBL to give more authentic assignments for the students' collaborative learning.

How to cite: Haryanto, J.F., Tamah, S.M., & Nordin, R. (2026). Investigating Students' Perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in a TEFL Course: A Case Study in Indonesian Higher Education. *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching, 14*(2), 582-595. Doi: https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v14i2.17714

INTRODUCTION

In the era of Society 5.0, essential soft skills like communication, collaboration and teamwork, creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving are increasingly prioritized in education. In this case, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has widely been recognized as a pedagogical approach that fosters these competencies by engaging students in authentic, real-world tasks (Bell, 2010; Larmer et al. 2015). As a student-centered instructional model, PBL

emphasizes autonomy, collaborative inquiry, reflection, and authentic task completion (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). This phenomenon is alligned with the Indonesian higher education that highlights its importance in the recent revisions of the national lecturer assessment rubric (BKD/*Beban Kerja Dosen*). Lecturers are required to carry out student-centered learning approaches, including problem-based or project-based learning, to guide the students in producing real-life projects, such as research writing (thesis/dissertation), practical works in laboratory (workshops, experiments), teaching practice, and other professional-oriented projects (Directorate General of Higher Education, 2021). This policy shift reflects the growing recognition of PBL as a means to prepare students for both academic and professional challenges.

PBL has been applied across disciplines including English, Mathematics, Science, and Chemistry (Afriana, 2015; Guo et al., 2020; Mali, 2016; Nurfitriyanti, 2016; Rezeki et al., 2014). More recent studies highlight its potential to enhance learner autonomy, collaboration, and problem-solving (Amalia et al., 2024; Lutfiyana et al., 2024). Empirical evidence also suggests that project-based environments can positively influence students' academic achievement and collaborative engagement, particularly among linguistically diverse learners (Chen & Yang, 2019; Han et al., 2016). At the same time, several challenges such as time management, uneven participation, and technological barriers persist, particularly in online learning contexts in higher education (Rachmawati et al, 2024; Ringotama et al., 2022). Similar challenges have been documented in EFL contexts, where teachers reported difficulties related to resource limitations, assessment complexity, and group management when implementing PBL (Ummah & Priyana, 2025). Furthermore, other studies have emphasized the value of embedding informal assessments within PBL cycles to increase motivation and oral participation (Handoyo et al., 2024). However, despite this growing body of research, empirical studies that examine how PBL is systematically integrated into a specific Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course, particularly through reshaped instructional design and from the students' perspectives, remain limited.

To address this gap, the present study redesigns a TEFL course syllabus using the ADDIE framework, shifting the instructional focus from an individual-oriented to a group-oriented project approach. By redesigning and executing the course within the PBL implementation, the research aims to examine both the instructional transformation and students' responses to the change. Specifically, the study is guided by the two research questions: (1) How is TEFL class instruction changed from individual-oriented project learning to group-oriented project learning? And (2) How is the PBL-infused TEFL class instruction perceived by the students? By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute theoretically to discussions on PBL integration in TEFL pedagogy and practically by documenting the students' evolving perceptions of the instructional shift of the course.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, dan Evaluation) model was employed throughout the study. To answer the first research question, the first stages—Analysis, Design, and Development—were conducted. In the first step (Analysis), the researcher analysed and examined the existing TEFL syllabus and Course Outline (CO). The researcher read more literature on PBL to get deeper insights on how to implement it to the existing syllabus and CO. As the class was conducted online, the features of breakout rooms in Zoom was studied further for the possible forums for small groups to work on the assigned projects. In the second step (Design), the researcher redesigned the CO to approach the PBL-oriented issue. With close examination of the learning objectives, indicators, materials, media, and assignments, the researchers tried to modify them based on the principles of PBL. In the

third step (Development), the researcher continued to develop the syllabus and CO to approach the essential project design elements to be implemented in the classroom.

To answer the second research question, the last two stages of ADDIE—Implementation and Evaluation—were conducted. In the fourth step (Implementation), the researcher implemented the new version of syllabus and CO in the classroom. The students were guided to follow the new learning objectives, materials, and types of projects assigned. During the first half of the semester, the projects assigned were group presentations and video production. On the second half of the semester, the students were assigned to conduct group teaching demonstrations and group Lesson Unit Plan (LUP). In the last step (Evaluation), the researcher attempted to obtain students' feedback covering their perceived feelings, benefits, and challenges throughout the implementation of PBL in the classroom. The overall ADDIE model is shown in Figure 1.

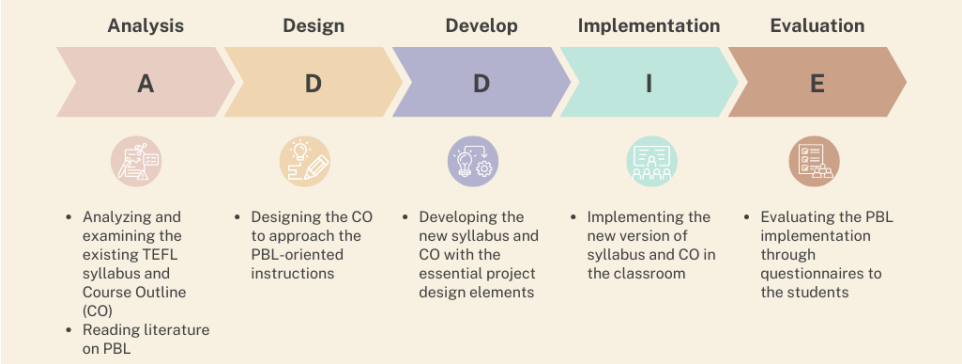

Figure 1. The ADDIE Model

To ensure alignment with PBL principles, each ADDIE phase was guided by core PBL elements such as authentic problem orientation, collaborative inquiry, iterative feedback, and reflective evaluation. During the Design and Development phases, the course learning outcomes were systematically mapped against these principles to ensure that project tasks, assessment criteria, and instructional activities reflected essential PBL characteristics. This alignment ensured coherence between the redesigned course objectives and the pedagogical foundation of PBL.

Research Participants

The participants involved were 13 students taking Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) class as a compulsory course. They were semester 5 students at an English Language Education Study Program of a private university in Indonesia. Three parallel classes were available: Classes A, B, and C with more or less the same size. The present study engaged the class where one of the researchers was the class teacher. The 13 students have taken foundational courses for English language skills and components, introductory courses for linguistics and literatures, and courses related to the implementation of Information Technology (IT) in English Language Teaching (ELT). Prior to the implementation, informal classroom discussion indicated that most students had limited structured exposure to PBL in previous courses, although they were familiar with group assignments in general. As a compulsory course in the fifth semester, students enrolled as part of their professional preparation for becoming English language teachers, which may have influenced their engagement and perception of collaborative instructional design.

Instruments

To answer the first research question, the Analysis, Design, and Development stages were conducted. The researcher collected the data from the existing syllabus and Course Outline (CO) of the TEFL class used in the previous semester. Throughout the

Implementation and Evaluation stages, the researchers constructed a questionnaire derived from the self-efficacy constructs by Webber (2016). The six constructs include the followings:

1. **Teamwork** : Students' perceived competence in collaborating effectively with others.
2. **Problem-solving** : Students' belief in their ability to overcome challenges and find solutions within the project.
3. **Motivation** : Students' willingness and drive to engage in the project.
4. **Course skills** : Students' perceived ability to master the specific academic skills and content taught through the project.
5. **Resilience** : Students' capacity to bounce back from setbacks and persist despite difficulties.
6. **Confidence** : Students' general belief in their capabilities to succeed in the project and related academic tasks.

To add richer data, the questionnaire was constructed with both closed-ended and open-ended questions. A 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly Agree (4)) was used to discover the students' perception within the 29 closed-ended questions. Four open-ended questions were added to get the students' general perception towards the implemented PBL instructions. In total, there were 33 question items covered (Table 1).

Table 1
The Question Items based on Webber's (2016) Self-efficacy Constructs

Self-efficacy Construct	Item No.	Item Code	Question Items
Teamwork	1	1.1	I like working with other students.
	2	1.2	I like to solve problems on my own without help.
	3	1.3	I think I can learn from my group members.
	4	1.4	I can help my classmates with projects.
Problem Solving	5	2.1	I think I am able to gather information from different sources.
	6	2.2	I will ask questions when I do not understand something.
	7	2.3	I will view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered.
	8	2.4	I can know what steps to take to solve a problem
	9	2.5	When I need help I will ask for it.
Motivation	10	3.1	I will try my best even when it is a difficult task.
	11	3.2	When I experience failure, I will stop trying.
	12	3.3	I will keep trying even when things get hard.
	13	3.4	I will give up when things get hard.
	14	3.5	I think I can recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments.
Course Skills	15	4.1	I think the things I learn in this course are not useful outside of campus.
	16	4.2	I think using English is an important skill in life.
	17	4.3	I think I can use English outside of the classroom.
	18	4.4	I think learning CL techniques is important to me.
	19	4.5	I can use English on a project.
Resilience	20	5.1	I think learning CL techniques is interesting to me.
	21	5.2	When I work hard on something, it shows in the results.
	22	5.3	I care about my project.
	23	5.4	I think I can make valuable contributions to a project.
	24	5.5	I think I am able to try harder when the teacher gives me encouragement.
Confidence	25	6.1	I think I cannot follow complex instructions unless someone shows me how
	26	6.2	to do it.
	27	6.3	I think I can plan out projects from start to finish.
	28	6.4	I believe that difficult tasks are beyond my capabilities.
	29	6.5	I think I can perform a new task when someone shows me how.
			I will avoid challenging tasks.
(General Perception)	30	7.1	I think I like the idea of using this kind of group instruction in this course
	31	7.2	I recommend other lecturers to implement this kind of group instruction
	32	7.3	How would you compare your experience in this course with your learning experience in a regular instruction (non-project) course?

	33	7.4	Please add any other comments about this course and how would you improve the experience.

The questionnaire was distributed at the beginning and end of the semester to compare the students' perception before and after the PBL implementation. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was piloted with three graduate students in English education to assess clarity, wording, and item relevance. Minor revisions were made to improve phrasing and ensure contextual appropriateness for the TEFL setting. The final version of the questionnaire was distributed via a Google form and the link was shared during the class through WhatsApp Group.

Data Analysis

As the collected data from the participants' responses of the questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively and descriptively to capture students' perceptions of the implemented Project-Based Learning (PBL) model. The analysis was carried out in two main stages. First, the responses of the pre-questionnaire (the questionnaire distributed before the PBL implementation) and the post-questionnaire (the questionnaire distributed after the PBL implementation) were reviewed to identify the shifts in students' perspectives. This involved a comparative analysis to detect changes in the degree of agreement regarding the use of PBL in the TEFL course. Second, the participants' responses were summarized thematically to highlight recurring patterns. Students' perceptions were grouped based on Webber's (2016) self-efficacy constructs. Within each construct, trends were compared across the pre- and post-questionnaires to reveal how the course design influenced students' learning experiences. The last two open-ended questions' responses were also thematically reviewed and summarized to find the themes of the students' perception. Thematic analysis was conducted through a multi-step process. First, responses were read repeatedly to achieve data familiarization. Second, initial codes were generated inductively to capture recurring ideas. Third, codes were organized into broader themes aligned with the self-efficacy constructs.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was conducted during the interpretation stage. Quantitative shifts observed in Likert-scale responses were compared with themes derived from open-ended responses to identify convergences and divergences. This triangulation approach allowed the researcher to contextualize numerical trends with students' narrative explanations, providing a more holistic understanding of their experiences with the PBL implementation. As a qualitative case study involving a single intact class without randomization, the findings are context-specific and not intended for broad generalization. However, the depth of analysis provides transferable insights for similar TEFL contexts in higher education..

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The researcher asked the previous lecturers about the existing syllabus and Course Outline (CO). Once the syllabus and CO were handed in, the researchers began to analyse the materials and methods planned for the 14 meetings. The existing CO was well-organized with the combination of teacher-centered and learner-centered approaches. There were several aspects that the researchers highlighted to redesign and develop the CO while infusing the PBL principles.

The first aspect is the individual presentation of Cooperative Learning (CL) techniques. Instead of requiring the students to learn the theories and explain them individually, the lecturer assigned the students to work in groups and explore the implementation of each CL technique. Each group was assigned a case of an EFL scenario where CL techniques could be applied most effectively. The scenario was varied according to the different levels (elementary, junior high school, or senior high school), the class sizes, the available facilities,

etc. Within the collaborative work, the students could support one another to think critically and decide the best solutions for each scenario and the appropriate CL technique.

The second aspect is the assessment type. Instead of only assessing the students' presentation and teaching demonstration, the lecturer monitors and highlight the process where the students work in groups. Within the principle of formative assessments, the highlight of the learning is shifted from merely the outcome to both the processes and the results. It can be in the form of project checkpoints (group discussions on the technique, initial project plan, peer feedback, initial draft of the lesson plan, etc.) and reflection or journal logs.

The last aspect focuses on the uses of particular terms throughout the CO. Some terms like "Techniques of CL", "Individual Teaching", and "Lesson Unit Plan" is replaced with more PBL-based terms. The phrase "The implementation of Jigsaw technique in classrooms" or the question "How can we use Jigsaw technique to support the students' learning?" are used to highlight the students' role of solving real problems in the classroom setting. Reframing the final examination from "Lesson Unit Plan" to "Teaching Innovation Proposal" or "Scaffolding Prototype for School A with Cooperative Controversy" underlines the urgency of innovating something impactful for real school contexts. The lecturer provides guiding prompts for the students to construct their final project, starting from the background problem of the class, theory review of relevant CL techniques, proposed solutions (the lesson plan), evaluation plan, and student and teacher reflection. These aspects, supported with the literature review on PBL, helped the researchers reformed the CO into more problem-driven, inquiry-based, and solution-oriented, rather than merely presentation- or demonstration-based.

As listed in Table 1, there were 33 questions in total within the 6 self-efficacy constructs of Webber (2016). The responses of the first construct can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
The Responses of the Teamwork Construct

Construct		Question Items	Pre- (Scale)				Post- (Scale)				Summary			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	Pre-	Post-	Decrease	Increase
Teamwork	1	I like working with other students.	0	0	6	7	0	1	6	6	3.54	3.38	0.15	-
	2	I like to solve problems on my own without help.	1	2	7	3	1	5	5	2	2.92	2.62	0.31	-
	3	I think I can learn from my group members.	0	1	7	5	0	0	5	8	3.31	3.62	-	0.31
	4	I can help my classmates with projects.	0	0	5	8	0	1	5	7	3.62	3.46	0.15	-
		AVERAGE									3.35	3.3	0.08	

The data showed minimal changes in students' perception towards their self-efficacy of the PBL implementation. Overall, the students showed positive perception of how they worked collaboratively in teams. As indicated in Table 3, the average score slightly decreased from 3.35 to 3.30 indicating a 0.08-point decline. Only Item 3 showed an increase from 3.31 to 3.62 indicating that the students feel improvement of their peers' contribution while working together in groups. Items 1, 2, and 4, on the other hand, showed a decrease by 0.15, 0.31, and 0.15 respectively. Despite the overall average decrease, the shift was relatively minor, and the increase in Item 3 suggested a nuanced development. Students might be gradually recognizing the value of peer learning even as other aspects of teamwork confidence fluctuate.

Table 3
The Responses of the Problem-Solving Construct

Construct		Question Items	Pre- (Scale)				Post- (Scale)				Summary			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	Pre-	Post-	Decrease	Increase
Problem Solving	5	I think I am able to gather information from different sources.	0	0	7	6	0	0	7	6	3.46	3.46	-	-

Construct		Question Items	Pre- (Scale)				Post- (Scale)				Summary			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	Pre-	Post-	Decrease	Increase
	6	I will ask questions when I do not understand something.	0	1	7	5	0	2	6	5	3.31	3.23	0.08	-
	7	I will view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered.	0	1	9	3	0	1	9	3	3.15	3.15	-	-
	8	I can know what steps to take to solve a problem.	0	1	7	5	0	2	6	5	3.31	3.23	0.08	-
	9	When I need help I will ask for it.	0	2	4	7	0	1	5	7	3.38	3.46	-	0.08
		AVERAGE									3.32	3.31	0.02	

Table 3 shows the students' perception on how they practiced *Problem Solving* while accomplishing the PBL-oriented instructions. The data summary indicated a very slight overall decrease in students' self-efficacy from 3.32 to 3.31 (−0.02). This might suggest that the students' confidence in their problem-solving skills remained generally stable across the semester. This was also confirmed with Items 5 and 7 which remained constant. This showed that the students had sustained confidence in information literacy and resilience or growth mindset. While the other 2 items, Items 6 and 8, showed a slight decrease by 0.08 points each. This suggested that the students might have a marginal drop in their willingness to seek clarification and find stages of solving a problem. In contrast, Item 9 showed a positive increase of 0.08, which might signal improved help-seeking behaviour and self-regulation. In sum, while the overall average showed minimal change, the students' perceptions of how they approached challenges might be evolving as they experience more dynamic and socially interactive learning environments.

Table 4
The Responses of the Motivation Construct

Construct		Question Items	Pre- (Scale)				Post- (Scale)				Summary			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	Pre-	Post-	Decrease	Increase
Motivation	10	I will try my best even when it is a difficult task.	0	1	3	9	0	0	4	9	3.62	3.69	-	0.08
	11	When I experience failure, I will stop trying.	3	2	6	2	4	1	6	2	2.54	2.46	0.08	-
	12	I will keep trying even when things get hard.	0	1	4	8	0	1	3	9	3.54	3.62	-	0.08
	13	I will give up when things get hard.	5	3	4	1	4	3	5	1	2.08	2.23	-	0.15
	14	I think I can recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments.	0	2	8	3	0	3	7	3	3.08	3.00	0.08	-
		AVERAGE									3.22	3.20	0.02	

Table 4 also revealed a minimal overall decline in students' self-perceived *Motivation*, with the average dropping slightly from 3.22 to 3.20 (−0.02). With only 2 items, Items 11 and 14, that had a slight decrease by 0.08 points, the data suggested that students' motivations were relatively stable. Positive shifts were shown in Items 10 and 12 by 0.08 points, indicating that students might have improved grit and determination to finish the assigned projects. Despite the increasing scale, the researchers highlighted the importance of emotional support for the class. As shown in Items 11, 13, and 14, some students might emotionally feel difficult to bounce back from setbacks and failures. Constructive feedback and encouragement might help the students find external motivation to keep going, develop stronger persistence, and finally accomplish their work and responsibility.

Table 5
The Responses of the Course Skills Construct

Construct		Question Items	Pre- (Scale)				Post- (Scale)				Summary			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	Pre-	Post-	Decrease	Increase
Course Skills	15	I think the things I learn in this course are not	6	2	4	1	7	2	2	2	2.00	1.92	0.08	-

Construct		Question Items	Pre- (Scale)				Post- (Scale)				Summary			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	Pre-	Post-	Decrease	Increase
		useful outside of campus.												
	16	I think using English is an important skill in life.	0	0	5	8	0	1	3	9	3.62	3.62	-	-
	17	I think I can use English outside of the classroom.	0	0	7	6	0	1	4	8	3.46	3.54	-	0.08
	18	I think learning CL techniques is important to me.	0	0	7	6	0	0	6	7	3.46	3.54	-	0.08
	19	I can use English on a project.	0	0	6	7	0	1	6	6	3.54	3.38	0.15	-
		AVERAGE									3.22	3.20	0.02	

The data of the fourth construct, *Course Skills*, showed a relatively stable perception of students' ability to transfer course-related skills beyond the classroom. Despite the minimal shift of 0.02, the overall data showed positively increasing trend. Notably, two items, Items 17 and 18, showed modest improvement with both increasing by 0.08. This might suggest that the students developed a greater appreciation for the practical relevance of English and CL techniques in real-world contexts. In addition, as the statement in Item 15 was a negative trait, the decreasing scale implied a positive way of how students saw the benefit of the materials for the real classroom or school settings.

While observing, the researchers noticed the students' tendency of using Indonesian language instead of English. This might be aligned with the slight decline in Item 19 by 0.15, which might indicate some uncertainty about students' confidence in applying their English skills throughout the projects. Nevertheless, this was still accommodated by Item 16 showing a constant scale of 3.62, which might indicate that the students still have the sustained beliefs about English language's value in their life. In sum, although there were some students having difficulties in using English while working on the projects, they still perceived the project-based applications of English skills and CL techniques as important and relevant to the practical situations in real life.

Table 6
The Responses of the Resilience Construct

Construct		Question Items	Pre- (Scale)				Post- (Scale)				Summary			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	Pre-	Post-	Decrease	Increase
Resilience	20	I think learning CL techniques is interesting to me.	0	2	4	7	0	1	3	9	3.38	3.62	-	0.23
	21	When I work hard on something, it shows in the results.	0	2	8	3	0	2	8	3	3.08	3.08	-	-
	22	I care about my project.	0	0	5	8	0	0	6	7	3.62	3.54	0.08	-
	23	I think I can make valuable contributions to a project.	0	0	5	8	0	1	4	8	3.62	3.54	0.08	-
	24	I think I am able to try harder when the teacher gives me encouragement.	0	0	7	6	0	1	6	6	3.46	3.38	0.08	-
		AVERAGE									3.43	3.43	0.00	

Table 6 showed an unchanged overall average at 3.43 for the *Resilience* construct. This indicated a general stability in students' resilience throughout the semester. The first statement, Item 20, showed the most increase of 0.23, suggesting a growing sense of interest and engagement into the content of the course. This highlighted the positive shift where students developed a more favorable attitude toward the material, which could also strengthen their resilience in accomplishing the challenging tasks. This was also supported by the data for Item 21 showing unchanged results at 3.08. This suggested a consistent belief in the link between effort and performance. The three items, Items 22, 23, and 24, showed a slight decrease of 0.08, highlighting the needs of higher encouragement for each individual so that they reduced the emerging doubts about their personal impact or emotional investment in the

project. In sum, while students' resilience remained averagely steady, there was a demand on highlighting each student's roles and his or her contributions and efforts for the group project-based tasks.

Table 7
The Responses of the Confidence Construct

Construct		Question Items	Pre- (Scale)				Post- (Scale)				Summary			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	Pre-	Post-	Decrease	Increase
Confidence	25	I think I cannot follow complex instructions unless someone shows me how to do it.	0	2	8	3	0	3	6	4	3.08	3.08	-	-
	26	I think I can plan out projects from start to finish.	0	2	5	6	0	2	6	5	3.31	3.23	0.08	-
	27	I believe that difficult tasks are beyond my capabilities.	0	3	7	3	1	4	6	2	3.00	2.69	0.31	-
	28	I think I can perform a new task when someone shows me how.	0	3	7	3	0	3	6	4	3.00	3.08	-	0.08
	29	I will avoid challenging tasks.	1	6	5	1	1	6	5	1	2.46	2.46	-	-
		AVERAGE									2.97	2.91	0.06	

Similar to the previous data set, the last construct, *Confidence*, also revealed a slight overall decline in students' perception on their confidence, with a decrease of 0.06. Item 26 showed a decrease point by 0.08, suggesting that there was a slight reduction in students' confidence in managing and organizing extended tasks. They might find it a bit difficult to stay on track within the plans. Aligned with this fact, Item 28 showed an increase by 0.08, highlighting how students believe that they needed guided instructions or scaffolding, models, and assistance from their peers and the lecturer. Furthermore, Items 25 and 29 showed a constant point of 3.08 and 2.46 respectively. In terms of facing challenging tasks, Item 25 reflected a fixed belief that clear instruction is essential, while Item 26 suggested a persistent hesitation toward engaging with difficulties. Nevertheless, the decreasing score of the negatively worded item in Item 27 showed how students began to see the possible development of their capabilities in overcoming the difficulties and eventually accomplishing the projects. Taken together, these results indicated a nuanced picture of how students' confidence in performing or finishing the projects were still not fully independent but required support system from their surroundings. This underscored the importance of structured guidance and clear scaffolding during project-based or challenge-oriented learning experiences to help students maintain or rebuild confidence.

Across constructs, students' self-efficacy perceptions were generally stable and positive. Notably, the largest positive movement appeared in interest and engagement with course content (*Resilience* Item 20), while responses in the *Confidence* construct suggested that students benefited from guidance and modeling when completing complex projects. This pattern is consistent with students' later open-ended responses, which emphasized both the meaningfulness of collaborative projects and the need for clearer instructions and fairer workload distribution.

In addition to the 29 closed-ended questions, the researchers added 4 open-ended questions asking the students' *General Perception* towards the implementation of PBL in the class. The results of Item 30 ("I think I like the idea of using this kind of group instruction in this course.") showed that 10 out of 13 students (77%) perceived the group instructions positively. The experience of working together with their peers became an interactive and engaging journey for the whole semester of the class. It was also supported by 11 students (85%) who agreed on Item 31 ("I recommend other lecturers to implement this kind of group instruction in this course."). These results indicate broad acceptance of group-oriented

instruction and provide a basis for identifying which implementation features students viewed as most supportive or challenging.

Item 32 ("How would you compare your experience in this course with your learning experience in a regular instruction (non-project) course?") discovered the students' perception on the PBL implementation in the course. The students showed generally positive perceptions of the implementation and highlighted the benefits of working in groups for enhancing their understanding of the content, collaboration, and communication skills. Compared to the other non-project courses, this course provided them the opportunity to actively learn from their peers, shared responsibilities, and supported one another. The goal of applying practical teaching techniques to the teaching demonstration and final project also underlined the well-organized, useful, and meaningful tasks for real-world teaching contexts. When describing what worked well, students most frequently pointed to (a) learning from peers through shared responsibility, (b) stronger engagement through authentic teaching tasks, and (c) clearer connections between theory and classroom practice.

One student stated, "*From my experience, group project course made me plan everything compared to the non-project course.*" This highlighted the students' autonomous practices of detailed planning, time management, and team coordination throughout the learning process. There was one concern raised about the unequal distribution of group work where some students over-relied on the others. A few students stated how they have balanced preferences between project and non-project courses saying that each offered significant benefits. Overall, students found the PBL experience more interactive and meaningful, particularly in areas like teamwork and communication, although concerns about group dynamics and workload were noted as areas for improvement.

The last item, Item 33, gave the students final chance to share their thoughts on the course and their suggestions for improvement. Many students expressed that the course was engaging, valuable, and inspiring. They highlighted their experiences of learning the teaching techniques, sharpening their teamwork skills, and practicing their project management skills. As a result, they could become more disciplined, collaborative, and creative in presenting and planning the teaching activities. Few students even noted that the course and its PBL implementation gave them ideas for their future research or their teaching career in schools. In terms of areas for improvement, students repeatedly raised two implementation concerns: (1) unequal workload distribution, with requests for clearer individual accountability within group grading, and (2) instructional clarity, with requests for more explicit step-by-step guidance and examples for each assignment. The students hope that teachers would consider individual grading over the group performances and provide more explicit and structured guidance for each assignment given.

Discussion

Research Question 1: How the TEFL class instruction is changed from individual-oriented project learning to group-oriented project learning.

With the use of ADDIE model, the TEFL course has been transformed from individual-based to group-oriented project learning. The first 3 stages (Analysis, Design, and Develop) allowed a structured implementation and infusion of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) principles into the existing Course Outline (CO), specifically on shifting the classroom instructions toward a more collaborative and inquiry-driven learning.

In the *Analysis* stage, as the researchers reviewed the original CO, particular key areas were identified, like the individual performance (solo presentations) and teaching demonstration on applying Cooperative Learning (CL) techniques. These components, though useful for assessing each student's understanding and capability, cannot accommodate the needs of the 21st century teaching competencies. Thus, the researchers tried to infuse the PBL principles to provide the students opportunities for flexible knowledge, self-directed learning,

and collaborative skills (Bell, 2010). The replacement of individual projects to group-based projects becomes the highlight of the shifting, such as using the terms "group presentations", "Everyone can Explain", "Learning from the Experts", and "peer-teaching demonstrations".

The *Design* phase involved restructuring the learning experience to group-based inquiry. Listed in the first meeting, the students were assigned to life value-labeled groups (Caring, Honest, Loyal, and Sincere) and were assigned to explore CL techniques through contextualized EFL classroom scenarios. Underlining the real-world teaching problems helped the lecturer bridge between the students' prior knowledge, past experiences, daily observations, and the new theories learnt. This is aligned with the PBL principles of using authentic challenges to drive student inquiry (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Goodman & Stivers, 2010; Hedge, 1993). Rather than presenting pre-determined materials, students could research, discuss, plan, and apply the CL techniques to solve teaching problems.

In the *Development* stage, the researchers also added project checkpoints, including brainstorming and discussing processes, project planning, peer feedback, and progress checking, in the form of assignments and reports. These tasks support the formative assessment strategies within a PBL framework to monitor both the processes and the results of the students' learning journey. Using Jigsaw principles, the researchers also constructed learning scenario in such a way that each student will have specific role for his or her group and also for the whole class. Starting with learning the assigned topics or CL techniques individually, sharing it to the groups in the breakout rooms, and explaining it to the whole class in the main room, each student was ensured to be the expert of the topic and learners of all topics at the same time. These intended plans were aligned with the needs of effective and strategic project design to ensure that the students, while having more power to determine and design their own learning, get the universal themes and goals for the class from the lecturer (Krauss & Boss, 2013; Mali, 2016).

In sum, the ADDIE model has helped the researchers transformed the TEFL class' course outline by effectively embedding the PBL pedagogy. The shifts include reshaping the course structure, assignment and report design, assessment methods, and even the language use. The new version of the course outline not only supported the student engagement and contextual learning, but also promoted the development of instructional problem-solving, collaboration, and reflective teaching skills, all of which are beneficial for preparing the students' readiness for future experiences and career across diverse educational settings.

Research Question 2: How the PBL-infused TEFL class instruction is perceived by the students.

The implementation of the PBL principles into the TEFL course revealed generally stable yet interesting facts of the students' perception on their self-efficacy. The data of the questionnaire pointed out the students' beliefs and feelings about themselves, both as learners and future educators. Across constructs like *Teamwork* and *Problem Solving*, students showed consistent value of collaboration. Though, with the minor declines in perceptions of control and self-reliance, the PBL-based assignments were seen to be more difficult and challenging. In the responses related to *Resilience* and *Confidence*, the students expressed how they needed more help and guidance when encountering complex and unpredictable challenges throughout the project making. The authentic learning situations were perceived as something new which students have never experienced before. It is supported with the students' experience of feeling confused and requiring clearer instructions and models to solve the problems.

Despite of the differences between each student's persistence and emotional control, the students' motivation remained steady. While many students were committed to accomplish the assigned tasks, some also signalled struggles in emotionally rebounding from setbacks and failures. This highlights the importance of supports and assistance from the lecturer. While monitoring the students' progress, the lecturer is also expected to provide

encouragement and constructive feedback to sustain the students' motivation in learning. Within the class, the students also began to view course content, especially CL techniques, as practically relevant to the real-world contexts. They realized the critical use of the *Course Skills* in the teaching practices that go beyond the academic context. As pre-service teachers, this experience appeared to contribute to the development of their emerging professional identity. The shift from completing individual tasks to collaboratively designing teaching innovations required them to think not only as students but also as future educators responsible for real classroom contexts.

The findings suggest that the PBL implementation in the TEFL course has opened a new trajectory, particularly on the students' task ownership, peer interdependence, and reflective awareness. As PBL-oriented environment provides indirect experiences of learning, verbal encouragement, and performance feedback, the students might keep improving their self-efficacy. Building upon these interpretations, several pedagogical implications can be considered. Practically, the findings suggest that effective PBL implementation in TEFL courses requires structured scaffolding and transparent assessment. Clear project guidelines, staged checkpoints, and defined group roles may help address students' concerns regarding unclear instructions and uneven workload distribution while sustaining collaborative engagement. Beyond this pedagogical course, PBL may be adapted to other language skill-based classes, such as speaking, writing, or reading, by designing collaborative tasks grounded in authentic classroom contexts. With appropriate scaffolding, the approach may also be extended to diverse student populations with varying proficiency levels.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the transformation of a TEFL course from an individual-oriented to a group-oriented course. Through the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), guided by the ADDIE framework, the study has successfully restructured the course into a more collaborative and inquiry-driven environments where students were encouraged to work collaboratively to solve contextual teaching problems. The redesigned Course Outline (CO) highlighted greater emphasis on group work, iterative feedback, and authentic assignments that represent real-world teaching contexts. Through the self-efficacy questionnaire, with closed and open-ended question items, the study revealed the student perceptions with the measurable changes in teamwork, problem solving, motivation, course skills, resilience, and confidence constructs. The data suggest that students began to view collaboration more positively, get clearer insights of their problem-solving skills, and develop better professional identity of their future roles as educators. They also valued the course skills more deeply as they could connect the theories learnt and the existing real-world problems. The course, thus, highlights the essence of both the process and the outcome of group-based projects.

Despite some challenges and concerns, such as uneven workload distribution and confusion over task instructions, the implementation of PBL was perceived as engaging, meaningful, and professionally relevant by the students. These findings support the urgency of integrating PBL into other courses through carefully designed authentic tasks aligned with course learning outcomes and supported by clear assessment rubrics, enabling students to cultivate both cognitive skills and key competencies such as collaboration and communication, all of which are essential for the 21st century English language educators. Moving forward, lecturers are encouraged to provide clearer scaffolding strategies, such as assigning structured group roles (e.g., coordinator, researcher, presenter), setting internal project milestones, and incorporating peer-evaluation, and maintain the students' self-efficacy to maximize the potential of PBL-based instructional models in other classes.

As the current study focuses only on one class consisting of 13 students, future researchers are suggested to have bigger sizes of population to capture more diverse

experiences and perceptions of PBL implementation. At the institutional level, structured professional development workshops on PBL design and collaborative assessment strategies could further support lecturers in implementing group-oriented instructional models effectively. Future studies may also involve interviews with both students and lecturer to give a more complex but holistic insights of the real experiences of PBL-oriented courses. The implementation can extend beyond pedagogical courses to include other classes focusing on English language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) and components (Vocabulary, Grammar, and Pronunciation).

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. By agreeing to take part, the participants acknowledge that they have been informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data utilized in this study cannot be made publicly available due to strict adherence to privacy concerns and ethical obligations that safeguard participant confidentiality. This ensures compliance with ethical research standards and data protection regulations.

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