



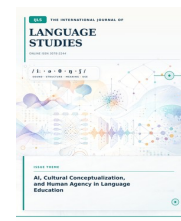
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Project-Based Learning in English for Tourism and Hospitality: Students' Perceived Development of English Listening, Speaking, and 21st-Century Skills

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Abstract

The Tourism and Hospitality industry requires graduates to have strong English communication abilities and 21st-century competencies. With traditional English for Tourism and Hospitality courses, however, students have limited opportunities for language learning and skill development through authentic challenges. Although Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been applied in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in tertiary education, there is limited evidence regarding the perceived contribution of PBL to English for Tourism and Hospitality. This study investigated students' perceptions of the contribution of PBL to English listening and speaking skills and 21st-century competencies. The study was conducted with 41 third-year Tourism and Hospitality majors at the University of Finance – Marketing (UFM). Students completed a ten-week authentic interview project with international tourists in Ho Chi Minh City. Data were collected through a post-project questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that the students perceived PBL as beneficial for developing English listening and speaking skills (mean scores ranging from 4.2 to 4.6) and 21st-century competencies (mean scores ranging from 4.2 to 4.7), with communication and collaboration receiving the highest ratings. The findings provide pedagogical implications for integrating authentic and project-based activities into English for Tourism and Hospitality and other ESP courses in higher education.

Keywords: 21st-century skills; English for Tourism and Hospitality; English Listening and Speaking skills; Project-Based Learning

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1. Introduction

In Tourism and Hospitality education, English serves as the primary language for international communication. Graduates are required to communicate effectively with international visitors or colleagues, to provide good service, to solve workplace problems quickly and efficiently, and to collaborate with global partners (Leslie & Russell, 2006). Consequently, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses play an important role in developing students' English competence and communication skills.

Despite the integration of ESP into tourism curricula, many programs remain predominantly language-focused, with insufficient emphasis on authentic workplace

communication and professional competences (Rahmani & Supardi, 2021). ESP tourism instruction still focuses on vocabulary lists, grammar structures, and pre-designed dialogues that provide limited exposure to authentic workplace communication. As a result, students often know tourism-related terminology but encounter difficulties when using it in real interactions with tourists. This reflects the fact that many ESP programs remain predominantly language-focused rather than emphasizing professional communication skills (Jaisabai et al., 2019; Jannah, 2021). Project-Based Learning (PBL) may help address the limitations by creating opportunities for students to use English authentically, collaborate in teams, create meaningful outcomes and present reasonable and logical solutions to Tourism and Hospitality problems.

Although PBL has been widely researched in ESP courses in higher education, research on its effectiveness in English for Tourism and Hospitality remains limited. In particular, there is a considerable research gap concerning the contribution of PBL to students' listening and speaking skills as well as 21st-century skills development through authentic interaction with international tourists.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates students' perceptions of the effectiveness of PBL in an English for Tourism and Hospitality course at the University of Finance - Marketing. Specifically, the study examined students' perceived improvements in English listening and speaking skills, the development of 21st-century competencies, and challenges students encountered during project implementation.

This study addresses the following questions:

RQ1: How do students perceive the contribution of PBL to their listening and speaking skills?

RQ2: To what extent do students perceive that PBL contributes to the development of 21st-century skills?

RQ3: What challenges do students experience during the implementation of the PBL project?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist theory, which views learning as a social and collaborative process in which learners construct their own knowledge through collaborating and interacting with others. According to this theory, learners do not acquire knowledge individually and passively; instead, they construct understanding collaboratively through authentic social interaction with peers.

Figure 1 summarizes the key components of the social constructivism framework, divided into three categories: learners, pedagogical strategies and environment. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs through social interaction, collaboration, and engagement with meaningful tasks. In the context of the present study, PBL provides opportunities for students to construct knowledge through collaborative inquiry and authentic interaction with international tourists.

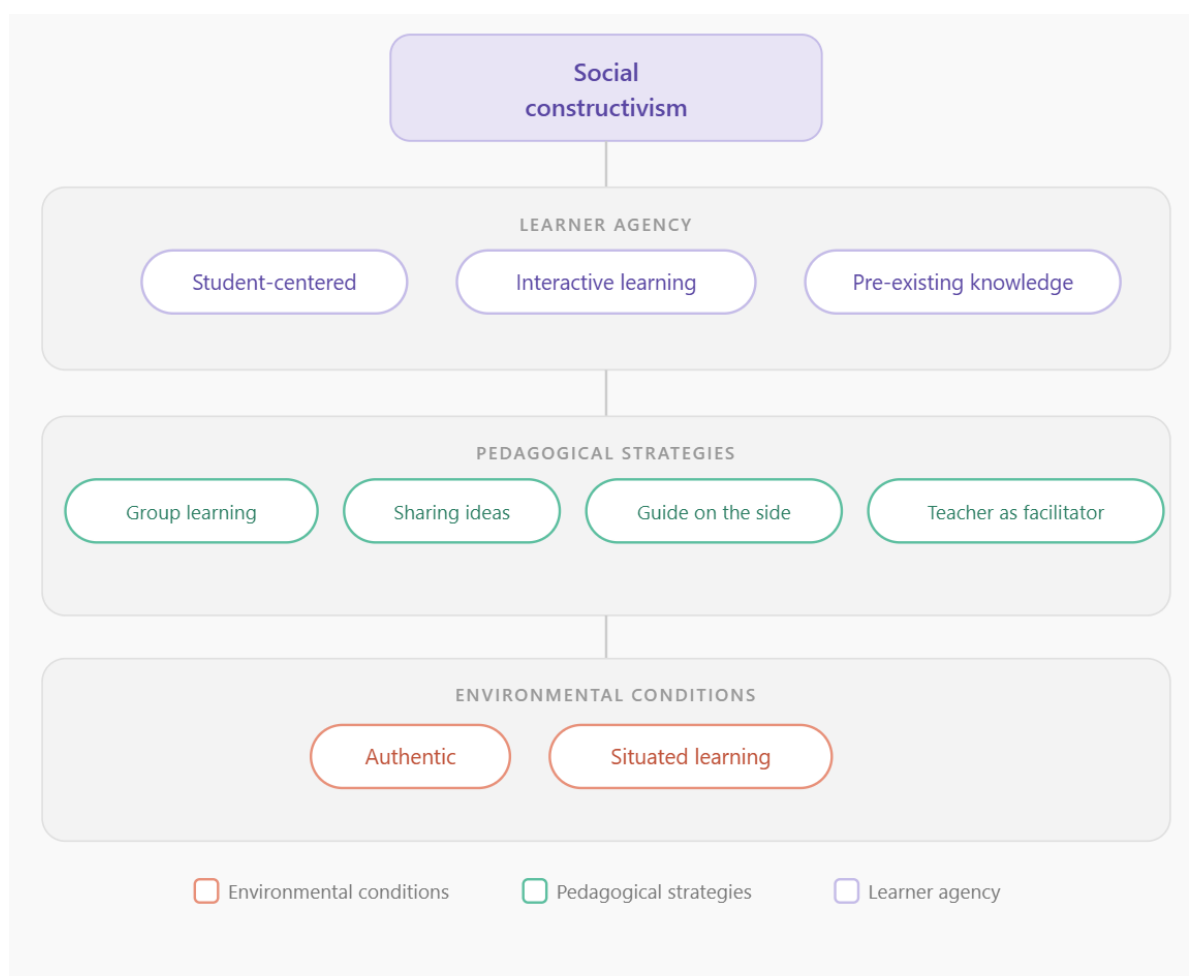


Figure 1. *Socio-constructivist framework adapted from Vygotsky (1978)*

2.2. *English for Tourism and Hospitality as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Context*

ESP aims to equip learners with English language skills needed in a particular domain (Paltridge and Starfield, 2013). Specifically, English for Tourism and Hospitality prepares learners to communicate effectively in tourism contexts. In this industry, the graduates are expected to communicate effectively across cultures, solve customer-service problems, adapt to technological innovations, and pursue lifelong learning (Leslie & Russell, 2006; Zahedpisheh et al., 2017). Consequently, English for Tourism and Hospitality courses are expected to extend beyond textbook contents to include authentic and tourism-related tasks that reflect the profession in real life (Komerendo et al., 2025).

2.3. *Twenty-First-Century Skills in Tourism and Hospitality Education*

21st-century skills refer to competencies which can help learners succeed in increasingly complex workplaces. Among these competencies, the 4Cs - Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking and Creativity are widely recognized as the foundation of modern education

(Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Plucker et al. (2016) emphasized that these skills are interconnected and should be developed together rather than in isolation.

In addition to the 4Cs, related competencies such as digital literacy and self-directed learning are widely recognized as essential skills that young employees must acquire to meet the high demand of the modern labor market. These competencies are particularly relevant in Tourism and Hospitality education, where graduates are expected to communicate effectively across cultures, solve customer-service problems, access to technological innovations, and pursue lifelong learning (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Therefore, English for Tourism courses should create learning environments which integrate language development with these professional competencies.

21st-century skills have become increasingly important in higher education as graduates are expected to possess not only disciplinary knowledge but also a range of transferable competencies required for success in modern workplaces and society. These competencies generally include communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and information and media skills. Kienzler et al. (2023) emphasize that higher education institutions play a crucial role in fostering these personal, social, and cognitive competencies by incorporating them into curricula and providing students with opportunities for experiential learning. In their study, the authors identified communication and collaboration, problem-solving and critical thinking, creativity and innovation, and information and media skills as important clusters of 21st-century competencies.

2.4. *Project-Based Learning in English for Specific Purposes*

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a student-centered instructional approach in which learners deal with authentic problems, collaborate with peers and produce meaningful outcomes over a fixed period (Thomas, 2000). Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, PBL integrates language learning with authentic tasks, creating opportunities for learners to apply disciplinary knowledge while developing communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Han & Le, 2024; Naseer et al., 2025).

Stoller and Myers (2019, as cited in Le & Nguyen, 2026) describe several characteristics of PBL, including authentic tasks, learner autonomy, collaborative learning, the integration of language and content, continuous reflection, and the production of meaningful final products. These traits make PBL particularly suitable for ESP contexts, where language learning is closely connected to professional practice and authentic communication.

Cahyono et al. (2024) reported that PBL significantly improves language learning outcomes across various English language contexts. Han and Le (2024) found that integrating PBL into ESP classes enhances language proficiency and workplace-related competencies. Similarly, Naseer et al. (2025) demonstrated that industry-oriented PBL prepares university students in the same majors for their future careers by promoting teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, and collaboration. Collectively, these studies suggest that PBL provides a valuable pedagogical approach for integrating language learning with industry-related skill development.

2.5. The Roles of PBL in Language and Tourism and Hospitality Education

PBL provides a meaningful context in which learners can develop language skills through authentic, purposeful and result-oriented tasks. In Tourism and Hospitality education, authentic projects such as interviewing international tourists require students to interpret authentic spoken language, respond spontaneously, and collaborate with peers to produce final products. Through these activities, students can develop English listening and speaking skills while strengthening 21st-century skills.

The potential contribution of PBL aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist perspective, which highlights that language and knowledge are co-constructed by meaningful social interaction. Authentic communication with international visitors allows students to co-construct meaning, receive immediate feedback, and gradually develop communicative competence in real-world contexts.

Simpson (2011) reported that PBL in an English for Tourism course at a Thai university significantly enhanced students' self-confidence and oral communication competence, particularly among low and medium proficiency learners. These findings suggest that authentic, project-based activities can bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace communication.

2.6. Research Gap

Although previous studies have demonstrated the benefits of PBL in English language education and ESP, relatively little research has examined its implementation in English for Tourism and Hospitality, particularly through authentic interaction with international tourists. Moreover, few studies have simultaneously examined students' perceived development of English listening and speaking skills and 21st-century competencies within authentic Tourism and Hospitality learning contexts. Addressing these gaps, the present study explores students' perceptions of the contribution of PBL in an English for Tourism and Hospitality course in a tertiary institution.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods educational intervention design to investigate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing English listening and speaking skills and 21st-century competencies in an English for Tourism and Hospitality course. Following a ten-week Project-Based Learning intervention, quantitative data were collected through a post-project questionnaire, and qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into students' learning experiences.

This study was conducted in an English for Tourism and Hospitality course at the University of Finance – Marketing (UFM), Vietnam. This course aims to develop students' English communication skills in tourism-related contexts, including providing tourist information, handling customer-service situations, and delivering professional presentations. As part of the course, students completed a PBL activity aligned with the course learning outcomes.

3.2. *Participants*

The participants included 41 third-year students registered in the course of English for Tourism and Hospitality at UFM. Their ages ranged from 21 to 22 years, including 16 males and 25 females. Before taking this course, students had completed 4 general English courses and their English proficiency ranged from intermediate to upper-intermediate based on their previous English course results. The participants had previous experience with PBL in content courses but had not previously participated in PBL in English language classes.

3.3. *Project Description*

Students were divided into groups of five or six members and conducted a ten-week PBL project. Each group designed and conducted face-to-face interviews with at least five international tourists in Ho Chi Minh City. The interviews aimed to explore their travel experiences, their favorite destinations, cultural impressions and perceptions of Vietnam as a travel destination. Before the interview, students developed interview questions under the guidance of the instructor.

During the project, students recorded interviews with participants' consent, transcribed and summarized the responses, and reflected on the communication challenges they encountered during real-life interactions in English. Groups produced an interview video and prepared a group presentation. The project concluded with a class presentation, followed by peer and instructor feedback.

Project Name:

Exploring International Tourists' Travel Experiences Through English Interviews

Driving Question:

How can students use English to communicate effectively with international tourists and understand their travel experiences in Vietnam?

Project outcomes:

Each group was required to:

- Produce a 15-minute video recording of interviews with at least five international tourists at tourist destinations in Ho Chi Minh City.
- Give a group presentation reporting the interview process, major findings, communication experiences and reflection on the English communication experience.

Project Procedures:

Table 1. *Timeline and Procedures of the Project-Based Learning Intervention*

Week	Activities	Expected Outcomes
Week 1	Introduction to PBL and group formation	Project orientation
Weeks 2–3	Research and inquiry	Inquiry questions
Weeks 4–6	Tourist interviews	Authentic interaction
Weeks 7–8	Video production	Draft product

Week	Activities	Expected Outcomes
Week 9	Feedback and revision	Revised product
Week 10	Presentation and showcase	Public product

3.4. *Data collection procedure*

Questionnaires: The questionnaire consisted of 28 five-point Likert scale items measuring three dimensions: students' English listening and speaking skills, 21st-century skills, and project-related challenges. The questionnaire was distributed to students after the group presentation and video showcase so that their responses reflected their full experience with PBL. The participants were informed clearly about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses. The questionnaire was delivered through Google Forms for convenience.

Semi-structured interviews: After participants conducted the questionnaire, 10 participants were invited for individual interviews, each lasting approximately 5-10 minutes. The language used for the interview was Vietnamese for participants to express all their ideas freely and clearly. Interviews were recorded with the permission from the participants and then transcribed for analysis. The interviews explored the reasons behind their responses, perceived changes in their oral English performance, development of 21st-century skills and suggestions for improving the project.

3.5. *Data Analysis*

Quantitative data from the post-intervention questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, mode values, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values. These statistics were calculated using Microsoft Excel. These measures were used to identify the central tendencies and variability in students' perceptions of PBL's contribution to English listening and speaking skills, 21st-century competencies, and project-related challenges.

Qualitative data from the ten individual interview transcripts were analyzed thematically following an inductive approach. Interview data were used to provide deeper insights into students' experiences and to complement the quantitative findings.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. *Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Project-Based Learning on English Listening and Speaking Skills*

Table 2 presents students' perceptions of the effectiveness of PBL in improving their speaking and listening skills. Overall, the high mean scores (4.2-4.6) and mode values of 4 and 5 indicate that students perceived PBL as contributing positively to their oral communication skills in authentic tourism contexts.

Table 2. *Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Project-Based Learning on English Listening and Speaking Skills*

Listening and Speaking Skills	Mean	Mode	Min	Max	SD
improving listening comprehension	4.4	5	3	5	0.55
understanding spoken English more accurately	4.4	4	3	5	0.58
understanding authentic listening situations	4.3	4	2	5	0.67
identifying key information while listening	4.5	5	3	5	0.51
understanding different English accents	4.2	4	2	5	0.74
speaking English more fluently	4.5	5	3	5	0.50
improving pronunciation	4.3	4	2	5	0.69
using Tourism and Hospitality-related vocabulary appropriately	4.5	5	3	5	0.55
expressing ideas confidently	4.5	5	3	5	0.55
participating actively in discussions	4.6	5	3	5	0.50
communicating effectively in Tourism and Hospitality-related situations	4.6	5	4	5	0.49
Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree N=41					

Among the listening-related items, identifying key information while listening has the highest rating ($M = 4.5$), followed by listening comprehension and understanding spoken English (both $M = 4.4$). Understanding different English accents received the lowest rating ($M = 4.2$), although it remained positive, suggesting that understanding authentic communication remained challenging for some students.

Student 7 explained how the project helped him develop more listening tactics:

“In real communication settings, I should focus on the key points of what the speakers say instead of trying to understand all word. In language classes, I often force myself to recognize every single word, but in the interview, I can’t do that. Catching the speaker’s main point was more important.”

Similarly, Student 8 commented:

“I struggled with unfamiliar English accents but I tried to guess their ideas from the context. I did not try to understand every single word; instead, I focused on the overall meaning.”

These findings reflect Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-constructivist perspective, which proposes that language learning develops through meaningful social interaction. Rather than practicing isolated listening exercises, students were required to negotiate meaning and interpret messages in authentic conversations with tourists. As a result, they reported developing more effective listening strategies, such as identifying key information, using contextual clues, and focusing on overall meaning rather than individual words.

For speaking skills, the means scores ranged from 4.3 to 4.6, indicating that students perceived PBL as highly beneficial for developing their oral communication skills. Participating actively in discussions and communicating effectively in Tourism and Hospitality-related situations received the highest ratings (both $M = 4.6$).

Student 3 explained:

“When talking with foreigners in English, I do not care about grammar or pronunciation mistakes, I just focus on expressing my ideas and responding at the right time. Some of them are very eager to share their experience when traveling to Vietnam so I learned a lot from the interviews.”

Similarly, Student 9 stated that authentic interaction encouraged him to speak more naturally and confidently because the primary goal was to communicate meaning rather than achieve grammatical accuracy.

These findings support Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-constructivist theory, suggesting that authentic interaction promoted meaningful communication. They are also consistent with Simpson (2011) and Han and Le (2024), who found that PBL enhances learners’ oral communication skills and confidence in authentic professional contexts.

Compared with the other items, improving pronunciation received the lowest mean score ($M = 4.3$), although it was still rated positively.

Student 10 said that:

“Sometimes, the tourists could not understand when I pronounced some words incorrectly. They asked me to repeat many times which helped me realize my pronunciation problems, and I tried to imitate their pronunciation during the conversations.”

This comment suggests that authentic interaction also improve student’s pronunciation. Instead of practicing pronunciation in isolation, students recognized their pronunciation weaknesses during the conversations and attempted to adjust their speech to facilitate successful communication.

Overall, the findings suggested that authentic PBL created meaningful opportunities for students to develop English listening and speaking skills. By engaging in real interactions with international tourists, students reported improvements in listening comprehension and speaking confidence. The findings reinforce the value of a socio-constructivist learning environment, where language competence is developed through authentic communication and collaborative knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978)

4.2. Students' Perceptions of the Contribution of PBL to 21st-Century Skills

Table 3. *Students’ perceptions of the Contribution of PBL to 21st-century skills*

STATEMENTS	Mean	Mode	Min	Max	SD
improving communication skills	4.7	5	4	5	0.47
enhancing teamwork and collaboration skills	4.6	5	3	5	0.54
developing critical thinking skills	4.4	5	3	5	0.59
encouraging problem-solving skills	4.4	4	3	5	0.63
fostering creativity and innovation	4.3	4	2	5	0.71
improving presentation and public speaking skills	4.6	5	4	5	0.49
increasing self-confidence in learning	4.5	5	3	5	0.55
promoting self-directed learning	4.4	4	3	5	0.62
improving digital literacy through the use of technology	4.2	4	2	5	0.74
enhancing time management and organizational skills	4.2	4	2	5	0.77

Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
N=41

Table 3 illustrates students' perception of the effectiveness of PBL in developing 21st-century skills. Overall, students reported highly positive perceptions, with mean scores ranging from 4.2 to 4.7 and mode values were 4 or 5 across all question items. These findings highlight that students perceived the project as beneficial for developing a wide range of competencies beyond language learning.

Improving communication skills received the highest rating (M = 4.7), followed by enhancing teamwork and collaboration skills and improving presentation and public speaking skills (both M = 4.6). Student 6 explained:

"Thanks to the project, I know how to start, maintain, and conclude a conversation naturally and politely."

Similarly, increasing self-confidence in learning also gained high rating (M = 4.5), indicating that authentic communication with international visitors helped students become more confident in English in real-life situations. These findings support the 4Cs framework proposed by Trilling and Fadel (2009), which identifies communication and collaboration as essential competencies for the 21st century.

Students also reported that BPL stimulated critical thinking, problem-solving, self-directed learning (all M = 4.4), and creativity and innovation (M = 4.3). Student 3 explained:

"During the interviews, we sometimes faced difficult or unexpected situations, so we needed to think and change the topics to keep the conversation going."

Student 8 added that communication problems helped them become flexible and independent. These findings suggest that project work encouraged them to analyze the situations, and adapt to challenges. This is consistent with previous studies (Cahyono et al, 2024; Naseer et al., 2025), which identified PBL as promoting higher-order thinking through authentic, real-world tasks.

Digital literacy, time management and organizational skills received the lowest ratings (both M = 4.2); however, students perceived improvements in these competencies. Student 1 noted:

"Producing the video required many digital skills, I struggled a lot at the beginning. I learned from the internet and more knowledgeable members. We worked hard to finish the project before deadline."

These findings suggest that an authentic project required students to use digital technologies, coordinate group tasks, and manage time effectively, thereby supporting the development of workplace skills.

Overall, the findings indicate that PBL contributed to the development of multiple 21st-century skills. Through authentic interviews with international tourists and collaborative project work, students developed not only English language competence but also the professional and transferable skills required in Tourism and Hospitality contexts. These findings support the

value of Project-Based Learning as an effective pedagogical approach for preparing students for future workplace communication.

4.3. *Students' Perceptions of the Challenges Encountered During Project-Based Learning*

Table 4. *Students' Perceptions of Challenges During Project-Based Learning*

STATEMENTS	Mean	Mode	Min	Max	SD
managing time to complete the project	4.2	4	2	5	0.77
coordinating schedules with group members	4.4	5	3	5	0.58
ensuring equal contribution from all group members	4.3	5	2	5	0.74
using English consistently during project discussions	4.3	4	2	5	0.73
preparing and delivering the final presentation	4.1	4	2	5	0.71
overcoming nervousness when speaking English	4.3	5	3	5	0.60
understanding different English accents when communicating with international tourists	4.3	5	2	5	0.74
using digital tools for completing projects	3.3	4	2	5	0.91
Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree N = 41					

Table 4 presents students' perceptions of the challenges encountered during the PBL activity. Overall, the mode values of 4 or 5 indicate that most students agreed that they experienced several challenges while completing the project.

The greatest challenge was coordinating schedules with group members ($M = 4.4$), followed by challenges in ensuring equal contributions among group members, using English consistently during group discussions, and overcoming nervousness when speaking English (all $M = 4.3$). Student 4 explained:

"Communicating in authentic situations is different from classroom interaction. I was really nervous for the first and the second time interacting with international visitors, but this feeling gradually decreases as I got used to. However, I couldn't maintain consistent English during the conversation. I could not recall the vocabulary quickly enough, this meant that I often forgot the words."

Student 7 also noted that the unequal task allocation affected group collaboration.

Students also reported the challenge of managing time ($M = 4.2$), and the challenge of preparing and delivering the final presentation ($M = 4.1$). In contrast, using digital tools received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.3$), indicating that it was perceived as a less significant challenge compared with other difficulties encountered during the project.

Although students experienced challenges throughout the project, they also reported substantial improvements in their English communication skills and 21st-century competencies (presented in Table 2 and 3). Student 9 reflected:

“We faced difficulties in dividing tasks fairly, working as a team, and expressing our ideas to teammates and international tourists. However, we learned and grew through these challenges because they taught us how to adapt, balance responsibilities, and cooperate effectively.”

The finding suggests that collaboration and other skills were developed through the process of overcoming challenges rather than in the absence of challenges. Similarly, students initially experienced nervousness when communicating in English; however, repeated interaction with international tourists gradually reduced their anxiety and built up their confidence. These findings are aligned with Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-constructivist theory, which suggested that learning develops through authentic social interaction and collaborative problem-solving.

In short, the findings from Table 2, 3, and 4, as well as the interview data provide a comprehensive picture of students’ perceptions of PBL. Although students encountered challenges related to team work, time management, and oral communication, these difficulties did not diminish the perceived benefits of the project. Instead, they became valuable learning opportunities that encouraged students to overcome their limitations and develop essential professional competencies. The findings suggest that authentic interview projects provided students with meaningful real-world learning experiences and were perceived as supporting their English listening and speaking skills and developing 21st-century competencies required for their future careers in the Tourism and Hospitality industry.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This study investigated students’ perceptions of the contribution of Project-Based Learning in enhancing English listening and speaking skills, as well as 21st-century competencies in an English for Tourism and Hospitality course. The findings indicate that authentic interview projects provide meaningful opportunities for students to improve their oral communication skills, particularly listening comprehension, speaking confidence, and communication in Tourism and Hospitality-related contexts. Students also perceived substantial development in the 4Cs of 21st-century skills – communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity – as well as increased self-confidence, self-directed learning, and presentation skills.

Although students encountered challenges related to teamwork, time management, communication anxiety, and the use of English during authentic interactions, these difficulties did not appear to diminish the perceived benefits of the project. Instead, they became valuable learning opportunities that encouraged students to develop resilience, collaboration, problem-solving abilities, and communicative confidence. These findings suggest that the challenges inherent in authentic Project-Based Learning should be viewed as an integral part of the learning process rather than barriers to learning.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on Project-Based Learning in English for Specific Purposes by demonstrating that authentic interaction may support students’ perceived language development and the professional competencies required in the industry. The findings further support socio-constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), emphasizing the value of authentic social interaction in fostering language learning and workplace-related skills.

5.2. Pedagogical Implications

These findings have several implications for design and instruction of English for Tourism and Hospitality and other ESP courses in higher education.

First, ESP courses should incorporate authentic learning activities, such as interviews, site visits, or collaboration with industry partners to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and workplace communication. Such real-life activities allow students to apply language knowledge in realistic professional contexts while developing transferable workplace skills.

Second, in order to avoid challenges related to coordinating group tasks and contributing equally, structured guidelines for teamwork and project management should be provided at an early stage. The guidelines should include clearly assigned roles, scheduled progress checkpoints, and peer evaluation to ensure fair responsibility and balanced contribution.

Finally, authentic communicative activities should be introduced and scaffolded progressively. Students should participate in lower-pressure tasks, such as role-plays or simulated interviews before engaging in real-world interactions, reducing communication anxiety and gradually building students' confidence and communicative competence.

5.3. Limitations

This study employed a post-intervention design without pre-test or control group; therefore, the findings primarily reflect students' perceived improvement rather than data-based improvements. Future research could consider adopting a quasi-experimental design including pre- and post-intervention language assessments and a control group receiving traditional instruction, to provide stronger evidence of the effectiveness of PBL. Another limitation of this study is its relatively small sample of 41 students from a single course at one educational institution. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to other ESP programs. Future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample from multiple institutions to examine the applicability of authentic Project-Based Learning in different English for Specific Purposes contexts.

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Author Contributions

Diem, N.T: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing.

Ngan, N.T.C: Investigation, Data Curation, Writing - Reviewer & Editing, Supervision.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

Formal ethical approval was not required for this classroom-based educational study under the applicable institutional regulations. The study was conducted in accordance with principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and protection of participants' privacy.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to completing the questionnaire and participating in the interviews.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available because they contain information obtained from human participants and are subject to confidentiality and privacy considerations. The data may be available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to applicable ethical and institutional restrictions.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) for language editing, grammar checking, and improving the clarity of academic writing. The authors reviewed and verified all AI-assisted content and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, interpretation, and final content of the manuscript.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Student Questionnaire

Students' Perceptions of Project-Based Learning in English for Tourism and Hospitality

Dear students,

This questionnaire aims to explore your perceptions of the 10-week Project-Based Learning (PBL) project in the English for Tourism and Hospitality course. Your responses will be used for research purposes only. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer honestly based on your experience during the project.

Scale:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

Part 1. English Listening and Speaking Skills

No.	Item
1	The project helped me improve my ability to understand English spoken by international tourists.
2	The project helped me identify key information when listening to international tourists.
3	The project helped me understand the main ideas of tourists' responses.
4	The project improved my ability to understand different English accents.
5	The project increased my confidence in speaking English with international tourists.
6	The project improved my speaking fluency in English.
7	The project helped me use tourism-related vocabulary more effectively.
8	The project improved my ability to ask questions in English.
9	The project improved my ability to respond spontaneously in English.

No.	Item
10	The project improved my ability to communicate effectively in tourism-related situations.

Part 2. 21st-Century Skills

No.	Item
11	The project improved my communication skills.
12	The project improved my ability to work collaboratively with others.
13	The project helped me contribute more actively to group discussions.
14	The project improved my critical-thinking skills.
15	The project improved my problem-solving skills.
16	The project encouraged me to develop creative ideas.
17	The project improved my ability to use digital tools for learning and communication.
18	The project improved my ability to manage my time.
19	The project encouraged me to take responsibility for my own learning.
20	The project improved my confidence in giving presentations.

Part 3. Challenges and Difficulties Encountered During the Project

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements based on your experience during the project.

No.	Item
21	Managing time to complete the project was challenging.
22	Coordinating schedules with group members was challenging.
23	Ensuring equal contribution from all group members was challenging.
24	Using English consistently during project discussions was challenging.
25	Overcoming nervousness when speaking English was challenging.
26	Preparing and delivering the final presentation was challenging.
27	Understanding different English accents when communicating with international tourists was challenging.
28	Using digital tools to complete the project was challenging.

Appendix B. Semi-Structure Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Student Participants

Duration: Approximately 5–10 minutes per participant

Language: Vietnamese

Participants: 10 students

Opening

Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to understand your experience of participating in the 10-week PBL project. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

Questions

Question 1.

How did you feel about participating in the PBL project?

Question 2.

In what ways, if any, did the project help you develop your English listening skills?

Question 3.

In what ways, if any, did the project help you develop your English speaking skills?

Question 4.

What did you find most helpful when communicating with international tourists?

Question 5.

What difficulties did you experience when using English with international tourists?

Question 6.

How did working with your group members contribute to your learning?

Question 7.

What 21st-century skills did you develop through the project?

Question 8.

Which part of the project was the most challenging for you? Why?

Question 9.

Did your confidence in using English change during the project? Please explain.

Question 10.

What would you suggest to improve this PBL project in the future?

Appendix C. Project Assessment Rubric

Project Presentation and Promotional Video Rubric

Total: 100 points

Criterion	Description	Points
English Language Use	Appropriate vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and intelligibility	25
Tourism Content	Accuracy, relevance, organization, and usefulness of tourism information	20
Communication	Clear delivery, interaction with audience, and ability to communicate ideas effectively	15
Creativity	Originality and attractiveness of the video and presentation	15
Collaboration	Evidence of balanced participation and effective teamwork	15
Digital Production	Appropriate use of video, images, sound, subtitles, and digital tools	10
Total		100

Appendix E. Information Sheet and Consent Form for International Tourists

INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS

Student Project: Exploring International Tourists' Travel Experiences through English Interviews

Dear visitor,

We are third-year students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Finance–Marketing, Vietnam. As part of our English for Tourism and Hospitality course, we are conducting a student project entitled:

“Exploring International Tourists' Travel Experiences through English Interviews.”

The purpose of this short interview is to learn about international visitors' travel experiences, favorite destinations, and perceptions of Vietnam as a travel destination.

The interview will take approximately **5–10 minutes**.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

With your permission, the interview may be **video-recorded for educational and project purposes**.

Your personal information will not be reported in the research article. The recording will be used only for the purposes explained above.

Interviewer:

Student name: _____

Group: _____

Course: English for Tourism and Hospitality

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS

Please tick the appropriate box.

- ☐ I have read and understood the information about this student project.
- ☐ I voluntarily agree to participate in the interview.
- ☐ I understand that I may refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.
- ☐ I agree to have the interview audio/video recorded.
- ☐ I understand that the recording will be used for educational/project purposes.
- ☐ I understand that my personal information will be kept confidential.

Name (optional): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____