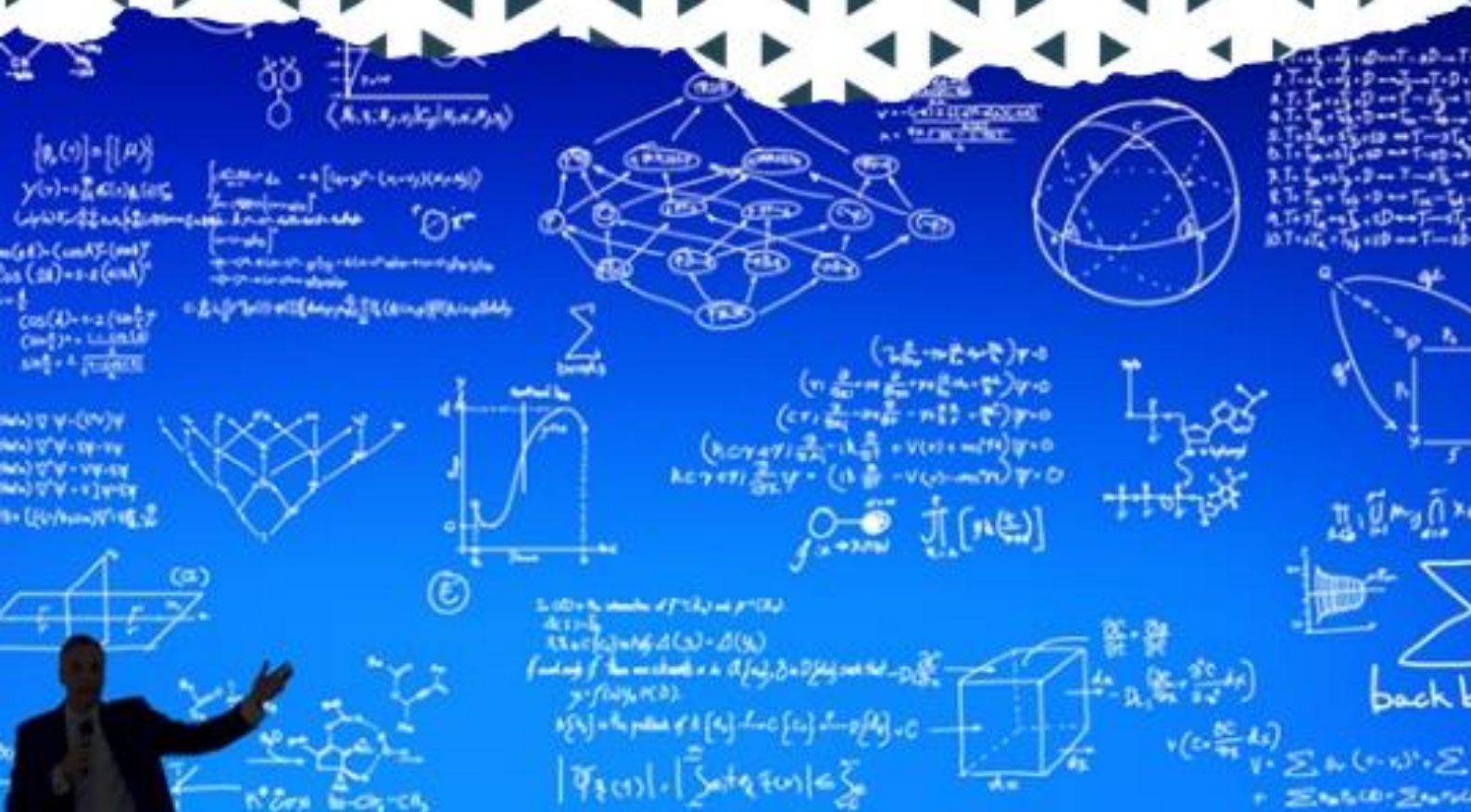




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TEACHER FACILITATION IN PBL SPEAKING CLASSES: STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract. Project-based learning (PBL) is recognized as an effective approach for developing speaking skills, yet its success largely depends on the teacher's facilitation competence. This article examines the strategies and challenges of facilitating PBL speaking activities in secondary school EFL classrooms. Research findings indicate that effective facilitation encompasses scaffolding, managing collaboration, providing formative feedback, and balancing learner autonomy with guidance. The professional development needs of teachers transitioning to PBL are also discussed.

Keywords: Teacher facilitation, project-based learning, speaking instruction, scaffolding, professional development

Introduction. The successful implementation of project-based learning (PBL) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms depends critically on the teacher's ability to facilitate rather than direct the learning process. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, PBL requires educators to assume complex roles as designers, mentors, monitors, and assessors of student-driven inquiry. This role transformation presents significant challenges for EFL practitioners, many of whom have been trained in conventional pedagogical paradigms. In the specific context of speaking skill development, teacher facilitation becomes particularly consequential. Speaking is a performance-based skill requiring real-time cognitive processing, emotional readiness, and social interaction. Within PBL environments, where students engage in collaborative oral tasks culminating in public performances, teachers must navigate the delicate balance between providing sufficient support and allowing autonomous practice. Too much guidance may inhibit student initiative; too little may leave learners without necessary scaffolding.

Despite the recognized importance of teacher facilitation in PBL, existing literature has focused predominantly on student outcomes and project design, with limited attention to the micro-level strategies teachers employ during implementation. This article examines the facilitation techniques of EFL teachers working with adolescent learners on project-based speaking activities, identifying effective strategies and persistent challenges.

Method and Research. This qualitative study employed a multiple-case study design to examine teacher facilitation practices across diverse classroom contexts. Participants were 12 EFL teachers from six public secondary schools, selected based on minimum three years of experience and current PBL implementation in speaking classes. Teachers' experience ranged from 3 to 15 years, and all had completed initial PBL training workshops. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with each teacher, exploring conceptualizations of facilitator role, specific techniques used during project stages, strategies for managing group dynamics, approaches to feedback and error correction, methods for supporting anxious speakers, perceived challenges, and professional development needs. Classroom observations were conducted during two project sessions per teacher, focusing on facilitation behaviors during different project stages. Data analysis employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Two researchers independently coded interview transcripts and observation

field notes, identifying facilitation behaviors, strategies, and challenges. Cross-case analysis examined patterns across teachers, while within-case analysis explored individual facilitation styles.

Analysis. Thematic analysis revealed five core facilitation categories that support effective PBL speaking instruction. Scaffolding strategies vary across project stages. During planning, effective facilitators activate prior knowledge and establish collaboration protocols. During preparation, they provide vocabulary support, model pronunciation, and offer sentence frames for hesitant speakers. During performance, they adopt minimal intervention, allowing students to communicate independently. Post-performance feedback emphasizes strengths before areas for improvement, focusing on communicative effectiveness alongside linguistic accuracy. Managing collaborative dynamics requires explicit organizational strategies. Successful teachers assign specific roles to distribute responsibility, monitor group interactions to prevent dominance by high-proficiency students, and mediate conflicts over task distribution. Teachers who established clear group contracts at project outset reported fewer collaboration problems than those who assumed students would self-organize. Formative feedback approaches differ significantly among practitioners. Process-oriented feedback during rehearsal addresses content organization and discourse markers, while product-oriented feedback after performance targets linguistic accuracy and presentation skills. Experienced teachers adapt feedback timing to communicative context, correcting meaning-blocking errors immediately while noting minor grammar issues for later discussion. Balancing autonomy and guidance represents a central facilitation challenge. Novice PBL teachers tend to over-guide, providing detailed instructions that limit student initiative. Effective facilitators employ gradual release, providing intensive scaffolding early in the school year and progressively increasing student autonomy. They recognize that productive struggle differs from unproductive frustration, intervening when students are genuinely stuck while allowing productive challenge to proceed. Addressing speaking anxiety through teacher intervention requires sustained, systematic effort. Preventive strategies include creating supportive classroom climates, normalizing errors as learning opportunities, and structuring graduated exposure from private to public speaking. For highly anxious students, individualized interventions such as private rehearsal sessions and alternative presentation formats prove effective. However, teachers note that anxiety reduction requires consistent support across multiple projects rather than isolated interventions.

Conclusion. This study demonstrates that effective teacher facilitation in PBL speaking classes involves a dynamic repertoire of strategies that shift according to project stage, student needs, and instructional goals. The five facilitation categories identified—scaffolding, collaboration management, feedback provision, autonomy-guidance balance, and anxiety intervention—provide a framework for understanding the competencies required for successful PBL implementation. For teacher education programs, the findings suggest that PBL preparation must address not only project design and language pedagogy but also group dynamics management, differentiated scaffolding, and affective support strategies. Pre-service and in-service teachers require opportunities to observe expert facilitation, practice facilitation techniques, and reflect on the challenges of role transformation from instructor to facilitator. For school administrators, the study highlights the professional development needs of teachers transitioning to PBL. One-time workshops are insufficient; sustained support including peer mentoring, classroom

coaching, and collaborative reflection communities is necessary for developing facilitation expertise. As PBL continues to expand in EFL contexts, understanding and supporting teacher facilitation remains essential for realizing the approach's potential for speaking skill development.

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