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Project-Based Learning in Arabic Speaking Instruction: Students' Perceptions from a Muhadatsah Course in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT
Developing speaking proficiency remains a major challenge in Arabic language education, particularly in foreign language contexts where students often face limited opportunities for authentic communication and low confidence in oral interaction. Although Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has been widely promoted as a student-centered approach for enhancing communicative engagement, existing studies have predominantly focused on learning outcomes or technological integration, with limited attention to how learners experience project-based speaking instruction in Arabic classrooms. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in Arabic speaking instruction within a Muhadatsah course. This study employed a qualitative case study design involving twelve undergraduate students in the Arabic Education Program at IAIN Ternate during the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns in students' experiences during the project-based learning process. The analysis identified six interconnected dimensions shaping students' learning experiences: increased speaking confidence through repeated communicative practice, active participation in project tasks, collaborative peer interaction, technology-supported rehearsal and reflection, contextualized linguistic development, and the emergence of creativity and problem-solving skills. These findings suggest that PjBL functions as an integrated learning environment that simultaneously supports communicative practice, learner engagement, and reflective language use. However, the findings are limited to a single institutional context and rely primarily on students' perceptions. Future research should examine project-based speaking instruction across diverse educational settings and incorporate mixed-method approaches to assess its impact on measurable speaking proficiency development.

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1. Introduction

The development of communicative competence has become a central objective in contemporary language education (Zhou & Li, 2025; Murtadho et al., 2025). In Arabic language learning, speaking ability represents a crucial indicator of language proficiency because it reflects learners' capacity to express ideas, negotiate meaning, and participate in authentic interaction (Héron et al., 2024; Huang & Sun, 2022). Within Arabic language education programs, speaking competence is commonly developed through Muhadatsah courses that aim to train students to use Arabic in communicative contexts rather than merely understand grammatical structures (رشدي أحمد طعيمة, 2004; Mutholib & Setyawan, 2021). Despite the importance of speaking competence, many learners of Arabic as a foreign language continue to face substantial challenges in developing effective oral communication skills (Kuluşaklı & Genç, 2024; Nurpadilah et al., 2026).

Recent studies indicate that students frequently encounter psychological and linguistic barriers when practicing Arabic speaking skills. These barriers include speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary mastery, low confidence, and restricted opportunities for communicative interaction in classroom settings (Aziz et al., 2025; Wahyuni et al., 2023; Sugirma & K., 2023). In many instructional contexts, speaking practice remains dominated by teacher-centered instruction or controlled drills emphasizing memorization rather than authentic communication (Ikhsanudin & Purwoko, 2022; Fitriani & Arifa, 2020). Such environments may restrict learners' opportunities to construct meaning through interaction and reduce their willingness to communicate in the target language (Du & Daniel, 2024 ; Bozkurt & Aydin, 2023). From the perspective of communicative language teaching (CLT), effective speaking development requires meaningful communicative tasks, repeated interaction, and active learner participation in authentic communication situations (Brown & Lee, 2015; طعيمة & الناقة, 2006).

To address these challenges, recent scholarship has increasingly explored the potential of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a learner-centered instructional approach in language education (Larmer et al., 2015; Halimah & Marwati, 2022). PjBL emphasizes authentic tasks, collaborative inquiry, and the production of meaningful learning outcomes (Krauss & Boss, 2013; Laur, 2013). Within language learning contexts, project-based activities such as dialogue construction, multimedia production, digital storytelling, and collaborative presentations have been shown to enhance learner engagement and provide sustained opportunities for communicative practice (Farrow et al., 2024; Sirisrimangkorn, 2021). Through collaborative project work, learners actively use language while simultaneously developing higher-order thinking skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and critical reasoning (Silberman, 2009; Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Empirical studies conducted in recent years also demonstrate promising results regarding the application of project-based learning in speaking instruction. For instance, (Benlaghrissi & Ouahidi, 2024) reported that mobile-assisted project-based learning significantly improved learners' speaking performance by enabling flexible practice and reflective learning cycles. Similarly, (Farrow et al., 2024) found that video-based project activities increased students' engagement and participation in speaking practice in higher education language classrooms. Other research highlights that collaborative dialogue and project design can support communicative interaction while reducing learners' speaking anxiety (Aziz et al., 2025; Bozkurt & Aydin, 2023).

Within Arabic language education contexts, the integration of digital media and project-oriented learning has also gained increasing attention in recent years. Several

studies conducted in Indonesian universities indicate that technology-assisted project learning can provide more interactive opportunities for Arabic-speaking practice while simultaneously fostering collaborative learning environments (Muid et al., 2022; Rahmi et al., 2024). In addition, the use of digital platforms, mobile devices, and multimedia tools has been reported to support reflective learning processes that allow students to monitor and improve their speaking performance (Ikhsanudin & Purwoko, 2022; Fitria & Abidin, 2023).

Despite these promising findings, several aspects of project-based speaking instruction remain insufficiently explored. Existing studies largely emphasize measurable learning outcomes, engagement levels, or technological integration, while limited attention has been devoted to understanding how learners interpret and experience project-based speaking processes from their own perspectives, particularly within Arabic language education contexts. Much of the existing literature focuses on measurable outcomes such as speaking scores, learner engagement, or technological integration in project-based learning environments (Benlaghrissi & Ouahidi, 2024; Zhong et al., 2025). While these studies provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of PjBL, relatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding how learners themselves perceive and interpret their learning experiences during project-based speaking activities, particularly within the context of Arabic language education.

Furthermore, research on project-based speaking instruction in Arabic language education remains comparatively limited compared with studies conducted in English language teaching contexts (Huang & Sun, 2022). Many existing studies emphasize instructional techniques or digital tools without providing detailed qualitative insights into how students experience project-based learning during the speaking process. As a result, the pedagogical mechanisms through which project-based learning influences speaking development—such as affective engagement, collaborative interaction, reflective learning processes, and contextualized language use—remain underexplored.

Addressing this gap requires examining project-based speaking instruction from the perspective of learners' experiences within the learning environment. From a theoretical standpoint, such an approach can be supported by several complementary frameworks. Communicative Language Teaching emphasizes meaningful communication as the foundation of language learning (Brown & Lee, 2015). Social constructivist theory, particularly Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, highlights the role of social interaction and collaborative dialogue in language development (Vygotsky, 1978; Prakash Chand, 2023). In addition, Project-Based Learning theory emphasizes authentic tasks, collaborative inquiry, and reflective cycles as mechanisms that promote deeper learning and learner autonomy (Larmer et al., 2015; Krauss & Boss, 2013; Thomas, 2000).

Based on these perspectives, project-based speaking instruction can be understood as a multidimensional learning ecology that integrates communicative practice, collaborative interaction, technological mediation, and reflective learning processes. Within such an environment, students are not only engaged in practicing language forms but also participate in constructing meaning through interaction, negotiation, and problem-solving activities.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in Arabic-speaking skills instruction within a Muhadatsah course. Specifically, this study examines how students experience the

learning process during project-based speaking activities, including aspects related to confidence development, participatory engagement, collaborative interaction, technology-supported practice, linguistic development, and higher-order thinking skills. By focusing on students' perceptions of project-based speaking activities, this study contributes to the growing body of research on project-based language learning by providing qualitative insights into the pedagogical mechanisms through which PjBL supports Arabic speaking development in higher education contexts.

2. Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Arabic speaking skills instruction. A qualitative case study approach was selected because the research aimed to understand how students experienced project-based speaking activities within a specific instructional context rather than to measure causal learning outcomes. Case study methodology allows researchers to investigate educational phenomena in depth within their natural setting and to capture participants' interpretations of learning processes (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2015).

The study focused on a bounded instructional system consisting of one Muhadatsah (Arabic conversation) course, one cohort of students, and one academic semester at the Arabic Education Program of IAIN Ternate during the 2024/2025 academic year. This bounded design enabled the researchers to examine how project-based learning shaped students' experiences of speaking practice throughout the project cycle.

Research Context and Participants

The research was conducted in the Arabic Education Program of IAIN Ternate, Indonesia, within a Muhadatsah course aimed at developing students' communicative competence in Arabic. During the semester in which the study was conducted, the instructor implemented Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as the primary instructional approach.

Students worked in small groups to produce dialogue-based Arabic video projects. The project cycle involved several stages, including topic selection, dialogue construction, vocabulary exploration, script preparation, rehearsal sessions, video recording, editing, and presentation of the final project. These activities created repeated opportunities for speaking practice, peer interaction, and reflective evaluation.

The participants consisted of twelve undergraduate students enrolled in the course. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which allows researchers to select individuals who possess direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2015). The selection criteria included students who actively participated in the PjBL-based course, completed the project tasks, and agreed to participate in research interviews. To protect confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized using coded identifiers.

Data Collection

Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews, which enable researchers to explore participants' perceptions while maintaining flexibility for probing questions (Creswell, 2015). The interview protocol was designed to explore students' experiences during the PjBL process, including perceptions of speaking confidence

development, participation in project activities, collaborative interaction, technology use, linguistic development, and challenges encountered during the project.

Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was conducted after the completion of the project cycle. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

To provide contextual understanding of the learning environment, the researchers also examined project-related artifacts, including dialogue scripts and video recordings produced by the students. These materials helped contextualize students' interview responses and provided additional insight into the learning process.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following systematic procedures for identifying patterns in qualitative data (Creswell, 2015). The analysis began with repeated reading of the interview transcripts to develop familiarity with the data. During the initial coding stage, meaningful segments of the transcripts were labeled according to students' descriptions of their learning experiences.

Related codes were then grouped into broader categories representing recurring patterns in the data. Through iterative comparison and refinement, several major themes were identified, including speaking confidence development, active participation, collaborative interaction, technology-supported learning, contextualized linguistic development, and higher-order thinking processes. These themes were subsequently interpreted using theoretical perspectives from project-based learning, communicative language teaching, and technology-assisted language learning literature.

Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were applied. First, data triangulation was conducted by examining both interview data and project-related artifacts to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the learning context. Second, the researchers conducted iterative coding and thematic comparison to ensure that themes accurately reflected patterns in the data. Finally, participant anonymity was maintained to encourage honest responses during the interviews. These procedures helped ensure that the interpretation of findings remained grounded in participants' experiences.

3. Finding and Discussion

Finding

This section presents the qualitative findings regarding students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Arabic-speaking instruction within the Muhadatsah course at the Arabic Education Program of IAIN Ternate during the 2024/2025 academic year. The findings are derived from semi-structured interviews with twelve students who participated in the course and experienced the full project cycle.

The thematic analysis reveals several interconnected patterns that characterize students' learning experiences in the project-based speaking environment. These patterns include the development of speaking confidence, active participation in learning activities, collaborative interaction among peers, the use of digital technology during speaking practice, contextualized linguistic development, and the emergence of creativity and problem-solving processes during project completion. Rather than appearing as isolated phenomena, these dimensions interacted dynamically during the learning process and collectively shaped students' speaking development.

Development of Speaking Confidence

A central pattern emerging from the data concerns the gradual development of students' speaking confidence. At the beginning of the course, several students reported hesitation when speaking Arabic due to limited vocabulary and uncertainty about grammatical structures. However, as the project activities progressed, continuous participation in discussions, rehearsals, and video production gradually reduced this hesitation.

Repeated exposure to communicative speaking tasks enabled students to become more accustomed to using Arabic in interactive contexts. In addition, the dialogue preparation and rehearsal stages allowed students to organize vocabulary and sentence structures before performing the final speaking task. These structured preparation processes appeared to reduce anxiety and increase students' readiness to speak. The coding process representing the development of speaking confidence is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Coding Process for Developing Speaking Confidence

Interview Excerpt	Initial Code	Category
"At first I was afraid of making mistakes when speaking, but because we often used Arabic during project discussions, I gradually became more confident." (M-S1-02)	Repeated speaking practice	Speaking habituation
"Because every group member had to speak, eventually we became used to speaking Arabic." (M-S3-01)	Mandatory participation	Repeated communicative exposure
"The project activities helped train our courage to speak Arabic directly." (M-S1-03)	Increased speaking courage	Affective engagement
"Making the video felt easier because we could prepare the script and memorize it first." (M-S3-02)	Script preparation	Structured rehearsal

Active and Participatory Learning

Another important pattern concerns the emergence of active and participatory learning during the project process. Students described their learning experiences as involving active engagement in various stages of project implementation, including selecting topics, constructing dialogue scripts, exploring vocabulary resources, rehearsing speaking performances, and presenting final outputs.

This structure required students to actively contribute to project completion rather than relying primarily on the lecturer's explanations. As a result, students reported increased engagement in speaking activities and greater responsibility for their own learning. The coding results related to participatory learning are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Coding Process for Active and Participatory Learning

Interview Excerpt	Initial Code	Category
"Students are not only receivers of information, but also seekers, processors, and presenters of information." (M-S3-03)	Active learner role	Student-centered learning

"We didn't just listen to the lecturer's explanation; we were the ones who spoke more during class activities." (M-S1-01)	Increased student talk	Learning engagement
"From determining the topic to presenting the final project, we were involved in every stage." (M-S1-05)	Participation across stages	Continuous project engagement
"During the project we had to actively search for vocabulary and practice speaking." (M-S3-04)	Self-directed task engagement	Participatory learning

Collaborative Interaction

Collaboration also emerged as a central feature of students' learning experiences. Since most project tasks were conducted in groups, students frequently interacted with peers during discussions, rehearsals, and video production activities. These interactions created opportunities for knowledge exchange and peer support.

Students reported learning from observing their peers' speaking strategies and receiving feedback during rehearsal sessions. Differences in language proficiency within groups encouraged peer scaffolding, allowing students to support each other in improving pronunciation and sentence construction. The coding results representing collaborative learning are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Coding Process for Collaborative Learning

Interview Excerpt	Initial Code	Category
"When we discuss in groups, we can learn from our friends." (M-S1-06)	Peer learning	Knowledge exchange
"By discussing often, we could hear how our friends speak and learn from them." (M-S3-05)	Learning through observation	Interactional learning
"In my group, there were students who were fluent and others still learning, but we helped each other." (M-S3-01)	Mixed proficiency support	Peer scaffolding
"If someone made a mistake, friends would help correct it immediately." (M-S1-02)	Peer feedback	Supportive learning climate

Technology-Supported Learning

The findings also indicate that digital technology played a supportive role in students' speaking practice. Smartphones and online resources were frequently used during project preparation and rehearsal stages. Students used digital tools to search for vocabulary, prepare dialogue scripts, and record speaking rehearsals.

Recording practice sessions enabled students to review their own speaking performances and identify aspects requiring improvement. These practices facilitated reflective learning and helped students refine their speaking performance before the final presentation. The coding results related to technology-supported learning are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Coding Process for Technology-Supported Learning

Interview Excerpt	Initial Code	Category

"Usually we search for vocabulary on the internet before speaking." (M-S1-03)	Digital vocabulary search	Technology-assisted preparation
"If there is a word we don't know, we immediately look it up on our phone." (M-S3-02)	Mobile vocabulary access	Digital language resources
"We recorded our practice using our phones so we could see which parts were still lacking." (M-S3-06)	Self-recorded practice	Reflective learning
"By watching the video again, we can evaluate our mistakes." (M-S1-04)	Self-evaluation	Reflective speaking practice

Contextualized Linguistic Development

The findings further indicate that project-based speaking activities contributed to contextualized linguistic development. Students reported improvements in vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, grammatical understanding, and speaking fluency during the project process.

Language was practiced within dialogue contexts rather than memorized separately, allowing students to use vocabulary and grammatical structures in meaningful communicative situations. The coding results related to contextualized linguistic development are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Coding Process for Contextualized Linguistic Development

Interview Excerpt	Initial Code	Category
"Vocabulary is easier to remember because we use it directly in the dialogue." (M-S1-02)	Contextual vocabulary use	Communicative practice
"When vocabulary is used frequently during the project, we memorize it naturally." (M-S3-03)	Repeated lexical use	Vocabulary retention
"Now I can speak more fluently, even though I still make mistakes." (M-S3-04)	Fluency improvement	Speaking practice
"When writing dialogue scripts, we had to pay attention to sentence structure." (M-S1-05)	Grammar awareness	Meaning-focused language use

Creativity and Problem Solving

Finally, the findings indicate that project-based activities also stimulated creativity and problem-solving processes among students. During project development, students were required to design dialogue scenarios, coordinate group tasks, and manage technical aspects of video production.

Students also encountered practical challenges such as scheduling conflicts and technical limitations related to device storage or recording conditions. Addressing these challenges required collaborative decision-making and adaptive problem-solving. The coding results representing this dimension are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Coding Process for Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Problem Solving

Interview Excerpt	Initial Code	Category

"We had to create the dialogue ourselves based on the theme." (M-S1-06)	Dialogue design	Creative task production
"Besides speaking skills, we also developed technical skills such as video editing." (M-S3-05)	Multimedia production	Creative project design
"I had to think carefully about how to arrange the sentences." (M-S1-01)	Sentence evaluation	Analytical language processing
"Sometimes we had to reschedule rehearsals because group members had conflicting schedules." (M-S3-06)	Coordination challenge	Project management
"My phone storage was full during the project." (M-S1-04)	Technical limitation	Adaptive problem solving

Cross-Theme Synthesis

Across the six themes identified in the analysis, the findings indicate that students' speaking development did not emerge from a single instructional component but from the interaction of multiple learning processes occurring throughout the project cycle. Speaking confidence developed through repeated communicative exposure, while active participation and collaborative interaction created social conditions that encouraged sustained engagement in speaking activities. At the same time, digital technology facilitated reflective practice, enabling students to monitor and improve their speaking performance. Contextualized language use during dialogue construction supported linguistic development, while project completion tasks stimulated creativity and problem-solving processes. These interrelated dimensions collectively shaped a learning environment in which affective, social, cognitive, and technological elements interacted to support Arabic-speaking development.

The interaction of these six dimensions suggests that project-based speaking instruction operates as an integrated learning ecology. Within this ecology, speaking development emerges through the dynamic relationship between affective engagement (speaking confidence), participatory learning structures, collaborative interaction, technological mediation, contextualized language practice, and higher-order cognitive processes. This integrated relationship is illustrated in the conceptual model presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of PjBL Speaking Learning Ecology

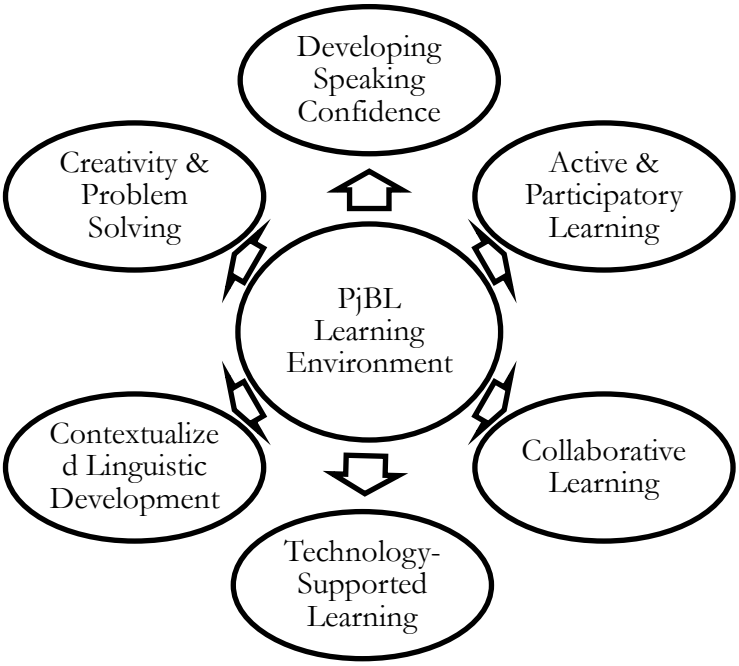

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model of the PjBL speaking learning ecology derived from the thematic findings of this study. The model demonstrates how several interconnected learning dimensions collectively shape the environment in which speaking development occurs. Rather than functioning independently, these dimensions interact dynamically within the project-based learning process to support communicative engagement and language development. Speaking confidence forms the affective foundation that encourages learners to participate in communicative practice, while participatory learning and collaborative interaction provide the social structure that sustains engagement throughout the project cycle. Technology-supported practice facilitates reflective speaking rehearsal, and contextualized language use supports integrated linguistic development. Together, these processes stimulate higher-order competencies, including creativity and problem solving.

Discussion

This study examined students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Arabic-speaking instruction within a Muhadatsah course. The findings indicate that students interpreted the project-based learning environment not merely as a pedagogical technique for producing project outputs but as an integrated learning ecology that combines affective, cognitive, social, and technological dimensions of language learning. Within this environment, speaking development emerged through the interaction of repeated communicative engagement, collaborative interaction, technology-supported practice, contextualized language use, and higher-order cognitive processes.

This interpretation aligns with contemporary perspectives in language pedagogy that conceptualize project-based learning as a holistic instructional environment rather than a discrete teaching method. Previous research suggests that PjBL environments

create integrated learning conditions in which communication, inquiry, collaboration, and reflection operate simultaneously to support language development (Larmer et al., 2015; Farrow et al., 2024; Thomas, 2000). Within such environments, language learning becomes embedded in meaningful communicative activities rather than isolated linguistic drills, allowing learners to develop both linguistic competence and broader learning capabilities. Studies in Arabic language education similarly emphasize that pedagogical environments combining collaborative interaction, technological mediation, and reflective learning can significantly enhance student engagement and learning motivation (Muid et al., 2022; Rahmi et al., 2024).

One of the most prominent findings concerns the gradual development of students' speaking confidence throughout the project cycle. Rather than emerging immediately, confidence developed progressively as learners repeatedly engaged in communicative speaking tasks during discussions, rehearsals, and performance activities. This pattern resonates with the concept of willingness to communicate, which suggests that learners' readiness to speak in a second language increases when they experience frequent opportunities for meaningful interaction (Fathi et al., 2024; Zhong et al., 2025). In project-based learning environments, such interaction is sustained across multiple stages of project work, including collaborative planning, dialogue construction, rehearsal sessions, and public presentation.

Previous studies have also shown that project-based speaking activities can reduce language anxiety and strengthen learners' confidence by normalizing communicative interaction in the target language (Huang & Sun, 2022; Sirisrimangkorn, 2021). The present findings, therefore, reinforce the argument that speaking confidence is not merely an individual psychological trait but a pedagogically cultivated outcome emerging from sustained communicative engagement.

Another important implication of the findings concerns the emergence of participatory learning behaviors during the project cycle. Students described their learning experiences as involving active participation in selecting topics, constructing dialogue scripts, rehearsing conversations, and presenting project outcomes. Such experiences reflect the principles of student-centered learning, where learners actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information. Project-based learning promotes such engagement because learners must negotiate meaning, make decisions, and collaboratively produce communicative outcomes (Larmer et al., 2015; Farrow et al., 2024).

Research in both language education and Arabic language education contexts further indicates that the integration of digital media and interactive learning environments can strengthen learner motivation and participation in classroom activities (Rahmi et al., 2024; Ikhsanudin & Purwoko, 2022). In Arabic language classrooms, project-oriented speaking activities have similarly been shown to increase communicative participation because learners are required to collaboratively construct dialogue content and negotiate linguistic meaning during project work (Muid et al., 2022; Fitria & Abidin, 2023; Meldi et al., 2025). These findings suggest that participatory learning emerges from the structural design of project-based tasks that distribute responsibility among learners and encourage collaborative contribution.

The findings also highlight the central role of collaborative interaction in facilitating speaking development. Students reported learning from peers through group discussions, shared rehearsal sessions, and collaborative dialogue construction. From a

sociocultural perspective, such interaction functions as an important mechanism through which language learning occurs through social mediation and shared problem-solving (Vygotsky, 1978; Prakash Chand, 2023). Within collaborative environments, learners jointly construct linguistic meaning while negotiating vocabulary, grammatical structures, and communicative intentions (Huneety et al., 2023).

Project-based learning environments intensify these processes because learners must collaboratively design communicative artifacts such as dialogue scripts or multimedia presentations. Similar patterns have been reported in educational contexts where collaborative learning models foster peer interaction and shared knowledge construction (Larmer et al., 2015; Halimah & Marwati, 2022). Thus, collaboration functions not only as a mechanism for completing project tasks but also as a pedagogical mediator that supports both linguistic development and emotional support during speaking practice.

Another significant dimension emerging from the findings concerns the role of digital technology in mediating speaking practice. Students frequently used smartphones and digital tools to search for vocabulary, record rehearsals, and review their speaking performances. These practices correspond with the framework of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which highlights the potential of mobile technologies to support flexible, autonomous, and reflective language learning processes (Joshi & Ladva, 2023). Through recording and reviewing their performances, learners were able to evaluate pronunciation, refine dialogue structures, and monitor their speaking progress.

Research in technology-enhanced language learning similarly demonstrates that mobile devices facilitate reflective learning by enabling learners to document and analyze their own language production (Kessler, 2018). In addition, recent studies highlight the transformative potential of artificial intelligence and digital media in supporting technology-mediated learning environments, particularly in Islamic and language education contexts (Taufikin et al., 2025; Idris et al., 2024; Priyatna et al., 2024). However, the findings also reveal several practical challenges related to technological integration, including limited digital skills and technical constraints, suggesting that technology should function as a pedagogical mediator rather than the primary focus of learning activities.

The findings further indicate that project-based speaking activities support integrated linguistic development. Students reported improvements in vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation awareness, grammatical understanding, and speaking fluency during the project process. This pattern reflects the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasize that language learning occurs most effectively when linguistic forms are practiced within meaningful communication (Brown & Lee, 2015; طعيمة & الناقة, 2006). In project-based learning environments, language becomes a tool for achieving communicative goals, enabling the simultaneous development of multiple linguistic dimensions.

Studies in Arabic language education also demonstrate that contextualized speaking activities and digital project tasks can enhance vocabulary retention, pronunciation awareness, and grammatical understanding (Muid et al., 2022; Rahmi et al., 2024).

Finally, the findings indicate that project-based learning environments can foster higher-order thinking competencies, including creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. During project development, students were required to design dialogue

scenarios, evaluate linguistic choices, coordinate collaborative tasks, and address practical challenges encountered during project implementation. Such processes required learners to engage in analytical reasoning, creative problem solving, and reflective decision making.

Research on project-based learning consistently emphasizes that authentic project tasks stimulate higher-order cognitive processes by engaging learners in cycles of inquiry, planning, evaluation, and revision (Larmer et al., 2015; Farrow et al., 2024). Project-based speaking activities, therefore, provide opportunities for learners to construct meaningful discourse while simultaneously developing cognitive competencies beyond linguistic proficiency.

Taken together, the findings of this study suggest that project-based speaking instruction functions as an integrated learning ecology in which communicative engagement, collaborative interaction, technological mediation, contextual language use, and higher-order cognitive activity interact dynamically to support speaking development. By illustrating how these dimensions operate simultaneously within Arabic language classrooms, this study extends existing research on project-based language learning and provides empirical insight into how integrated pedagogical environments can strengthen both communicative competence and broader learning capabilities. These findings highlight the potential of project-based speaking instruction to serve as a comprehensive pedagogical framework for fostering language proficiency, learner engagement, and cognitive development in foreign language education.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning in Arabic-speaking instruction within the Muhadatsah course at the Arabic Education Program of IAIN Ternate. The findings reveal that PjBL created a learning environment in which repeated communicative practice, structured participation, peer collaboration, and the use of digital tools collectively supported students' speaking development. Through project discussions, rehearsal cycles, and video production tasks, students gradually developed greater confidence in using Arabic while simultaneously strengthening their linguistic competence, including vocabulary use, fluency, and grammatical awareness. In addition, project activities encouraged the development of higher-order skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and collaborative problem solving.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that PjBL can function as an effective instructional approach for Arabic-speaking instruction when supported by well-designed communicative tasks, collaborative learning structures, and appropriate technological scaffolding. Projects that integrate dialogue construction, iterative rehearsal, and reflective feedback mechanisms can provide meaningful opportunities for students to engage in authentic speaking practice while enhancing learner autonomy and engagement in the language classroom.

However, this study was conducted within a single institutional context and focused primarily on students' perceptions. Future research may therefore examine the impact of project-based speaking instruction across diverse educational settings and integrate mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative insights with quantitative assessments of speaking proficiency development. Such research will be essential for advancing a more comprehensive understanding of how project-based pedagogies can be systematically leveraged to strengthen Arabic-speaking competence in higher education language learning environments.

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