Implementing project-based language teaching in an Asian context: a university EAP writing course case study from Macau

Sean Grant

Correspondence: sgrant@umac.mo
University of Macau, Avenida da Universidade, Taipa, Macau

Abstract

Project-based language teaching (PBLT) provides a number of potential language learning benefits through opportunities for authentic meaningful language use. Previous research has also indicated how PBLT can encourage student motivation and develop learner autonomy. However, mixed findings have been found when implementing PBLT in Asian contexts. The aim of this study was to describe the development of a PBLT project and explore the implementation and student perceptions of this project within an EAP writing course in Macau. The study utilized student questionnaire data ($n = 16$) and teacher reflections. Results indicated that the project appeared effective at creating opportunities for meaningful interactive language use, and students were comfortable with their autonomous role within the project. Findings also indicated that student motivation, autonomy and learning opportunities were raised through the PBLT approach. These results are discussed in light of the previous research on implementing PBLT in Asian EFL contexts, and further potential improvements to the project used in the current study are explored.

Keywords: Project based language teaching, Asia, Language task, EAP, Second language writing

Background

Findings from a range of studies in both ESL and EFL contexts show that utilizing a project-based approach can provide many benefits to classroom language learning. What we know about these benefits derives primarily from literature indicating how project-based language teaching (PBLT) provides meaningful contexts for authentic language use in much the same way as task-based language teaching (Beckett and Miller, 2006; Ellis, 2003; Samuda and Bygate, 2008; Stoller, 2006). These meaningful and authentic interactions aid in acquiring language, and PBLT is also supportive of areas such as improving student motivation (Dörnyei, 2005; Egbert, 2003) and student autonomy for learning (Allen, 2004). Despite these identified benefits, more case studies are needed to explore projects that can be implemented with students in academic EFL contexts. In this article, I will outline the potential language learning benefits from PBLT, discuss several practical examples of PBLT from previous studies undertaken in Asian contexts, and report on the development and implementation of a PBLT project in a Macau university EAP writing course.

Background and theoretical bases for projects in language teaching

PBLT is an extended series of activities utilizing a combination of different language skills in pursuit of a goal or outcome (Hedge, 1993; Savery, 2015). This series of activities should be meaningful and bring about opportunities for comprehensible language input and output between interlocutors (Beckett, 2006b; Bygate and Samuda, 2009). The terms project and task are sometimes used interchangeably in much of the PBLT literature, but one way it has been noted to differentiate between the two is in terms of scale. Bülent and Stoller (2005) suggested that tasks in general are limited in scope to a single or part lesson, whereas a project can contain multiple tasks spanning a much longer timeframe. Slater, Beckett, and Aufderhaar (2006) also noted that a key consideration for instructors utilizing PBLT is to clarify the exact task sequence that makes up the overall project. Language learning theories supported by task-based and project-based approaches are also very similar. I will briefly discuss the most relevant of these theories here.

Dewey and experiential learning theories

Previous literature has discussed how PBLT is supportive of Dewey's problem solving method of teaching and other experiential learning theories (Beckett, 2006b; Hedge, 1993; Savery, 2015). The Dewey approach places the individual at the centre of the learning process (Baker, 1965; Dewey, 1959). In this way, individual learners become active agents in the learning process by continually encountering, exploring and overcoming problems. Dewey (1959) noted how through this exploration, knowledge is developed as a subjective interactive process between individual and the world around. In this sense, the process is an experiential one. Rather than learning by rote, experiential learning theories suggest that learning is most beneficial when it is grounded in concrete experiences with the world around the individual (Kolb, 1984; Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). Based on this, PBLT is supportive of learning by providing an authentic basis for learners to carry out learning-based problem solving through their second language in authentic ways.

Meaningful language input, output and negotiation

Many well established language acquisition theories can also account for language development through a PBLT framework (Ellis, 2009, 2015). These theories posit that language is most effectively acquired through meaningful interaction (Bygate and Samuda, 2009; Ellis, 2003, 2008, 2015; Samuda and Bygate, 2008) as these types of interactions give opportunities for language development through language input, output and negotiation of meaning. For the sake of clarity, I will briefly explain each of these.

The input hypothesis suggests that language is acquired when the learner receives adequate and extensive language input suitable to their ability level (Gass, 1997, 2005; Shintani, 2012; Takimoto, 2009). Swain (1985, 1995) however noted the limitations of solely an input approach to language development and argued that output in the form of writing or speaking is also important. Swain suggested language output affords opportunities for noticing, hypothesis testing, and metalinguistic reflection. That is, noticing of errors occurs when learners realise their language limitations evident through their output. Learners then form hypotheses regarding different language

forms to overcome these noticed errors and trial these hypotheses through further language output (Hanaoka, 2007; Hanaoka and Izumi, 2012). This ongoing process results in metalinguistic reflection, and new language features being acquired. Furthermore, meaningful interaction with an interlocutor provides either positive or negative evidence that the new language has been understood (Gass, 2005; Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013; Pica, 1994; Pica, Young, & Doughty, 1987; Yang and Lyster, 2010). Communication breakdown between interlocutors within interactions leads to negotiation through further trialling of different language until mutual understanding is achieved (Long and Porter, 1985), and previous studies suggest PBLT is effective at encouraging this to occur (Heo, Lim, & Kim, 2010; Koh, Herring, & Hew, 2010; Rooij, 2009) In short, input, output and negotiation are important to effective language acquisition, and the PBLT approach is supportive by providing the necessary conditions for these elements to arise.

Project-based language teaching, motivation and autonomy

Previous studies have also explored how PBLT can be beneficial for improving student motivation, autonomy and other important skills within the language classroom. Egbert (2003) and Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) outlined some key characteristics that influence motivation for class activities. These are (1) a balance of challenge and capability, (2) clear goals to focus learners' attention, (3) clear processes and outcomes that are both authentic and enjoyable, and (4) a sense of student control over processes and outcomes. PBLT offers a framework for instructors to comprehensively address these four elements. For example, Tessema (2005) showed how utilizing PBLT assisted with engaging learners in the process of second language writing. Although the final product from this project was written, the process incorporated all the other language skill areas and students had some flexibility as to how they went about completing the project. Results on student motivation from the project were positive. Also in a review of 16 previous studies utilizing PBLT, Stoller (2006) noted that the most common reported benefit is authenticity in language use and processes within projects. This authenticity and engagement from PBLT are also likely to be supportive of classroom motivation (Baş, 2011; Yang and Wu, 2012).

PBLT can also assist with developing a more student-led classroom environment, student autonomy and skills for life-long learning (Benson, 2007, 2013; Hafner and Miller, 2011; Lier, 2007). Allen (2004) utilized PBLT by having students build written portfolios analysing culturally relevant topics. This analysis was done through a process of self-reflection, research, and further reflective writing contrasting their own with other cultures. Allen then used the portfolios to conduct analysis on the themes identified within the texts. These themes indicated evidence of high motivation for the project. Follow-up questionnaire data also indicated a high level of autonomy, critical thinking, and cultural self-reflection by students. In addition to autonomy, other necessary life-long learning and transferable skills can also be developed through a PBLT framework (Assiter, 1995; Coleman, 1992; Fallows and Steven, 2013). These skills include creativity and critical thinking (Beckett, 2006a; Chea, Chea, & Klein, 2007).

In summary, previous research has established that PBLT appears well suited for generating authentic communication in EFL classroom environments which may otherwise

present a challenge for getting students to use English meaningfully. In addition, the approach seems well suited to encouraging broader skills such as student autonomy. Classroom context however also plays an important role in PBLT pedagogic decisions. I will now discuss more on practitioners' previous classroom-based experience with PBLT in Asian contexts. Using this as background, I will report on the development, implementation and results from the current study project for a Macau university EAP writing class.

Project-based language teaching successes and challenges within Asian contexts

Many case studies have explored how PBLT can be successfully integrated in a broad range of ESL and EFL language classroom contexts. Beckett (2006a) outlined how PBLT was used as a basis for socializing high school ESL students from Chinese backgrounds into Canadian cultural and language environments, and Mohan and Lee (2006) explored how a student-led action research project allowed a student from a Taiwanese background to critically examine and reflect on informal language episodes outside the classroom. Levis and Levis (2003) also developed a PBLT course to assist ESL graduate students with academic writing and genres related to their chosen field of study.

From an Asian university EFL perspective, positive results have also been demonstrated with PBLT. Successful examples include case studies of in-class student led survey projects with Japanese students (Tomei, Glick, & Holst, 1999), projects focusing on all four skill areas in Thai universities (Poonpon, 2011; Simpson, 2011) and projects incorporating technology in a Malaysian university (Thang, Lin, Mahmud, Ismail, & Zabidi, 2014). One difference between PBLT carried out in ESL compared to EFL settings appears to be the level of structure necessary to facilitate adequate second language usage. In ESL settings, second language use is facilitated by the nature of the English speaking environment and students from a broad range of language backgrounds. Where students share the same L1 however, the need for task and overall project process structure increases. Further below, I will exemplify how this structure can be considered and incorporated into PBLT at the project design phase.

Other studies show that PBLT projects can sometimes encounter difficulties. In a review of literature, Beckett (2002) found that PBLT in ESL classes can result in discrepancies between teacher and student evaluations. The review indicated that students can feel frustrated at the lack of language structure that PBLT entails. In addition, Gibbes (2011) and Gibbes and Carson (2014) found that PBLT group work requires both autonomy and responsibility on behalf of group members, and these competing demands can detract from focusing on project language goals. One explanation for negative student evaluations may be attributed to culturally defined expectations within classrooms. Beckett (2002) noted how Asian students' preference for more teacher led and traditional learning methods within the classroom may make PBLT unsuitable for these types of students.

Some challenges have been encountered when implementing PBLT in Chinse EFL contexts. Guo (2006) reported on an attempt to introduce PBLT into language teaching classes in a Mainland China university. The university teachers involved in the study had concerns regarding how the alternative teaching approach would be received by students. Particular concerns included the student-teacher role adjustments required, ambiguity in the PBLT learning process, and the lack of access to authentic English resources within Mainland China. Despite this, PBLT has still been successful in other Chinese contexts. For example, Gu (2002) implemented PBLT within a Mainland China

university and showed positive outcomes. The project incorporated technology and re-quired collaboration between a Chinese student group and another student group based in the US. Overall, Gu utilized qualitative data and reported how project out-comes were successfully achieved. Hafner and Miller (2011) also developed a language technology project for engaging student autonomy at an English medium university in Hong Kong. Student feedback on the project was gathered through questionnaires and interviews. Hafner and Miller found evidence of improved student motivation, authen-tic language use and autonomy as a result of the project.

The contrasting examples of positive outcomes with Chinese EFL learners in Hafner and Miller (2011) and Gu (2002) compared to negative outcomes in Guo (2006) suggest access to authentic language or language speakers is important for students without prior PBLT experience. In addition, Bülent and Stoller (2005) suggested a number of other considerations for successfully implementing PBLT. These included focusing on real-world issues, balancing both student collaboration and independent work, incorp-orating some focus on form during the process, and having an eventual visible product at the end of the project. The context and project design in Guo (2006) may not have provided for these considerations. In addition, both student and instructor involvement is required throughout the project process (Beckett and Slater, 2005). These require-ments were taken into account for the current study project design.

In summary, previous studies suggest PBLT is well suited for providing meaningful language interactions to facilitate second language acquisition. PBLT also appears sup-portive for developing a range of life long skills and student autonomy. In Asian EFL contexts, successful PBLT requires having well-structured projects, access to authentic resources and fluent or native speakers where possible. What remains unclear from previous studies however is how accepting students from Chinese backgrounds are of PBLT and how they react when PBLT projects require a high level of self-directedness. Reports on more case studies which exemplify and evaluate possible projects for EAP programs in these contexts would be beneficial. Based on this, the current study devel-oped a project within an EAP writing course for students within a Macau university and reviewed the project through the following questions:

- Can students within an Asian EFL university context successfully carry out a PBLT project semi-autonomously?
- Can a PBLT project provide opportunities to develop the student autonomy skills, such as seeking out suitably qualified support staff and framing questions to assist with ongoing EAP writing queries outside class?
- Do students in an Asian university context perceive a PBLT assignment positively or negatively in an EAP writing course?
- Does a PBLT project appear to provide opportunities for meaningful interactions to aid language acquisition for these students?

Case Presentation

The project

A case study approach was used to exemplify the development of a PBLT project within an Asian EFL context and then review the execution and resulting student perceptions

and opportunities for language development. I will first describe the background, design and content of the project utilized before moving to discuss the method for reviewing the project. The PBLT project was prepared as part of an EAP writing course within an English medium university in Macau. Students ($n = 16$) within the course were aged from 19–24, had Chinese as their first language, and were from the business faculty of the university. The majority of student within the class were in their third or fourth year of university, and had completed general and academic English courses prior to entering the EAP writing class. Based on this, the students had roughly a CEFR B1 level of English proficiency. As an English medium university, there were a wide variety of local and international faculty and support staff who had lived, studied and worked within English speaking academic environments abroad.

The main goals of the course were to assist students with developing EAP writing skills to facilitate writing in their chosen major. However, the final assessment was a speaking assignment to give students an opportunity to explore and present on an EAP writing topic, and it was this assignment that used the PBLT approach. The goals of the PBLT project were not to develop any single language skill or feature of their writing, as many of the other assignments in the course had already addressed this. Instead, the main aims of the PBLT assignment were to develop student confidence and autonomy in seeking out ongoing assistance and learning opportunities once the writing course was complete as well as provide authentic opportunities for meaningful language interactions to aid fluency development.

Table 1 shows the main elements and process of the PBLT project. This process followed the approach discussed by Slater et al. (2006) by having clearly defined subtasks to an overall project to ensure a variety of different meaningful language interactions were undertaken by students. The project consisted of students autonomously working in pairs to identify one particular problem or challenge within their academic writing, identify an experienced writer on campus who could help resolve this problem, and interview this experienced writer. To facilitate the interview, an invitation email was sent to their intended interviewee and some interview questions were drafted. As the instructor, I was able to give feedback on language structure and appropriacy after the emails and interview questions had been drafted. Students then carried out the interviews and recorded them as audio files. These files were submitted as part of the

Table 1 PBLT project main elements

Main elements	Communication	Language Product	Instructor feedback	Assessed
Initial pair brainstorming on topic and interviewee	Student - Student	Brainstorm sheet	No	No
Drafting of invitation email to interviewee	Student - Student / Student - Instructor	Email	Yes	No
Drafting Interview questions for interviewee	Student - Student / Student - Instructor	Interview Sheet	Yes	No
Conducting interview	Student - Interviewee	Interview mp3 recording	No	No
Drafting of follow-up thank you email	Student - Student	Email	Yes	No
4–5 ongoing consultation on process and progress	Student - Teacher	-	Yes	No
Pair presentation to class	Student - Student	PPT / Presentation	No	Yes
Post presentation Q&A	Student - Student	Q&A sheet	No	Yes

project to ensure the interview had been conducted in English. Having the interview file also allowed students to listen again if they had not fully understood any points the interviewee had made during the live interview. From the audio file and notes taken during the interview, students worked with their partner to try and identify the main relevant solutions to their originally identified problem. Afterwards, student pairs carried out a 10 min presentation to the class on the interview process and some viable solutions to their original problem based on what they learnt from their interview. This was followed by a 5 min Q&A session with the class. A follow-up thank you email was also drafted by students as part of the project to be sent to the interviewee. In addition, four or five student-teacher consultations were held throughout the project process.

This project overall took four weeks and students were able to use the class time exclusively for their projects. These classes were conducted in a computer laboratory, which gave students access to the tools they needed to plan and carry out all subtasks of the project.

The project review used both informal teacher reflections and quantitative student questionnaire data. First, critical reflection is commonly used as means for teaching practice improvement (Richards, 1998; Richards and Farrell, 2005). The current study used informal teacher reflections from during class time while students carried out the process of subtasks within the overall project. The ongoing teacher-student consultation with each group also gave opportunities to take notes and reflect on how students were dealing with the subtasks. These reflection notes were reviewed in a cyclical manner (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005) in order to determine how well the project was meeting the goals of providing opportunities for meaningful language development and preparing students for carrying out a similar process autonomously after finishing the course.

Questionnaire data was also collected to obtain a quantitative measure of student perceptions on their motivation, language learning opportunities, and level of learner autonomy derived from the project. Validity was assumed by structuring questions based on previous research in the areas of task motivation (Dörnyei, 2001, 2005; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011), student autonomy (Benson, 2007, 2013), and student feedback on language learning (Blackstone and Jaidev, 2015; Hafner and Miller, 2011; Takeda, 2015) The questions in each of these three areas are shown in Tables 3, 4 and 5 below. For each question, a 5-point Likert scale was used to gauge the level of student agreement with the questionnaire statements. As this was developed as a simple instrument to gauge student feedback, no reliability analyses such as Cronbach's alpha were calculated. Results from the questionnaire should be viewed with this in mind. This questionnaire was carried out after all students had done their final presentation and completed the project.

Project results

Table 2 presents the topics choices of each pair as well as the position and language background of the interviewees chosen by students. What is most interesting is that students were able to autonomously select a wide range of diverse topics relevant to EAP writing, and also choose well suited interviewees from a wide range of faculty and language backgrounds. This added to the variety of ideas within the final student presentations.

Table 2 Topic choices and interviewees

Student pair topic choice	Interviewee	Interviewee language background
How to find reliable sources	Graduate student	Non-native
How to write a good thesis statement	Residential Fellow	Non-native
Brainstorming in academic English writing	Residential Fellow	Non-native
How to translate ideas into English in academic writing	English Writing Centre Tutor	Non-native
How to find high quality sources	Teaching Fellow	Non-native
Academic versus general writing	Senior English Instructor	Native
Where students can find good resources to help with writing	Senior English Instructor	Native
How to get started with writing and essay	Professor	Non-native
Writing a good essay introduction	Residential Master	Non-native

Table 3 presents the questionnaire responses in the area of motivation during the project. From this data, we can see that students tended to agree that the project was enjoyable and better than other projects in the class. They also tended to disagree that the project was uninteresting.

Table 4 shows the questionnaire results in the area of learning that occurred as a result of doing the project and watching other student presentations. The table illustrates how students believed that the project provided good learning opportunities related to EAP writing.

Table 5 presents the questionnaire results in the area of autonomy for learning in academic writing. Overall following the project, students appeared to exhibit a reasonably strong willingness to take self-directed action for continued learning outside the classroom.

Discussion

Student autonomy and motivation

The current study was designed to develop and review the implementation of a relatively straightforward PBLT project for an EAP writing class within an Asian context. The project targeted improving motivation, language learning opportunities, and student autonomy for future self-directed learning. Based on the questionnaire results and teacher reflections a few important findings were evident relating to the study questions. The first questions addressed whether Asian EFL university students could

Table 3 Follow-up questionnaire motivation items ($n = 16$)

Question	M[a]	SD
I enjoyed this project	4.38	0.72
I would like to do more projects like this one	3.81	0.83
This project was better than the other assignments in this class	4.19	0.83
I found this project boring	2.56	1.15

[a] 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

Table 4 Follow-up questionnaire learning items (n = 16)

Question	$M^{(a)}$	SD
I learnt a lot about academic English writing from doing this project and watching other students' presentations	4.20	1.10
I discovered something new about academic English writing from doing this project and watching other students' presentations	4.13	0.57

(a) 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

successfully carry out a PBLT project semi-autonomously, whether the project would provide opportunities for developing student autonomy and how students would perceive the project. The approach appeared to achieve the intended aims of being student directed and beneficial to autonomous language learning during the study and encouraging self-directedness for resolving future language problems by seeking out advice. The findings also appear to contradict negative results encountered by Beckett (2002) and Guo (2006) and support positive findings from Gu (2002) and Hafner and Miller (2011) in regard to implementing PBLT within Chinese contexts. The questionnaire results and teacher reflections indicated that students felt comfortable to take a more self-directed role in the learning process as part of the project. The reason for this may be that Chinese student attitudes to learning have shifted since the Beckett (2002) and Guo (2006) studies. Alternatively, the access to fluent English speakers may have assisted with the project authenticity and student motivation levels. The current study results therefore suggest that realism through an authentic language context, whether online or face-to-face may be beneficial for conducting PBLT in Asian contexts.

The final study question addressed whether the project appeared to provide interaction opportunities to encourage language acquisition. The project appeared effective at providing authentic and meaningful communicative language opportunities, and students appeared proactive in seeking corrective language feedback. For example during drafting the interviewee invitation email, many students mentioned how concerned they were to avoid errors, as the email would be sent to a real recipient who they did not know. This attention to form in language output is exactly what the output hypothesis suggests benefits second language acquisition (Swain, 1985, 1995).

Project language assessment

In terms of formative and summative assessment of language, this project provided some opportunities which were not fully utilized. Firstly, conducting the entire project process in English and having input, output and interaction with interlocutors gave the

Table 5 Follow-up questionnaire autonomy items (*n* = 16)

Question	$M^{(a)}$	SD
This project helped me to seek advice about my English writing from people other than my instructor	4.31	0.60
I feel more confident to approach UM staff with questions about my English writing	4.06	0.68
I didn't like asking questions to people who are not my teacher	2.56	1.26
My teacher should be the only person to ask for advice about my English writing	2.75	1.18

(a) 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

opportunity for formative feedback on authentic and meaningful language use. Students received formative feedback on the invitation email, interview questions and follow-up thank you email. This feedback addressed email and question structure, appropriacy of language as well as grammatical form and vocabulary choice improvements. Despite this, much of formal summative assessment incorporated into the project could have been improved. Formal summative assessment within language projects is important (Slater et al., 2006), and PBLT facilitates a functional approach for summative assessment of each task incorporated into an overall project (Mikulec and Miller, 2011; Miller, 2006). This gives the instructor the benefit of language samples from authentic situations as the current project also did. Due to time constraints for the current project however, only the presentation structure and English within the final presentation and Q&A session were used for formal summative assessment and grading purposes. There are opportunities to extend this summative assessment to cover much more. The writing course where this project was utilized mainly focused assessment on essay writing and the necessary language skills for parts within an essay. Alternative perspectives on academic writing suggest success within academic environment requires second language skills that extend beyond strictly essay writing. For example, Swales (1990) noted the importance of being able to communicate effectively in a broad range of academic genres within different discourse communities. Some of these are similar to the genres covered within the current project such as email writing and academic discussion. Using these emails and recorded interviews for formal summative assessment could measure students' language abilities in realistic academic genres which extend beyond essay writing.

Opportunities for interaction

Project modifications could also be incorporated to improve opportunities for student language development through the interactionist theories discussed earlier. Firstly, one of the main language learning benefits from output derives from error noticing and metalinguistic reflection in output, such as that generated from the project interview phase (Swain, 1995; Swain and Lapkin, 1995). However, the recordings from the interviews were only briefly used. These listening tracks could however be a useful source of authentic language for student analyses and other class activities. For example, an interesting activity could be to have each student transcribe or analyse their part within the interview from the recording to encourage noticing of errors within their speech.

Furthermore, the instructor could use online technology platforms such as Google Drive to error correct synchronously rather than asynchronously within the emails or drafted interview questions. Synchronous feedback occurs in real time while completing a task whereas asynchronous feedback occurs afterwards (Hsu, 2015). Giving instructor led error correction on student writing synchronously has shown to be more beneficial to language acquisition (Shintani, 2016; Shintani and Aubrey, 2016). Another possibility is for the instructor to use the group interview recordings as a basis for follow-up listening comprehension or further noticing activities for the wider class. Input flooding involves giving students an extensive amount of exposure to a particular language feature, which can be either explicitly or implicitly modified to draw attention to the feature (Han, Park, & Combs, 2008; Hernández, 2011; Izumi, 2002). Presenting a

range of student texts or recordings with correct and incorrect usage of a particular language feature could effectively draw attention to the correct and incorrect usage of that feature. Using student output in this way for follow-up activities could also further improve students' sense of engagement, involvement and motivation for language learning within the class.

Finally, pre-task planning and rehearsal can also have a significant effect on task performance (Bygate and Samuda, 2005) and noticing of output errors (Ellis, 2005). This is a result of working memory having limited capacity (Ellis, 2008). Allowing pre-task planning or rehearsal can allow students to better utilize this limited capacity and therefore enhance language performance. Due to time constraints, the students in the current study were not able to rehearse during class time prior to the real interview they conducted. Being able to rehearse through mock interviews with other students prior to conducting the real interview may be an additional way this project could better target language performance and acquisition.

Conclusion

This case study set out to exemplify and review a PBLT project developed for an EAP writing program within an Asian context. The study has shown that PBLT appears well suited for students within this context, and students indicated strong levels of perceived motivation, language learning, and willingness to autonomously take charge of their academic writing development as a result. The study has also highlighted the importance of realism in PBLT and the opportunity for utilizing student language generated through project subtasks for formative assessment in authentic ways. Some further modifications to the project could extend the language learning benefits derived through the project further by better addressing interactionist learning theories. Some important limitations of this study should be considered. The first is the small sample size and lack of pre-test measures which limits the ability for the study to recognize gains based on the questionnaire data. In addition, no reliability analysis was done on the questionnaire data and only informal teacher reflections were considered for the study, which could be open to bias or inconsistency. Future research would be useful to explore similar PBLT projects for Asian contexts in a more systematic and reliable manner.

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