JURNAL UPI

JoKAL
Journal of Korean Applied Linguistics

Journal homepage: https://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/JoKAL

Perceptions of Korean language teacher and learners in the implementation of project-based learning based on the 6Cs

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ABSTRACT

Character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking, collectively known as the 6Cs, have become core demands of 21st-century education, including foreign language learning; yet studies linking these competencies to project-based learning (PjBL) have concentrated on English and Mandarin and rarely brought teacher and learner voices together. This study describes how a lecturer and students described the opportunities and limits that PjBL project offered for the 6Cs in Korean language learning. Using a qualitative case study design, it examined an annual Korean learning media exhibition in which students who are prospective, Korean language teachers design and present learning media; lecturer who designed the exhibition was also the informant. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with this lecturer and six students selected for strong performance and clear recall of the project, and the data were analyzed thematically against the 6Cs framework. In the informants' accounts, collaboration, creativity, and communication were described most readily; character and critical thinking only in part; and citizenship least, with the lecturer and the students reading it differently. Informants linked their experiences to the exhibition's authentic audience and to each student's involvement. Because the data are self-reports from a small, purposively selected sample, the findings are tentative; they suggest that components left implicit in a project's design are unlikely to develop on their own, so citizenship and source evaluation should be built into task requirements, and this design merits extension to other language courses over a longer period.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received 06 Aug 2026
Revised 20 Sept 2026
Accepted 21 Oct 2026
Available online 30 Oct 2026

Keywords:
21st-century skills,
6Cs,
case study,
perceptions,
project-based learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Shifts in the social, economic, and technological landscape of the 21st century have moved education away from mere content mastery and toward competencies that equip learners to live and work in a complex world. Frameworks describing what such a world demands of learners have multiplied over the past two decades (Trilling & Fadel, 2009); among the most comprehensive is the formulation of Fullan et al. (2018), who grouped these competencies into six components known as the 6Cs: character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. Rather than standing on their own, the six are viewed as global competencies that intertwine within *deep learning*. Under this framework, learning is no longer measured simply by how much knowledge is absorbed, but by how far learners are able to think, create, and contribute. The 6Cs are used here because they describe general competencies, including character and citizenship, that language-specific frameworks address only in part. The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, for example, organize language education around communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015); these partly overlap with the communication and citizenship components of the 6Cs, but they do not name character, collaboration, or critical thinking as competencies in their own right. Using the 6Cs therefore makes it possible to examine a language project against a broader set of demands than language proficiency alone.

Foreign language learning faces the same demand. Language learners need more than linguistic competence; they also need the 21st-century competencies that allow the language to be used meaningfully in real contexts (Beckett, 2023; National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Work in language education has long argued that projects supply precisely this condition by giving learners genuine reasons to process and use the target language (Stoller, 2006). One approach considered capable of serving both needs at once is project-based learning (PjBL). In the research literature, PjBL is characterized by projects that are central to the curriculum, organized around a driving question or problem, built on constructive investigation by learners, largely managed by the learners themselves, and realistic in kind (Thomas, 2000); such projects culminate in an end product (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). In practice, PjBL places an authentic project at the center of learning: learners formulate problems, plan, execute, and publish their products to a real audience, while the teacher acts as a facilitator (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2020). It is through this sequence of stages that the 6Cs components find room to be trained in an integrated way, rather than being taught as separate material. Reviews of the evidence report benefits of PjBL, but also that the strength of the findings is limited, that some studies show mixed results, and that success depends on conditions such as high-quality group work, student autonomy and choice, and the way learning is assessed (Kokotsaki et al., 2016).

Several studies are relevant to this combination, although none addresses all of its elements. Bulkis et al. (2025) qualitatively investigated how English teachers in Makassar implemented the 6C skills in their classrooms and found that the six skills were integrated systematically through the preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages of instruction, although their study concerns teachers' practice in general rather than PjBL specifically. From the learners' side, Maulida (2024) explored students' perceptions of project-based learning in a Speaking course and reported growing confidence in speaking, even though anxiety over public speaking and uneven group contributions remained obstacles. At the conceptual level, Beckett (2023) proposed PjBL as an approach for teaching five Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and competencies in digital literacy) to second language learners, while Yin and Huat (2021) discussed how PjBL principles mmay be carried from theory to practice in teaching Mandarin as a foreign language in Malaysia. Meanwhile, Cai et al. (2023), working with mixed methods on 257 elementary school teachers in China, showed that teachers' attitudes toward PjBL were generally positive yet shaped by training, social support, resource availability, and time. In the Indonesian context, Fitri et al. (2025) demonstrated quantitatively that digital literacy-based collaborative learning affected students' essay writing competence.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/jokal.v6i2.104881
p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494

Three gaps emerge from this mapping. First, in terms of language context, existing studies concentrate on English and Mandarin; Korean as a foreign language has barely been touched, even though interest in Korean in Indonesia keeps growing alongside the spread of Korean popular culture and the establishment of Korean-related study programs in higher education. Second, in terms of perspective, previous research tends to portray only one side, whether teachers (Bulkis et al., 2025; Cai et al., 2023) or learners (Maulida, 2024), so they do not bring both perceptions together over the same PjBL practice in a language-learning context. Third, in terms of the competency framework, some studies reach only part of the components, for instance five Cs (Beckett, 2023), speaking skills (Maulida, 2024), or writing competence (Fitri et al., 2025), and others remain at the conceptual level (Beckett, 2023; Yin & Huat, 2021) and thus call for empirical support. The full 6Cs framework as formulated by Fullan et al. (2018) has not yet been used to read a PjBL practice in Korean language learning.

This study seeks to fill those gaps by describing teacher and learner perceptions of PjBL implementation as an effort to strengthen the 6Cs in Korean language learning. The practice under study is the Korean learning media exhibition held at a public university in Bandung, an annual project requiring students to design learning media and exhibit them to a general audience interested in, or in the midst of, learning Korean. Specifically, two questions are answered: (1) how does the lecturer describe the opportunities and limits for developing each of the 6Cs in the exhibition project, and (2) how do the students describe the opportunities and limits of those same components, and (3) which conditions of the project do the lecturer and the students link to these opportunities and limits. By bringing two viewpoints to bear on a single project, the study is expected to offer a fuller picture of which components are genuinely facilitated by the project, which they describe as receiving little room, and what conditions determine both.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). A qualitative approach was chosen because the object of inquiry was perception, that is, how a teacher and learners make sense of an instructional experience they went through, which is better captured through open verbal accounts than through measurement (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because the object of inquiry is perception, the study reports what informants described as opportunities and limits for developing the 6Cs; it does not measure change in competence, and no baseline, students products, grades, task documents, or direct observation of the exhibition were analyzed (see Limitations). A case study design suited the object for a further reason: the exhibition project constitutes a bounded system in which one teacher and one cohort of learners share a single, identifiable experience, which makes it possible to place their perceptions side by side over exactly the same practice rather than over practices that merely resemble one another.

Consequently, the study does not aim at statistical generalization What it pursues instead is depth and completeness of description within the case, along with an account of the conditions under which the perceived strengthening of the 6Cs did or did not occur. Decisions at every subsequent stage, from participant selection to analysis, were taken with that descriptive aim in mind.

2.2. Research Setting and Participants

The case under study was the Korean learning media exhibition held at a public university in Bandung, part of how prospective Korean language teachers in the study program there are trained to design technology-supported instruction. Its central task asks students from one cohort, divided into groups of four, to develop Korean learning media, choosing between a digital or a non-digital format. Material had to come from two standard volumes of a shared reference textbook, with topics distributed evenly across groups so that no two groups covered the same ground; this constrained the content and sources students could choose, a point taken into account in the

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/jokal.v6i2.104881
p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494

Results. Groups checked in with the lecturer through weekly counseling sessions, working toward an annual open exhibition on campus, where students from other programs and members of the public dropped by; visitors marked the booths they liked best with stickers, so every group walked away with direct feedback from people who had no obligation to be kind about it.

Seven people agreed to take part: the lecturer who supervises the exhibition and six students from the 2023 cohort who had already taken part in it. The lecturer, referred to in this report as the Lecturer, applies PjBL routinely in her teaching and is an experienced practitioner who originally introduced the exhibition format itself, so her account of the project's design intentions is first-hand rather than a guess. At the same time, the Lecturer designed, supervised, and assessed the project, so her account is also that of the person evaluating her own design, and the students were interviewed about a course in which she assigned the grades; both circumstances may have shaped what informants were willing to say. The six students, referred to here as Students 1 to 6, were chosen purposively against two criteria: strong performance on the exhibition project, and a clear memory of working on it. This procedure favors students with positive experiences and leaves out those who were less successful or less engaged, so their accounts should not be read as representative of the cohort. The sample is small, and no claim of saturation is made. Table 1 summarizes the profile of the informants.

Table 1.
Profile of the informants

Code	Role in the project	Sex
Lecturer	Lecturer and exhibition supervisor	Female
Student 1	Group member	Male
Student 2	Group member; chair of the exhibition committee	Female
Student 3	Group member	Male
Student 4	Group member	Female
Student 5	Group member	Female
Student 6	Group member	Male

Participation was voluntary. Before each interview, the informants were told the purpose of the study, asked for permission to record, and reminded that they could decline any question or withdraw at any point. Because the Lecturer also assessed the students' work, a power relationship exists between the informants, which is acknowledged as a limitation. All identities were anonymized in reporting through the codes used above.

2.3. Instrument and Data Collection

Data collection relied on semi-structured interviews, which gave every informant the same core set of questions while still leaving space to probe whatever an individual answer opened up. The interview guides were developed with reference to the *Interview Protocol Refinement* framework (Castillo-Montoya, 2016) as applied by Shoozan and Mohamad (2024), combined with the three-stage preparation-development-refinement approach of Coker and Akande (2025): questions were mapped onto the research questions first, arranged into something closer to a natural conversation running from opening to core to closing items, and then polished for clarity before use.

Substantively, the question indicators were derived from the 6Cs framework of Fullan et al. (2018) and the PjBL stages described by the George Lucas Educational Foundation (2020), yielding 19 items for the students and 16 for the teacher. The guides open with background items, continue with items on how PjBL principles ran in practice (topic determination, the teacher's role, and assessment), then work through the six components one by one: problem solving and the evaluation of information sources for critical thinking; task division and conflict resolution for collaboration; the delivery of project results and perceived gains in Korean speaking for communication; the demand for new ideas and unique approaches for creativity; cultural or social content and new cultural insight for citizenship; and time management, responsibility, and personal challenges for character. Each guide closes with reflective items on the overall benefit of learning

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p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494

through the project. Probing prompts were prepared for items likely to draw brief answers. Some components were operationalized more narrowly than in the descriptions of Fullan et al. (2018): citizenship was probed mainly through items on cultural or social content and new cultural insight, whereas their description also covers engagement with global and civic issues; communication was probed mainly through perceived gains in Korean speaking, although the exhibition was not designed to elicit target-language speaking; and character was probed through time management, responsibility, and personal challenges. The two guides also differ in length and wording (19 versus 16 items), so the lecturer's and the students' answers are not strictly equivalent (see Appendix), and the findings concern these operationalizations rather than the full constructs. This article reports the data bearing on the six components; responses to the background items and to the items on topic determination, the lecturer's role, assessment, speech level, overall benefit, and recommendations are not reported here.

Interviews were conducted individually in Indonesian at times agreed with each informant, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. The researcher's observational notes on each student informant were appended to the transcripts as contextual support; they did not involve observation of the exhibition itself and are not reported as separate findings

2.4. Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Analysis proceeded thematically through the six phases of Braun and Clarke (2006). The transcripts were first read repeatedly for familiarization; initial codes were then attached to meaningful segments; codes were collated into candidate themes; the themes were reviewed against the full data set; each theme was defined and named; and the report was produced. Coding was hybrid in orientation: deductive, in that the six components of the 6Cs served as starting categories into which relevant segments were sorted, and inductive, in that segments falling outside those categories were coded openly, which is how the two cross-cutting patterns reported later, the role of the authentic audience and the variation in individual involvement, took shape. Because the components were defined in advance, the analysis is closer to framework-based than to reflexive thematic analysis, in which themes are developed from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

To keep the two perspectives comparable, the coded data were arranged in a matrix crossing each component with each informant, so that the teacher's account and the learners' accounts of the same aspect could be juxtaposed directly. Trustworthiness was supported by verbatim transcription, which provided the basis for an audit trail linking each reported claim back to specific transcript segments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Comparing the lecturer's account with the students' accounts is treated here as a way of placing two perspectives side by side, not as independent corroboration, because all informants belong to the same course and the Lecturer designed and assessed the project; where the two perspectives diverge, the comparison cannot settle which is correct. As with any interview-based study, the data remain self-reports; this limitation is acknowledged and returned to in the concluding section. Analysis was conducted on the Indonesian-language transcripts, and the informant statements reported here were translated into English at the reporting stage, with the codes retained; some nuances of the original wording may have been lost in translation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is presented in two sub-sections. The Results sub-section lays out the findings of the analysis, moving through with an overview of how the project was implemented, moving through the perceptions of both sides on each of the six components, and closing with two cross-cutting patterns that emerged inductively from the data. The Discussion sub-section then interprets the overall pattern, compares it with previous research, offers explanations for the unexpected findings, and states the significance of the results; the limitations of the study are then presented in a separate sub-section.

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p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494

3.1. Results

Collaboration

Fullan et al. (2018) define collaboration as working interdependently and synergistically in teams, including managing team dynamics and challenges, making substantive decisions together, and learning from and contributing to the learning of others, which goes beyond dividing a task into separate parts. Read against this definition, collaboration was described concretely by the Lecturer and by every student, and the two sides largely told the same story from different vantage points.

Collaboration left the thickest trace in the data of any component, and the two sides largely told the same story from different vantage points.

Teacher's perspective. For the Lecturer, collaboration was where PjBL showed its sharpest edge, precisely because it was also where things most often went wrong. The recurring challenge in her account was the free rider: almost every cohort has at least one member who disengages or becomes hard to reach, and a problem she felt had to be addressed openly. Her response was direct: call both sides in for clarification and dock marks where necessary. "It's group work, after all," she said, "not everyone can work well in a group. But whether we like it or not, that's still something that has to be practiced" rather than protected from friction. What stayed with her most, though, was a group that had struggled internally yet still delivered one of the strongest products in the exhibition, proof, in her reading, that a rocky process and a strong outcome are not mutually exclusive. This iis consistent with the emphasis in Fullan et al.'s (2018) definition of managing team dynamics and interdependence rather than simply assigning tasks, and the free-rider problem she described resembles the uneven group contributions that Maulida (2024) documented as a recurring friction point in other project-based classrooms.

Learners' perspective. Students, for their part, could reconstruct their group's division of labor in granular detail. Student 3's group split cleanly down the middle, two members drafting questions while two built the website; Student 5's group let whoever was most confident in Korean handle the questions while the rest tracked down materials; Student 1 and Student 4, by contrast, described their groups working almost everything jointly, with no fixed roles at all. Disagreements were handled with just as much specificity: Student 3's group put contested app choices to a vote, Student 2's group hunted for a middle ground when preferences clashed, Student 4's group discovered that a seeming disagreement was really just a difference in phrasing once they talked it through, and Student 6's group weighed two source options side by side before deciding together. Student 4 also described the harder version of this: a member who struggled to keep up left the rest of the group scrambling. "We sort of told them off," she recalled, "and thank goodness they realized their mistake and started joining in." Taken together, these are not vague impressions of working well together; every student could say specifically who did what and how disputes were resolved. This shows that the students experienced the group format as a demand that required active handling, although no interview item asked whether their collaboration skills changed.

Creativity

Fullan et al. (2018) describe creativity as having an "entrepreneurial eye" for economic and social opportunities, asking the right questions to generate novel ideas, and demonstrating leadership to pursue those ideas into practice. The exhibition addressed a narrower, product-oriented version of this demand, since students had to turn course material into media that visitors would find engaging.

Teacher's perspective. Of all six components, creativity was the one Lecturer named most readily and without hesitation. What the project drew out, in her assessment, leaned more toward creative execution than critical analysis: students were good at taking the material and turning it into something visually engaging, even when the underlying content was straightforward. Certain products had stayed with her long after grading: an augmented-reality display, a carefully designed avatar-based game, a computer game visitors kept coming back to. But she was equally candid about the ceiling on that creativity. Ideas tended to repeat year after year, and enough students defaulted to the safest option that she eventually had to rule out conventional presentation formats

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p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494

altogether. Even then, the habit was hard to break: "they'd still hand in something that was basically PowerPoint," she said, "even after we'd already said PowerPoint alone wasn't allowed." Her workaround was rotating the project theme annually so no cohort felt like it was just redoing its seniors' work. This tension, genuine creative output alongside a pull toward convention, fits Fullan et al.'s (2018) point that creativity has to be actively cultivated within a task's design, since learners left unconstrained tend to default to familiar formats.

Learners' perspective. Students located the demand for creativity in more specific places than the teacher's vantage point could reach. "I was racking my brain," Student 2 said, "to make our design eye-catching but still informative." Student 5 felt it most in choosing which medium would carry her group's material best, Student 4 in hand-building physical game pieces, and Student 3 in figuring out how to deliver the material itself to visitors. Student 6's group supplied the clearest case of a constraint forcing invention: assigned a non-digital medium, they initially resisted the idea of a board game, but the push to stay original sent them hunting for references until they landed on a board game no other group had attempted. Resource limits showed up on the students' side too, in a different form than the teacher described: Student 4's group had actually considered a more ambitious idea but shelved it once the cost and equipment it required became clear, a reminder that creativity in this project was bounded by budget as much as by imagination. This resource ceiling lines up with what Cai et al. (2023) found among teachers implementing PjBL more broadly, that the availability of resources, not motivation alone, shapes how far a project idea can go.

Communication

Fullan et al. (2018) describe communication as communicating effectively through a variety of styles, modes, and technologies, tailored to a range of audiences. The exhibition provided a real audience of this kind, mostly visitors without prior knowledge of the topic, and both accounts record how informants responded to it.

Teacher's perspective. Lecturer traced most of the communication gains directly to the exhibition format. Her comparison was blunt: in an ordinary classroom presentation, students tend to read straight off their notes without much concern for whether anyone is actually listening, but the exhibition forced a genuine back-and-forth with visitors who had to be engaged and convinced, not just addressed, and by her observation, students rose to that noticeably better than they did in class. This is the Lecturer's own observation; it was not corroborated by observation or student products in this study. This reading fits the broader claim that authentic communicative demand, not classroom rehearsal alone, is what pushes learners toward real two-way exchange (Beckett, 2023).

Learners' perspective. Students' accounts matched that shift closely. Student 3 recalled presenting directly to visitors at his booth and coaxing them to try the media themselves, which in his telling demanded a kind of on-the-spot creativity in speaking just to make sure he was understood. Student 4's group, working with visitors who had no background in the topic, had to walk people through every component of the game before anyone could play; Student 2 and Student 6 both added door-prize incentives and rehearsed explanations to keep visitors from wandering off mid-conversation. In short, the exhibition swapped a captive classroom audience for one that had to be actively won over, and students adjusted how they communicated accordingly. On the narrower question of Korean-speaking proficiency itself, opinions split. Some felt real gains: Student 3 found that preparing the media brought back material he had studied earlier, Student 6 became aware of vocabulary he still had not mastered, and Student 5 got the chance to revisit vocabulary and grammar tied to her group's topic, going as far as rehearsing her explanation with a native-speaker lecturer beforehand. The others described no change. "I didn't feel like my spoken Korean got better," Student 2 said, "it was more my teaching skills that improved." Student 4 pointed out that her group's material stayed basic enough that visitor explanations were simply given in Indonesian. This split nuances the confidence gains Maulida

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p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494

(2024) reported among speaking-course students, here the exhibition was not designed to elicit target-langugae speaking, and explanations to novice visitors could be given in Indonesian.

Critical Thinking

Fullan et al. (2018) describe critical thinking as critically evaluating information and arguments, seeing patterns and connections, and constructing meaningful knowledge and applying it in the real world. The accounts below touch two strands related to this description: working out practical solutions to problems that arose during the project, and evaluating the sources of the material used. The second strand is where the target language is most directly involved, since some of the sources students had to judge were written in Korean.

Teacher's perspective. Lecturer read critical thinking through a practical lens: it surfaced whenever students had to work out how to make a piece of material land more easily with an audience, task division included. On source evaluation specifically, she held herself to a standard the students were never actually required to meet: she made sure the material she supplied came from credible institutions and, for certain media, required at least three corroborating sources before signing off. That gap, a verification standard held by the teacher but never handed down as a task requirement, is exactly the kind of implicit demand Fullan et al. (2018) warn tends to go unpracticed by learners, however present it is in the instructor's own thinking.

Learners' perspective. Problem-solving appeared in the accounts of five of the six students, though the specific problems varied widely. Student 2's group piloted their exhibition questions on a few people first, then swapped out whichever items fell flat, calibrating difficulty through trial rather than guesswork. Student 3 had to choose among a crowd of similar applications; Student 4 had to translate her group's material for visitors who had never studied a word of Korean; Student 5 and Student 6 found themselves solving a problem as unglamorous as how to punch clean holes in a plywood board. "We were stuck for a while on how to even punch a hole in the plywood," Student 5 recalled, "in the end we just went with a nail." Such practical problems sit at the margin of the construct as Fullan et al. (2018) describe it, which centers on evaluating information and arguments; they are reported here as examples of everyday problem-solving rather than as strong evidence of critical thinking. Evaluating sources, however, told a different story, and here the Korean-language materials added a linguistic dimension that the interview guide did not fully anticipate. Most students described trusting their material simply because it came from the textbook they used daily in class. Since the task required material to come from the shared textbook (see Research Setting and Participants), this trust is largely what the task prescribed and should not be read as weak source evaluation on its own; the related interview item asked how students judged a source they had found, which presupposes independent searching and may have shaped these answers. Verification only appeared in isolated cases: Student 6 cross-referenced questions from the Korean proficiency test bank, itself written in Korean, against other sources before settling on them, and Student 2 adapted textbook questions to make them fit the exhibition context better. This pattern, practical problem-solving described by most students and source verification described by only two of them (Students 2 and 6), is reported here as it appears in the accounts.

Character

Fullan et al. (2018) describe character in terms of qualities such as grit, tenacity, perseverance, and resilience, together with learning how to learn and the ability to make learning an integral part of life. Read this way, the pattern below is less about whether students behaved well than about how differently each of them took ownership of their own work.

Teacher's perspective. The Lecturer's account of character was brief and favorable. Students, in her view, chose their own media concepts within the textbook material the task prescribed, fronted their own explanations to the public, and generally tried to work out group problems on their own before escalating them to her; her involvement was reserved for issues genuinely past the students' control, like a member who had gone unreachable.

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Learners' perspective. Students' own accounts filled in both the shape and the range of that independence. Student 4's group planned backward from the deadline, working out how much time each stage would eat up and marking the point where execution had to start. Some responsibility went further than any assigned role required it to. "I try to stay aware I shouldn't be a burden," Student 6 said, "so I pitch in with the others as much as I can," while Student 3's group developed a habit of checking in on one another to keep laziness from creeping in. Character also came through in a willingness to admit limits rather than bluff past them: Student 2, thrown into chairing the exhibition committee with no organizational background, got through it by asking experienced friends a lot of questions. Not every account sat at that end of the spectrum, though. "I just did what I could," Student 1 admitted, "there wasn't really another way." This spread, from deliberate planning to a more limited account of effort, is consistent with Maulida's (2024) observation that project-based formats surface individual differences in self-management as much as they build a uniform skill.

Citizenship

Fullan et al. (2018) describe citizenship as thinking like a global citizen: considering global issues on the basis of a deep understanding of diverse values and worldviews, and engaging with complex real-world problems that affect human and environmental sustainability. This is broader than cultural content alone. The interview guides, however, probed citizenship mainly through cultural or social content, so the findings below concern this narrower operationalization, and they show a clear difference between how the Lecturer and the students read the component.

Teacher's perspective. Lecturer's reading of citizenship differed from the students' accounts, although it responded to a different question; she was asked how intercultural or social-cultural awareness is built into the project design, whereas the students answered narrower questions about their project themes (see Appendix). For her, social-cultural content is baked into project design almost by default: students have to think about who their media is for, since material aimed at elementary schoolers looks nothing like material aimed at high schoolers, and elements of local or Korean popular culture tend to work their way into the media regardless of whether a group set out to include them. This framing lines up with Beckett (2023), who treats language socialization and audience context as inseparable from language-oriented PjBL, meaning that citizenship, by this logic, is never really absent from the task, only unlabeled.

Learners' perspective. Students told a different story almost across the board. Asked directly whether their project theme touched on Korean cultural or social issues, four of the six said no: Student 1 thought his material was too basic to count, Student 2 felt it only touched the language side, and Student 3 called it everyday vocabulary at best. "No," Student 5 said flatly when asked whether her food-themed project touched on culture, "food just didn't feel like a social or cultural thing to me." What cultural traces did surface tended to stay surface-level: Student 2's group worked in the names of K-Pop artists to make the media feel current, Student 6's group displayed pictures and names of Korean foods, and only a handful of students, Student 2 among them, said they picked up any new cultural knowledge at all, usually just from wandering past other groups' booths. Citizenship ended up the one component where teacher and students did not simply differ in degree, as they did elsewhere, but pointed in genuinely opposite directions, a split taken up more closely in the Discussion.

The Authentic Audience and Individual Variation

Two patterns cut across all six components, appearing not in one or two components alone but across all of them, and they emerged inductively rather than from the coding frame itself, since no interview item asked about the audience or about differences in involvement. The first is the authentic audience's role as the real engine behind 6Cs strengthening. Several of the effects already described, the shift toward two-way communication, the pressure to be creative, the problem-solving that came from calibrating question difficulty, the responsibility of explaining a product

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p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494

face to face, traces back to one fact: students were building something for real people to see, not just something to be graded. That showed up in how much students trusted the audience's judgment over formal grades; Student 2 treated the stickers visitors left on her booth as a more meaningful measure of success than any score, and Student 4's booth was one of the most-stickered of the day. "What we put in on the day itself," she said, "was worth exactly what people gave us." Lecturer's own conviction ran parallel to this: she holds that direct experience is the kind of learning that actually sticks, and that having a tangible product helps students recall what they learned long after the fact, a belief the students echoed when they described vocabulary sticking better because it had been tied to a specific booth (Student 2) or a project that helped resurface lessons that had already started to fade (Student 5).

The second pattern is how unevenly that strengthening landed across individuals. Students who described themselves as fully involved into the project tended to report benefits across several components: Student 2, who on top of the group's work also chaired the exhibition committee, described growth in collaboration, communication, and character, largely from being pushed to lead outside her comfort zone, although this additional role may account for part of the difference; Student 4 described a similar spread through full engagement in her group. The accounts of the remaining three students (Students 3, 5, and 6) are not placed on this spectrum here, and because both involvement and perceived benefits come from the same self-reports, highly engaged students may simply have reported more. Student 1's account suggests more limited involvement: he thought his material too basic to count as cultural content and said, in his words, "I just did what I could." Few benefits across the six components were apparent in his account, which may reflect a shorter or less detailed interview as much as limited involvement; the study cannot distinguish the two, although he did express genuine interest in Korean.

3.2. Discussion

Read together, the two sets of perceptions form a pattern of uneven strengthening. The three components most directly demanded by the structure of the project were the ones both sides recognized most readily: collaboration by its group format, creativity by its media product, and communication by its exhibition. The components the design never named explicitly, citizenship and the source evaluation side of critical thinking, were described least, while character sat in between, since the project created situations calling for responsibility and self-management, but accounts of how far each student answered that call differed from student to student. One tentative reading is that what a project makes explicit in its tasks and rules is more likely to appear in participants' accounts than what it leaves implicit. This reading is offered for the present case only; it could not be checked against design documents such as the syllabus, task guide, or rubric, which were not analyzed, and it resembles the familiar idea of aligning tasks with intended learning outcomes more than it offers a new principle.

The case also offers a small empirical illustration of how a PjBL project operates in a Korean language program, a setting that the conceptual accounts reviewed above, such as Yin and Huat's (2021) discussion of how PjBL principles may be carried from theory to practice in teaching Mandarin, do not address. What it adds is a description of how informants experienced a project built around media production in teacher education; it does not test the principles those accounts set out.

Some of these accounts resemble findings reported elsewhere, although the settings differ. The free-rider problem described by the Lecturer, and by one student (Student 4), resembles the uneven group contributions that Maulida (2024) flagged as a routine hazard of project-based coursework, and the resource ceiling students hit on the creativity front echoes what Cai et al. (2023) found more broadly: PjBL implementation bends to what resources are actually available, not just to how motivated a group is. The gap between planned and unplanned components tells a similar story at the classroom level: Bulkis et al. (2025) found the 6C skills taking hold specifically because teachers built them into preparation, delivery, and evaluation on purpose, and the pattern here, creativity flourishing under explicit rules while citizenship withered under none, reads like the same

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/jokal.v6i2.104881
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mechanism working in reverse. The split verdict on speaking gains, meanwhile, complicates two claims at once. It tempers the speaking-confidence boost Maulida (2024) reported, since here the growth looks less like target-language proficiency and more like comfort performing for an audience in whatever language got the job done. And it puts a real condition on Stoller's (2006) long-standing claim that projects hand learners authentic reasons to use the target language: the claim held for Student 5, whose material forced her back into Korean vocabulary and grammar, whereas for Student 4's group case could serve the entire exhibition in Indonesian.

Two findings call for explanation. The first is the difference between the Lecturer's and the students' accounts of citizenship, which can be traced in three directions. First, the two sides responded to different questions: the Lecturer was asked how intercultural or social-cultural awareness is built into the project design, whereas the students were asked closed questions about whether their project theme touched on Korean cultural or social issues and whether they had learned anything new about Korean culture. Different questions elicit different constructs, so this difference partly reflects the instruments and should not be read as a stable perception gap. Second, the two sides also seem to hold different concepts of the component: the Lecturer read it broadly as sensitivity to the social context of the media's users, whereas the students read it narrowly as the presence or absence of culture-themed material. By Fullan et al.'s (2018) definition, which centers on global and civic issues, diverse values, and sustainability, neither reading captures the component fully, and the audience analysis that students actually performed is closer to communication than to citizenship. Student 5's comment that food "just didn't feel like a social or cultural thing" illustrates the students' reading: it suggests a lay understanding of culture anchored in explicit traditions, so that everyday practices such as food do not register as cultural, although academically food is one of the basic domains in which culture is enacted and passed on. Seen this way, the gap is less a simple misunderstanding than a difference in what counts as culture from the start. Third, citizenship was not described as an explicit demand of the task, unlike creativity, which the Lecturer described as bounded by rules, or collaboration, whose dynamics she monitored. Taken together, these points mean that the finding says as much about the task and the instruments as about the students' citizenship, and with six students the pattern should be treated as tentative.

The second finding is the limited evaluation of sources, where the task design is central. Because material had to come from the shared textbook, students' trust in it is largely what the task prescribed, and it would be unfair to read it as weak source evaluation. The accounts nonetheless show that verification, where it occurred, was an individual initiative (Students 2 and 6), and the Lecturer's own verification standard does not appear in the students' accounts as a requirement. If a project aims to develop source evaluation, the task may therefore need to ask students to search for and judge sources, for example through a short, required verification step; whether this would change students' habits is a question for further research, since this study did not examine how such habits develop.

Finally, it is the dual-perspective design itself that makes these patterns visible, and that is where the study's significance sits. Where the two perspectives converge, on the teacher's facilitating role and on the prominence of collaboration and creativity, that convergence corroborates both accounts at once; where they diverge, on citizenship, the divergence is itself a finding no single-perspective study could have produced. Naming the authentic audience as the operative mechanism sharpens the design advice available for PjBL in Korean and other less commonly taught languages, and the finding that benefit tracks involvement carries a practical warning of its own: unless groups distribute meaningful roles rather than just administrative task slots, the gains of PjBL will keep pooling in whoever is already most active, a concern Lecturer herself was already circling when she spoke about the members who do not pull their weight.

3.3. Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the data are retrospective self-reports from one lecturer and six students; no baseline, student products, grades, task documents, or direct observation of

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p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494

the exhibition were analyzed, so the findings describe what informants said about the project and cannot show that any competence was strengthened or changed. Second, the students were selected purposively for strong performance and clear recall of the project, which favors positive accounts and leaves out less successful or less engaged students; in the accounts reported here, the free-rider problem is described mainly by the Lecturer and by one student. Even among the selected students, engagement varied, which suggests that strong project performance did not necessarily coincide with high individual involvement. Third, the only teacher informant designed, supervised, and assessed the project, and the students were interviewed about a course in which she assigned the grades, so self-presentation and social desirability may have shaped the accounts; because all informants belong to the same course, their accounts also cannot serve as independent corroboration of one another. Fourth, the study covers one exhibition project in one study program with a small sample, and it makes no claim of saturation or statistical generalization; whether the findings transfer to other contexts is for readers to judge.

Fifth, the interview guides operationalized some components narrowly (citizenship as cultural content, communication as Korean speaking, and character as time management and responsibility), differed in length between the students and the lecturer, and contained some closed or leading items, such as those on judging a source one had found, on whether the project theme touched on Korean cultural or social issues, and on the biggest benefit of learning through PjBL (see Appendix); this affects the comparison between the two groups, especially for citizenship. Because the questions about Korean language ability centered on the communication component, the case speaks most directly to language use there and says little about how the target language operated across the other five components; source evaluation is the clearest exception, since some accounts touched on reading Korean-language material critically. In addition, the participants were prospective Korean language teachers in a project whose purpose was the design of learning media, so the project was not designed to improve their Korean proficiency or cultural knowledge, and findings on these points should be read accordingly. Finally, the quotations were translated from Indonesian into English, which may have altered nuances of the original wording.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to describe how a lecturer and a group of learners perceive the implementation of project-based learning as a way of strengthening the 6Cs in Korean language learning. It succeeds on its own terms: both accounts converge closely enough on concrete detail, not just general impressions, that they can be read side by side as evidence of the same underlying practice. From both standpoints, the exhibition project clearly opened room for that strengthening, though the room filled unevenly across the six components. Collaboration, creativity, and communication came through as the components most strongly facilitated and recognized by both the lecturer and the learners. Character strengthened in ways that tracked each learner's own disposition, and critical thinking held up well in problem-solving but stayed thin in source evaluation. Citizenship, meanwhile, ended up the weakest component overall and the one point where the two perspectives genuinely diverged rather than merely differed in degree. Informants frequently linked their experiences to the presence of an authentic audience and to the depth of each student's involvement, although the design of the study cannot establish either as a cause. For lecturers designing similar projects in Korean language teacher education, these accounts point to three possibilities worth testing: building a source-verification step into the task, stating in the rubric what citizenship would look like in the project, and giving every group member a substantive role. Given the limitations discussed above, notably the small, purposively selected sample, the reliance on self-reports, and the dual role of the Lecturer as designer and sole teacher informant, the findings describe this case and should be treated as tentative. Further research could extend this dual-perspective design to other language courses and to students with varied levels of performance, add document analysis and direct observation alongside interviews, use instruments that cover the 6Cs more fully and equivalently for both groups, or follow how any benefits endure after the project has ended.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/jokal.v6i2.104881
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p- ISSN 2776-4486 e- ISSN 2776-4494