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Authentic Media Production in Project-Based EFL Learning: Exploring Student Perceptions of Language Development, Engagement, and Professional Skills in a Jordanian University

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Abstract

Project-based language learning research has linked authentic media-production tasks to perceived improvements in language and professional competencies, yet limited understanding exists of how and why students perceive these improvements. This qualitative study explored EFL university students' perceptions of language learning, motivation, and professional-skill development following an authentic media-production project. The study was conducted at Philadelphia University, Amman, Jordan, in an English for Media and Journalism course during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Sixty intermediate-to-advanced students, as a full class, completed a semester-long project producing a video news report or interview accompanied by a written reflective report. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and written reflective reports and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Three broad patterns emerged. First, students described holistic, multi-skill language gains rather than development confined to a single skill, with confidence-building identified as an outcome of iterative, low-stakes rehearsal rather than of the final performance itself. Second, engagement was often linked to the substantive, human dimension of the interview exchange, consistent with the construct of investment, rather than to the language task alone, with some students reporting that the experience reshaped their academic or career outlook. Third, the project elicited a wider range of professional and media-related competencies than typically expected of a conventional speaking task, including interview pragmatics, genre and register awareness, and, in later-emerging cases, translation sensitivity and audio-visual production skill. These findings indicate that authentic, project-based media tasks can facilitate integrated language and professional-identity development in EFL settings, with implications for syllabus design in English for Media and Journalism and similar content-integrated language programs.

Keywords: learner confidence, EFL, professional identity development, content and language integrated learning, video production

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Introduction

The fast-paced evolution in the global media landscape has placed substantial changes on the skills required by English language graduates. These changes generated a set of new challenges in the tertiary higher education institutions in the Arab world. Al-Masshaqbah and Abuhasirah (2023) stated that although there are many classes to take, many Jordanian university students still encounter obstacles when attempting to apply their linguistic knowledge and abilities to authentic media production environments. This tension has raised concerns in academia and business, as English has become the dominant language of journalism, international communication, and higher education. This divide is evident in the enduring educational paradox that students learn to think critically about news stories but get little chance to write them. Although students have theoretical knowledge of journalistic writing styles, they often lack chances to use that knowledge in actual communicative situations. This is a symptom of a more profound pedagogical problem where language analysis is valued over language production, and this is translated into teaching that promotes interpreting to the detriment of engaging in authentic and meaningful use of the language.

Consequently, authentic media production as a university course is attracting considerable international attention as a promising teaching practice. Supporters of authentic journalistic production as a learning tool at the tertiary level argue that there is no better way to hone both linguistic ability and professional know-how. For instance, Tseng (2018) stated that media-based teaching of English has been largely built on the passive side of learning such as close reading of news and media texts analysis and grammar work which considered as unrelated to real communicative situations. Although these methodologies are still essential for establishing a foundation, they lack the context in which learners can practice the communicative expertise they will really need as journalists.

The absence of this type of pedagogy has also fueled interest in preservice language teachers adopting authentic media production projects (Yang, 2014). Promoters of this approach stress that involving students in the production of real media content as opposed to confining them to text analysis, leads to a stronger and more significant learning ecosystem that nurtures both language and professional capabilities. Project-based language learning (PBLL) has been identified as a theoretical and pedagogical approach that helps to articulate the relationships among task-based language teaching, learner needs, and project work within the broad context of Communicative language teaching (Beckett, 2023; Beckett & Slater, 2018; Beckett & Slater, 2019). According to Gilmore (2007) and Widdowson (1998), the traditional classroom activities simplify the language use, but the content of professional journalism brings the learners to the complexity and communicative challenge of real-world professional discourse.

As students research, interview, write, edit, and produce work for real audiences, they engage in a multidimensional learning process that takes place in authentic communicative situations and that calls for disciplined command of professional terminology and genre conventions as well as language skills on the level of the content of communication (Stoller, 2002). Indeed, such productive

involvement with language is expected to produce learning outcomes qualitatively distinct from and potentially more enduring than that observable following passive exposure to language in more traditional educational contexts (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Stoller, 2002).

Nevertheless, the Jordanian higher education context is clearly underrepresented in the empirical literature, despite this theoretical underpinning and the emerging body of international findings that portray media production as a language-learning medium. As far as the researcher is aware, no published research has investigated the language development, engagement, and professional-skills outcomes of real-world media production projects for students of EFL in Jordan. The present research fills this gap by providing an in-depth qualitative study on the impact of a scripted, realistic media production project in an English for Media and Journalism course at a private university in Jordan.

In the Jordanian higher education context, EFL learners specifically those pursuing degrees in Applied English (Applied Linguistics) are required to attend a course in English for Media and Journalism, but they do not produce journalism for a real audience. Even when institutions have state-of-the-art media suites on campus, such as digital newsrooms and radio or television studios, these facilities often have little to do with formal language teaching. Employing the perceptions of media faculty at Jordanian universities, Abuhasirah and Ismael (2023) revealed that there is a disparity between students' academic qualifications and the practice-based requirements of the media labor market. They recommended that increasing the number of hands-on training hours available to students would provide them not only with exposure to the latest media tools, methods, and practices, but also with the practical and technical know-how needed to successfully enter the media labor market. Similarly, Al-Masshaqbah and Abuhasirah (2023) revealed that this gap builds a paradox: while students develop an analytical awareness of media language, they lack the productive skill that employers frequently prioritize when recruiting graduates. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate whether students perceive that the inclusion of a structured, authentic media production task in their English for Media and journalism curriculum enhances language learning, motivation, and readiness to work in the media.

This study pursues three interrelated objectives; each paired with a corresponding research question. The first objective is to explore EFL learners' language learning awareness as it emerged through their participation in an authentic media production experience, addressed through RQ1: In what ways do authentic media production projects influence EFL learners' language skills development in an English for the Media and Journalism course at a private university in Jordan? The second objective is to investigate learners' perceptions of the importance of motivation and engagement in undertaking an authentic media production project, addressed through RQ2: How do EFL learners view their motivation and engagement in media production tasks (TV shows, videos, and news reports)? The third objective is to examine students' perceptions of the professional and media skills they acquired through the project, along with their preparedness to engage in media work, addressed through RQ3: In what ways can authentic media production

projects contribute to the development of EFL learners' professional and media skills? Together, these objectives and research questions frame the study's inquiry into how authentic, real-world media production tasks shape language awareness, motivation, and professional readiness among EFL learners.

Review of Literature

Authentic Materials and Task-Based Language Teaching

The use of authentic materials and tasks, rather than materials specifically designed for language teaching, has been shown to enhance both the motivation and communicative usefulness of EFL teaching instruction (Nghi, 2023; Peacock, 1997; Sample, 2015). For example, a study conducted by Peacock (1997) in the Korean EFL context found that authentic materials promoted greater on-task behavior and increased higher levels of motivation compared to synthetic materials although self-reported motivation gains emerged only gradually and some learners rated authentic materials as less immediately engaging. This pattern has persisted in more recent research. Likewise, Latifah et al. (2025) study reported that authentic materials integrated into project-based speaking tasks increased Indonesian EFL learners' motivation, though such materials are also capable of introducing cognitive challenges leading to sustained anxiety in the learners highlighting that the motivational effects of authenticity are real not unconditional.

This focus on authenticity is linked to the more general Task-Based Language Teaching framework, which places meaningful real-world tasks over isolated grammar or lexical tasks as the medium for developing language (East, 2021; Ellis, 2021; Nunan, 2004). Within the TBLT model, reading and writing are generally integrated with spoken interaction in a collaborative manner, mirroring the communicative and social organization of authentic language use. Rather than conceiving them as isolated skills, these literacies are situated within tasks that are meaningful and that simulate real-world communication (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004, Willis, 2021). Systematic reviews on the implementation of TBLT in EFL environments report a positive impact of authentic, communicative tasks on learners' ability to utilize language in a more natural and integrated manner compared to traditional language teaching methods that focus on isolated and decontextualized language form instruction. In addition, this literature suggests that TBLT enhances learners' motivation, engagement, and willingness to participate in language learning activities (Anbarshahi & Yeganeh, 2026; Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Guo et al., 2026; Namkung & Kim, 2024). This is echoed by experimental evidence: Anbarshahi and Yeganeh (2026) found that Iranian EFL learners exposed to form-focused TBLT significantly outperformed a control group on both speaking fluency and motivation measures, reinforcing that meaningful, real-world tasks can drive gains in fluency and engagement simultaneously rather than as separate outcomes.

Project-based learning (PBL), a closely related pedagogical approach, similarly emphasizes the application of language skills within authentic, real-world contexts. Beyond linguistic gains, PBL has been argued to support the development

of broader life skills including communication, critical thinking, mutual respect, and self-regulation through collaborative work toward a shared, meaningful outcome (Hicham, 2024; Song et al., 2024). Studies combining PBL with video-based or multimodal production tasks in EFL settings report gains in student confidence, autonomy, and critical-skills development, while also noting that some students experience difficulty with the increased complexity of producing both spoken and written output simultaneously underscoring the importance of structured scaffolding within authentic, multimodal project work (Pamuji et al., 2025).Project-based approaches have also been shown to significantly improve EFL undergraduates' writing performance specifically, through enhanced idea generation, organization, and collaboration on real-world tasks (Andargie et al., 2025).

News and Media-Based EFL Instruction

A closely related study is that conducted by Tseng (2018), who investigated the integration of a News English course at a Taiwanese private university. The research involved 33 intermediate EFL learners who completed individual weekly mini-news projects and the final project was a collaborative news video production. Results found that the use of online news media in an EFL course in a task-based environment, where students were required to use the four skills, developed student positive attitudes towards the course and contributed to an integrated rather than compartmentalized skills learning.

Similarly, in the Asian context, Gong (2023) carried out a semester-long, quasi-experimental study comparing an experimental class receiving weekly peer-assisted sharing of online English news with a control class receiving traditional instruction among Chinese university ESL learners. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that consisted of standardized proficiency tests and semi-structured interviews, the study demonstrated statistically significant advancement in reading, and writing performance of those involved, with comparatively modest enhancement in the listening skill.

More broadly, it was argued that incorporating newspapers and broadcast news into ESL/EFL classrooms exposes learners to a rich and authentic input of vocabulary and sentence structures not found in textbook materials, and it also enhances learners' cross-cultural communicative competence and motivation by involving them in current, socially oriented issues (Manasrah & Al-Khawaldeh, 2014; Jain, 2024). This synergy is further confirmed by the latest studies located in the news-EFL context: Luo and Xie (2025), using a systemic functional linguistics (SFL) approach to examine Chinese EFL learners' news critical literacy. The findings revealed that discursive technology, contextual orientation, and critical awareness were interacting factors for learners' negotiation of news texts. Although they were concerned with critical evaluation (rather than production), this finding provides indirect, genre-specific support for the claim of the present study that authentic, news-based tasks, production among them, tap into integrated linguistic-cognitive resources rather than isolated, fragmented skills.

Taken together, this body of research suggests that news- and media-based instruction can facilitate productive integrated EFL skill development, although much of the extant empirical foundation, for example, Tseng (2018) and Gong

(2023) is established within East Asian university contexts; the present study contributes to this stream of research by exploring a Jordanian tertiary context and an interview rather than purely written or retold news format.

Foreign Language Anxiety, Confidence, and Self-Efficacy

Foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) has been a focal point of L2 research since Horwitz et al., 1986 seminal work, which framed FLCA as a discrete, context-specific anxiety resulting from the particular challenges of classroom language learning and included elements of communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed in the study still remains the most widely applied instrument within the domain and has significantly influenced subsequent studies on the association between learner anxiety and speaking and engagement in the L2 classroom.

A considerable number of recent qualitative studies have focused on how EFL learners manage and cope with speaking anxiety. Strategies that were most frequently reported in these studies are (over)practice and preparation; design of classroom activities and environment to be warm, supportive, non-threatening; exposure (to speaking-related tasks) in small, manageable steps; cognitive and emotional coping strategies, such as positive self-talk and reframing anxious thoughts, and emotion regulation (Theriana, 2023). Preparation and rehearsing are common discourses of coping strategies within this literature, a pattern which is mirrored in this study, especially within the sub-theme confidence-through-practice. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory is a complementary theoretical lens indicating that a person's perceived ability to perform a specific behavior can be influenced by enactive mastery experiences successfully performing the behavior, especially when the behavior is difficult and is perceived to be due to one's own effort. In the L2 context, this would mean that carrying out challenging authentic tasks (e.g., interviewing) successfully can be more than an end as a task performance, but a means of fostering learners' overall confidence and willingness to try their hands on target-language tasks in the future.

Learner Identity and Investment in Language Learning

Norton's (2000, 2013) poststructuralist theory of language learner identity has been influential in the field of second language motivation research, as it reconceptualizes motivation through the notion of investment. Learners' commitment to the language is thus not simply a function of individual ability or a unitary, fixed notion of motivation, but is shaped by the social and personal value attached to language use and by learners' access to desired or imagined identities and communities (Norton, 2000, 2013). When a teaching task provides access to a socially or personally valued identity that of a journalist, broadcaster, or professional interviewer, for example, students may become more deeply invested in the linguistic practices that constitute that identity, with implications for their language development.

This framework is particularly relevant to project-based and role-based language tasks, in which learners are asked to take on a professional or social role beyond that of language learners as such. The present study's identity-shift theme, in which participants described having "thought like a journalist" or performed the role of a television presenter, situates the authentic media project within this broader literature on identity and investment as a motivational mechanism in L2 learning.

Together, this body of literature gives three sources of evidence supporting the design of the current study and its research questions. First, authentic, task- and project-based approaches to teaching are now recognized as being effective for integrated development of EFL skills and fostering learner motivation (Peacock, 1997), which supplies theoretical support for RQ1 and RQ3. Second, instruction based on news and media has been associated with integrated language learning and positive affective changes from anxiety to confidence through practice (Tseng, 2018; Gong, 2023), paralleling results in the current study, but this line of research is still focused largely on East Asian contexts and has rarely specifically addressed interview-based formats. Third, although not explained in this article, theoretical studies in foreign language anxiety, self-efficacy and learner identity (Horwitz et al., 1986; Bandura, 1977; Norton, 2000, 2013) provide complementary explanations for how and why authentic media tasks may facilitate both language and motivational development.

Despite this convergence of supporting evidence, a definite void remains. None has investigated an authentic, interview-driven media production project where EFL learners themselves carry out, tape, and report on interviews with interviewees they select within a Jordanian or wider Arab context of higher education. This study bridges that void, by qualitatively exploring how such a project influences students' perceptions of language growth (RQ1), engagement and motivation (RQ2), and mastery of professional- and media-based abilities (RQ3), further developing the news-based EFL instruction literature into a novel task type, an institutional environment, and a geographic locale.

Beyond addressing this empirical gap, this study contributes to the literature in four further ways. First, it is one of very few investigations focusing on EFL students' perspectives on engagement in an authentic media production project. Second, it fills a critical geographical and contextual gap in the literature by being the first empirical study of authentic media production as a language teaching tool in the context of higher education in Jordan. Third, to extend Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) theory, it explores the use of this pedagogic approach in the domain of English for Media and Journalism, a speciality that has so far attracted scarce research attention. Fourth, the research may have practical implications for curriculum planners, department chairs, and instructors of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Jordanian universities, as it proposes evidence-based recommendations for pedagogical innovation and program enhancement.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was conducted in a Media and Journalism English course offered as part of the Applied English program at Philadelphia University in Amman, Jordan, during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The course convened for three hours each week over a full semester. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the research site: the course was chosen because its mandatory, semester-long authentic media production component directly aligned with the study's research questions. Data was collected in two phases: reflective reports were obtained from all participants, while a purposively selected subsample additionally took part in semi-structured interviews to explore further qualitative insight.

Participants

Within the selected research site, all enrolled students were invited to participate, yielding a total sample of N = 60 students, whose English proficiency ranged from intermediate to advanced, as determined by instructor assessment and self-report. Of these, a purposively selected subsample of 20 students chosen as information-rich cases whose reflective reports offered particularly detailed or contrasting perspectives additionally took part in semi-structured interviews.

The Media Production Project

Media production assignment was used to accommodate students' group-based needs in ways similar to the present study. The media production assignment accounted for 20% of students' final course marks. Evaluation criteria addressed both content (relevance, accuracy, and informativeness of the journalistic topic) and language (clarity, fluency, and appropriateness of register for journalistic writing), applied consistently to both the video and the written report.

Materials/Instruments

Two primary instruments were used to generate the study's qualitative data. The first was the written reflective report submitted as part of the media production project, in which students described the production process and the language and professional skills they perceived themselves to have developed. The second was a semi-structured interview protocol, administered to a purposively selected subsample of participants, designed to allow their written reflections to be further explored and clarified.

Data Collection Procedure

The course in which data collection took place was designed around two integrated sets of objectives: content learning objectives and language learning objectives, following Coyle et al.'s (2010) CLIL framework for curriculum design. Content objectives centered on building students' knowledge of news English across a range of current issues, while language objectives targeted the development of specific English language skills through purpose-built tasks and projects. The full

syllabus, which reflects this integration and situates the media production project within the semester's broader instructional design, is provided in Appendix B.

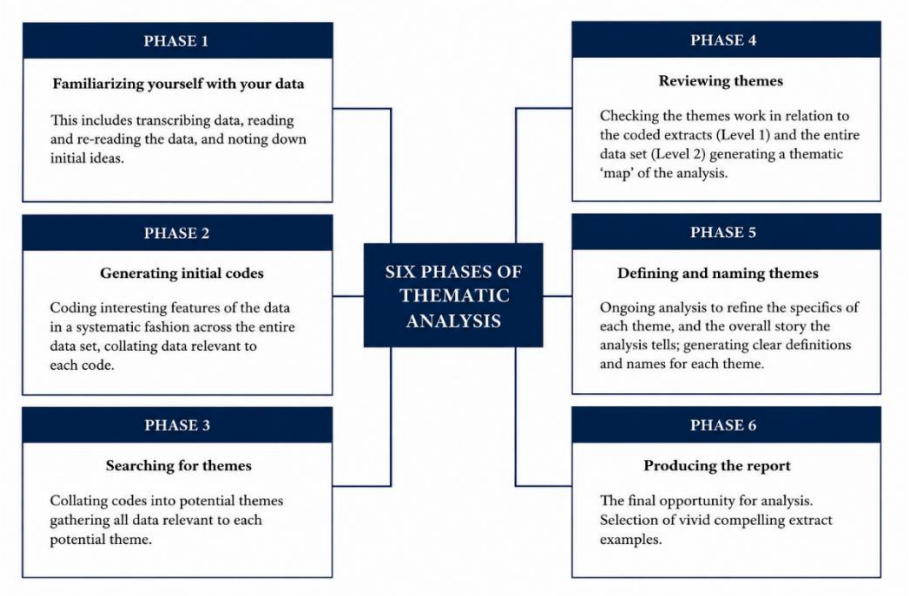
Data was collected in two sequential phases over the course of the semester. In the first phase, all 60 enrolled students completed the media production project, comprising the video piece and the accompanying written reflective report, as a required course assignment; these reflective reports were collected from the full sample at the point of submission. In the second phase, a purposively selected subsample of 20 students, chosen as information-rich cases whose reflective reports offered particularly detailed or contrasting perspectives, was invited to take part in individual semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted in person, lasting approximately 50 minutes, and took place after the reflective reports had been reviewed, allowing the interview questions to probe and clarify points raised in each participant's report. Prior to students' participation, all interviewees were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative data from both the written reflective reports and the interview transcripts were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis procedure. Consistent with this reflexive TA approach, coding was treated as an interpretive, researcher-informed process rather than a search for pre-existing themes, with theme development proceeding iteratively rather than through a fixed coding frame, as elaborated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Thematic Analysis Phases (Braun and Clarke, 2006)



Results

Regarding students' perceived effectiveness of the integrated, project-based English for Media and Journalism course, results from the semi-structured interviews are reported under three major headings: (a) the perceived effectiveness for students' language development, (b) the perceived engagement and motivation among students while participating in media production tasks (e.g., videos, news reports and TV programs), and (c) the perceived development of EFL learners' professional and media-related skills. Participant quotations are identified using the abbreviation US (University Student) followed by a numerical identifier (e.g., US1, US11).

RQ2: Students' Perceived Effectiveness for Language Development

In response to the first research question, *in what ways do authentic media production projects influence EFL learners' language skills development in an English for the Media and Journalism course at a private university in Jordan*? the analysis of the semi-structured interviews generated two themes that illustrate students' perceived impact of task-based English for Media and Journalism projects on their language development. Each theme is presented below, supported by representative excerpts from the interviews.

Impact 1: Confidence Development Through Practice

The majority of university students felt that they had gone through a process of what might be described as stages of initial discomfort or reluctance toward greater confidence. They explained this transformation as a result of practice preparations rather than inspiration at a particular point in time. As one of the participants noted,

"Since I had practiced many times, I was more comfortable and confident while I was speaking and asking questions during the interview" (US 1).

It was a much more sudden change for US12, who shared that:

"The Media project really pushed us out of our comfort zones and made us more confident in interviewing and journalistic skills" (US 12).

Other participants had similar experiences. Such as US14 who reported that:

"By practicing and performing the script before the camera, I gained considerable confidence in public speaking" (US 14).

Also, US 15 mentioned that:

"I thought one of the difficulties for me was trying to keep the conversation going naturally, but I felt more at ease as the interview went on" (US 15).

These stories highlight once more the importance of sustained involvement in and recursive practice of a particular performance in building confidence and communicative competence.

Impact 2: Development across receptive and productive language skills

Participants also agreed that the project enhanced a variety of language skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and vocabulary all at once, as opposed to the advancement of one single skill.

The authentic nature of the Media assignment meant that students were required to speak, listen, read and write from the beginning to the end of the project. This resulted in general language development. As an example, US,1, US2 and US 13 detailed that,

"This was a good experience that helped me to study and practice English by talking, listening, reading, and writing and enhanced our oral communication and pronunciation."

US12 claimed the following:

"This task also helped me to improve my English pronunciation, speed of speaking and communication skills and made me easier to listen more effectively in real world too!" US 12

In conclusion, these responses reveal that EFL students at Philadelphia University-Jordan anticipated several language gains through involvement in the authentic media production project. The most prominent finding to emerge across the participants was the enhancing of multiple language skills at once (i.e., speaking, listening, and writing), rather than the improvement in one single skill. This implies that the task-based, integrated-skills approach of the project may have contributed to promoting cross-skill development in media English, which contrasts markedly with the typical, reception-based media English teaching. Increased confidence in oral communication also emerged as a frequently reported and closely related outcome. Participants attributed this improvement not only to the final recorded performance itself but also to the process of preparation, repeated practice, and practice leading up to the recording.

RQ2: Students' Perceived Effectiveness for Engagement and Motivation

In response to the second research question, how do EFL learners view their motivation and engagement in media production tasks (TV shows, videos, and news reports)? the analysis of the semi-structured interviews generated four themes, which illustrate students' perceptions on the influence of the task-based English for Media and Journalism project on their engagement, motivation and emotional experiences. Below are each of these themes in detail.

Impact 1: Affective Barriers and Emotional Engagement

It is also the case that although university students presented a very positive image of the experience, all participants reported feeling anxious. These emotional

trials were particularly pronounced in rehearsal and live interviews, which students were required to perform publicly and on-the-spot to speak. For example, US1 stated that:

"One of the things I struggled with was being nervous while we were recording," US1

US8 reported that the task made her nervous, especially at the prospect of conducting the interview, and organizing it, *"I was so nervous! while asking questions and organizing the interview."*

Similarly, US3 considered the emotional nature of the experience to be architectural:

"I went through personal anxiety during the process, and it made me realize how vital natural chemistry is to a good flow of conversation."

Although these emotional challenges initially had a negative impact on students' performance, the respondents generally perceived them as temporary impediments that they were able to overcome through active participating. The tension between anxiety and growing confidence indicates that engagement in the real media task proved deep emotional involvement, and that such participation evoked is a profound emotional engagement, eventually driving personal growth and enhanced self-confidence

Impact 2: Professional Identity Formation

Another prevalent theme among the respondents was representing professional media identities. Respondents commented frequently that they felt like journalists, presenters or interviewers as they worked on the project. This sense of role immersion seemed to increase students' engagement in the tasks and the authenticity of the learning process. For instance, US1 insisted that: "*This project has made me think more like a journalist and made me more confident when I speak English in real-life situations.".* Similarly, US 14 noted that one had to *"learn to have comfortable body language as a real television presenter* ". Several participants related these experiences to coming professional situations. For example, US19 stated that *"this project has definitely helped build my confidence in interviewing, reporting, and using language for professional media production",* and US 20 reported that *"this assignment made me think more like a journalist."*

These results suggest that the assigned authentic media production task enabled learners to imagine themselves as professionals in communicative roles and in so doing enhanced both engagement and motivation.

Impact 3: Content-Based Engagement and Interpersonal Learning

The most common method was "*learning from interviewees*" and deep listening or reading the interviews. Consistently, the majority of the participants discussed acquiring new information, views, or cultural knowledge from their interviewee. For example, US13 explained that:

"After conducting the interview, I started to know more about Chinese culture and the contrast between living in China and living in Jordan."

US15 reported that "I *got more information about the differences and similarities between Jordanian and British culture."* To be sure, there were profounder intellectual and personal learning experiences described by some participants. For instance, US 16 reflected that:

"Came away with a strong understanding of the role media and journalism play as a mirror for cultural identity."

At the same time, US17 emphasized that: *"Dr. Mohammad's insights enabled me to understand the significance of balancing theory with practical application and adapting educational methods to modern realities."."*

These answers suggest that the participants were not simply learning a language, but were also interacting with ideas, cultures and professional experiences in ways that made the project more personally meaningful.

Impact 4: Aspirational and Motivational Impact

For a smaller number of participants, the Media and Journalism project had a stronger impact on their personal dreams and future plans. After hearing the experiences and views of interviewees, students stated that they were prompted to think about their own academic and career paths. For instance, one participant commented on their interviewee, "*his words made me consider more seriously my academic and future career goals"* (US8). This shows a straightforward incentive effect. Similarly, US17, *"this experience improved my academic understanding of language learning and strengthened my perspective on innovation in education*. Despite being less frequently reported, these comments indicate that genuine media creation tasks can affect students' aspirations for the future and foster enduring motivation development.

RQ3: Professional and Media-Related Skills

In response to the third research question, in what ways can authentic media production projects contribute to the development of EFL learners' professional and media skills? the analysis of the semi-structured interviews generated six themes that described student perceptions of the impact of the

authentic media production project on their professional and media-related capabilities. Below are these thematic findings in detail.

Impact 1: Professional Communication and Flow Management

One of the most significant results of the media production activities was the acquisition of professional communicative competence in interview and reporting situations. Learning how to ask the right questions, keeping the conversation flowing and having a trained but natural conversation were some of the things they picked up. This encompassed both language for interaction and a greater awareness of what is linguistically required by professional interviewing. For example, US1 came to realize that: *I learned how to ask professional questions and confidently talk to people.".* Just as US19 commented on how to formulate "*professional interview questions"* and the way to "*structure a formal dialogue.".* They also stressed the need to stay natural not become staged. As an illustration, US15 confessed to having a hard time *"keeping the conversation flowing naturally,*" and US18 had a similar aspiration: to get the report to "*sound natural and professional*." These narratives reveal that students gained fundamental media communication strategies related to interviewing, reporting and keeping an on-going interaction in professional situations.

Impact 2: Organizational and Production Management Skills

University students expressed similar concerns and insights about the organizational and procedural aspects of media production. These were how to schedule interviews, how to work within time limit, how to organize reports, and how to deal with the editing. US3 characterized these challenges as *"rushing the early planning phase*," but for US20 these problems related to "*organizing the interview and… preparing the podcast."* Technical Production was also noted. She also mentioned that she had to "*cut down on the time during recording and editing."* These results indicate that the project supported the acquisition of fundamental media production management skills such as planning, sequencing, and post-production arrangement.

Impact 3: Identity Shift and Professional Role Adoption

One theme that emerged among the participants was the development of journalistic and media producer identities. Students often talked about how it changed their sense of self to that of a journalist, a presenter, or a media producer. US1 noted that "*This project made me think more like a journalist",* while US14 spoke of learning to employ "*body language that is comfortable as a real television presenter*." Likewise, US19 commented that the experience gave him increased confidence in *"interviewing, reporting and using language for professional media production"* and US20 reported that she "*thought as a real journalist."* These

results suggest that engagement in authentic media activities encouraged students to adopt professional roles that fostered higher engagement and language use congruent with real-world media identities.

Impact 4: Interpersonal and Content-Based Learning as Journalistic Practice

Participants often felt that they were able to learn from those interviewed and so they had a high level of engagement with the topic. Learning went far beyond language learning; it was cultural, social and professional. For example, US13 was exposed to "*Chinese culture and contrasts between life in China and Jordan,"* and US15 contemplated *"the differences and likenesses between Jordanian and British culture*." More sophisticated reflections were also evident. US16 discussed learning to *"see media and journalism as a reflection of cultural identity,"* and US17 spoke of the importance of *"integrating theory and practical application."* These results imply that the interview format encouraged productive intellectual engagement, thereby establishing information acquisition and interpretation as core journalistic practices.

Impact 5: Emerging Specialist Media Skills

Apart from general communication and management, some of the participants also showed initial recognition towards more specialized media-making techniques. These ranged from how to build rapport to awareness of register, non-verbal features and journalistic writing strategies. For instance, US3 stressed the significance of establishing rapport to *break the ice* and "*reduce anxiety*", and US14 drew attention to the application of "*easy, simple, clean and professional English words for journalism*." In the same vein, US16 spoke of "*structuring a cohesive news report under journalist guidelines*" *and* US7 and US 14 mentioned eye contact and body language to convey meaning in televised presentation. Even though some of these competences were mentioned by only a handful of the participants, they still suggest the formation of media literacy skills relevant to the working environments of media professionals.

Impact 6: Obtaining Technical and Reflective Production Skills

Finally, participants reported that they were led to develop potential technical production skills and reflective practice. These were such things as video editing, audio management, and an awareness of production quality. For instance, US13 noted difficulties in "*editing the interview video*," whereas US 16 stressed the need to distinguishing between *"background ambient sounds from concrete sound effects during recording*". Further, a number of participants evidenced strategic moments of self-correction and future-oriented coping. US18 reflected on how to work on *"eye contact and body language"* and on the use of "*supplementary visual materials,"* and US3 on the need to prepare the interview schedules in a more rigid

fashion. These results indicate that participation in media production activities facilitated development of technical skills as well as reflective professional practice.

Discussion

This study contributes to a limited body of research examining the impact of a whole-task, authentic English for Media and Journalism production project on EFL students' perceived language improvement, engagement and motivation, and professional and media skills development, as captured through reflective reports and interviews. Thematic analysis of the 20 semi-structured interviews resulted in 12 codes, structured around the study's three research theme, while the 60 reflective reports served as supplementary data source for triangulation process (Creswell, 2013), providing additional context that supported and corroborated the interview-based findings. This discussion is organized by research questions, with findings compared against the literature where relevant.

In response to the first research question — In what ways do authentic media production projects influence EFL learners' language skills development in an English for Media and Journalism course at a private university in Jordan? the findings showed that the strongest general pattern in the data was a concurrent increase in language skills, identified in 13 of 20 participants' accounts. Participants rarely described individual language skills as developing independently; rather, they conceptualized speaking, writing, and listening as an integrated set of competencies that progressed simultaneously through their engagement with the media project. This pattern suggests that the integrated nature of the project — which required participants to conduct research, carry out interviews, record content, and write up a news story — promoted multiple language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and pronunciation) concurrently, rather than producing gains confined to a single skill. This finding is consistent with the theoretical basis for project-based language learning put forward by Stoller (2002), who argues that project work brings the four skills together within a single purposeful outcome and therefore requires learners to develop them concurrently rather than separately. Read alongside whole-language treatments of integrated skill development (Goodman, 1986; Freeman & Freeman, 1992), the present results offer empirical evidence, from a real-world media-production setting, in support of the theoretical argument that skills co-evolve when practiced within a meaningful communicative task rather than when pursued through isolated, decontextualized drills. This synergy is also consistent with the broader news-EFL literature reviewed above. For instance, Luo and Xie (2025) found that discursive technology, contextual orientation, and critical awareness functioned as interacting factors in EFL learners' negotiation of news texts, though their study addressed critical reception of news rather than its production. The present findings extend this pattern from reception into production: where Luo and Xie (2025) observed integration in how learners read and critically evaluated news, participants in the present study demonstrated a parallel integration, consistently describing speaking, writing, and listening as developing together rather than in isolation. This convergence across reception and production suggests that engagement with the news genre, regardless of directionality, may be a distinctively integrative task type for EFL skill development a comparison that also sharpens the contribution of the

present study, since, as noted in the literature review, this line of research has rarely addressed production-based or interview-driven formats.

Confidence-building through practice was another dominant theme, identified in 9 of 20 participants' accounts. Participants consistently described confidence not as something achieved immediately upon task completion, but as something built through repeated practice: iterative rounds of recording, questioning, and presenting appeared to produce a gradual shift toward greater ease. This pattern is consistent with the FLCA literature reviewed above, which builds on Horwitz et al.'s (1986) identification of communication apprehension and fear of negative valuation as prominent, learner-specific sources of anxiety in oral tasks. It also echoes Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory, in which enactive mastery experiences successfully performing a challenging, effortful behavior — build a learner's perceived capability for future performance; the present participants' accounts of gradually increasing ease across successive rounds of recording and interviewing closely mirror this mechanism. Recent empirical evidence confirms that public speaking anxiety among EFL students operates at multiple stages, encompassing both anticipatory (process) anxiety and in-the-moment performance anxiety (Halimah & Nuraida, 2025). This distinction is consistent with the present findings: because rehearsal in this study addressed the *process* stage, the drafting, planning, and repeated low-stakes attempts leading up to the final recording rather than only the performance itself, it may have targeted the anxiety-generating stage most amenable to intervention through repeated exposure.

In response to the second research question - in what ways does the authentic media production project influence EFL learners' engagement and motivation in an English for Media and Journalism course at a private university in Jordan? the evidence was relatively scant compared to that for RQ1 and RQ3, a trend that itself calls for methodological reflection (see Limitations). Where evidence was available, however, it was substantial. Interpersonal and content learning was the most common RQ2-relevant theme, identified in 13 of 20 participants' accounts, though with considerable variation in intensity. This theme related to moments when participants felt they had learned something, gained a new perspective, or obtained insight from their interviewee — learning that participants did not frame as a language-skill gain. For a small number of participants (US 8, US 11, and US 17), this expanded into an aspirational impression: the interview experience was described as having shaped their own academic or professional outlook. This suggests that for at least a few students, motivation to participate in the project stemmed not from the language task itself but from the genuine human contact it brought about — a dynamic that parallels Norton's (2000, 2013) formulation of investment, which reframes learners' commitment to a target language not as a fixed individual trait but as something shaped by the social and personal value they attach to language use, and by their access to desired or imagined identities and communities. This is consistent with recent applications of Darvin and Norton's (2015) expanded investment model in EFL contexts: Rahaman (2025), in a narrative case study of EFL learning in Bangladesh, similarly found that

engagement with English deepened when connected to imagined future identities — such as future

In response to the third research question — in what ways does the authentic media production project develop EFL learners' professional and media-based abilities in an English for Media and Journalism course at a private university in Jordan? RQ3 proved the most richly differentiated of the three, accounting for the largest number of distinct codes (6 of 12). Professional communication and flow management, the ability to conduct a natural-sounding professional exchange, manage conversational flow, and avoid stilted delivery was the most frequently cited RQ3 theme (12 of 20 participants). This suggests that the interview format was broadly effective in developing this specific pragmatic competence, regardless of participants' chosen topic or interviewee. This finding is consistent with recent experimental evidence: Anbarshahi and Yeganeh (2026) found that Iranian EFL learners exposed to form-focused, real-world tasks significantly outperformed a control group on speaking fluency measures, alongside gains in motivation. While their design was quantitative and controlled, the convergence with the present qualitative findings suggests that structured exposure to authentic, naturally organized talk can measurably improve learners' management of turn-taking, sequencing, and conversational coherence a pattern that recurred across participants regardless of interview topic.

Beyond this core competence, several infrequently reported but conceptually discrete abilities were observed, indicating that the real-world media-based format encouraged the development of a wider set of professional skills than those traditionally acquired via standard speaking activities. This included genre and register awareness: participants recognized that broadcast English is simplified and demonstrated awareness of journalistic conventions in news delivery. Nonverbal and paralinguistic competence was also emphasized by participants, particularly the use of eye contact and body language during presentations. Moreover, the interview data demonstrated the development of translation and interlingual awareness, participants discussed the difficulty of translating culturally bound language as well as technical audio/visual production skills, such as the intentional use of ambient and scripted sound in media production.

Such a diversification of emergent competences is consistent with recent research on digital multimodal composing in EFL contexts. Zhang and Peng (2025), for instance, found that learners' video artifacts reflected a cluster of literacies including audience awareness, semiotic awareness, and genre awareness that extended beyond the task's explicit linguistic goals, suggesting that authentic production tasks may encourage learners to develop a wider range of literacies than anticipated at the outset of instructional design. Similarly, US 16's interlingual awareness and translation practice align with classroom-based research on EFL students' use of literal versus paraphrastic translation strategies to preserve the emotive and cultural connotations of source texts (Ymeri & Vula, 2025), yet it is admittedly a singular example within the dataset that would require further data

student-selected topics and modalities expand (e.g., participants using multilingual source material, or producing more extensively edited audio/video content), the project may elicit an even wider array of media-production literacies than captured in the current codebook. This suggests that the learning outcomes of such authentic projects may be, to some extent, emergent and topic-specific rather than predetermined by task design a point I return to in the Pedagogical Implications section below.

Two participants (P3, P18) also exhibited strategic self-correction: they did more than merely state a problem; they identified a specific, prospective revision to their process (e.g., checking interviewees more carefully, rehearsing more, and bringing audiovisual materials). This is a relatively sophisticated metacognitive move, consistent with self-regulated learning (SRL) models, in which Tran and Tran (2021) identified iterative planning, monitoring, and evaluation as effective components of project-based EFL tasks more generally. Its occurrence, even within this small subset of the sample, indicates that the reflective-report component of the task may itself be fostering a transferable professional habit (iterative self-evaluation), in addition to the language and media competences more immediately targeted by the task.

Conclusion

This study investigated EFL university students' perceptions of language learning, motivation, and professional development in an authentic, integrated media production project. Three main themes were identified from a thematic analysis of reflective reports by all 60 students participating in an English for Media and Journalism module, and these were supplemented by semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected subsample of 20 participants. First, participants reported improvement in the range of skills and described progress in all four skills or in subsets of the four skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking), with confidence-building identified as a recurring practice-dependent mediator of these improvements. Second, where motivational aspects could be identified in participants' reflections, these tended to be tied to the meaningful, human interaction of the interview itself rather than treated as separate from it (e.g., language problem-solving occurring within the interaction rather than in preparation for it) suggesting that the authenticity and personal relevance of the project, not merely its communicative demands, may be central to its motivational appeal. Third, it seemed that the project engaged a broader and more nuanced set of professional and media skills than a typical classroom speaking task would ever elicit, such as interview pragmatics and genre consciousness, and, in a few instances, translation awareness and technical audio/video production know-how. Taken together, these findings point to the potential of authentic, project-based media activities to foster the development of both language and job skills in the EFL setting and suggest that there are meaningful differences between learners in terms of which aspect of the experience linguistic, affective, or professional is most salient for their own perception of learning.

These findings are useful for designing similar English for Media and Journalism modules or other content-based language modules. 1 Task authenticity and topic selection should be maintained: The participants' motivation to participate in the project was often connected to the topic of their self-chosen interview (e.g., migration, cultural identity, career advice) and much less to the language task in the abstract, so teachers planning similar projects are advised to make sure that students have a real choice as to the topic and interviewee and do not impose one topic type across all students, as relevance of content to personal experience seems to be a rather powerful motivator in sustaining depth of reflective engagement. Second, the structured rehearsal aspect should be built-in as opposed to a single, one-time performance: the reported gains in confidence were consistently ascribed to process of practicing and rehearsing and not the end recorded performance, so course designs that follow through on the rehearsal arc (e.g., by way of low-stakes rehearsal opportunities mock interviews with peers, for example, or run-throughs of an interview prior to final recording) are more likely to prove supportive of confidence building, a process this project appears to hinge on, rather than opting to contemplate the option of rehearsing as " preparation " to be taken up or not by students at their own pace. Third, the reflective report itself could be utilized as a learning tool rather than simply an assessment mechanism: the development of strategic self-correction in a portion of the reflections (participants pinpoint a particular problem and offers a focused, forward-looking resolution) indicates that reflective writing may foster metacognitive and self-evaluative tendencies that have utility beyond language acquisition per se and reflective prompts may be reformulated so that they more explicitly invite this type of error to revision narrative (e.g. , What would you do differently next time and why?) as opposed to more broad “what did you learn” framing, a revision that might not only increase the number of participants who take up this metacognitive move but also bolster the evidentiary foundation for RQ2, which was relatively under-represented in the current data.

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