

HANDLING CONFLICTS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING-FOCUSED PROJECT-BASED LEARNING: INSIGHTS FROM LOW-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

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Abstract: *This study explored how low-achieving students in Vietnam manage group conflicts during project-based learning (PBL) speaking courses and how teachers can support them. A mixed methods approach was used, including a questionnaire (n = 48) and follow-up group interviews. Data were analyzed using the Thomas-Kilmann conflict management model. The findings showed that low-achieving students often preferred to solve conflicts through collaboration (47.9%) and compromise (27.1%). Few chose competing or avoiding as their first-choice strategies. However, when their first approach did not work, some students, especially male, switched to more assertive or avoidant strategies. A Chi-square test revealed a significant relationship between gender and the subsequent conflict management choice ($p = 0.035$). Although many students tried to deal with problems on their own, they believed that teacher support was important when conflicts became serious or affected group performance. Students suggested that teachers could help by providing basic training in conflict management, regularly checking in with groups, and allowing private ways of reporting problems. These findings suggest that low-achieving students may need more support in group work, especially when they lack confidence or communication skills. Teachers play a key role in guiding conflict resolution and creating a respectful classroom environment that encourages active participation from all students.*

Keywords: *Speaking courses; Teacher support; Project-based learning (PBL); Conflict management; Group conflict.*

1. Introduction

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a student-centered teaching method that encourages students to work on real-world projects in teams. Unlike traditional approaches that focus on memorization and individual tasks, PBL requires students to collaborate, communicate, and solve problems together (Sah et al., 2024). In teaching English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL), PBL is especially effective in developing speaking skills, as it provides learners with authentic opportunities to use English in discussions, negotiations, and presentations (Wuntu et al., 2022). Through teamwork, students have more opportunities to speak, helping them improve their fluency and confidence in communication.

Several key elements contribute to the success of PBL, including authentic tasks, collaboration, student autonomy, continuous feedback, and

communication (Ni'mah et al., 2024). Among these, communication is essential, as students must express their ideas, listen to others, and make group decisions. However, working in teams also creates challenges for students, such as language barriers, unclear role distribution, cultural disagreements, or differences in expressing opinions. These challenges can be more pronounced among low-achieving students, as they often lack confidence, have limited problem solving skills, or experience frustration in group settings (Alghamdi & Siddiqui, 2016). As a result, such difficulties can lead to conflicts that negatively affect group performance and learning outcomes. If not properly managed, these conflicts can further reduce motivation and make collaboration difficult, ultimately hindering the benefits of PBL for low-achieving students (Lee et al., 2015).

Although conflicts in PBL teamwork are well recognized, it is not yet clear how low-achieving students handle these challenges. Difficulties such as decision-making struggles, personality differences, language barriers, and cultural misunderstandings can affect communication, but their exact impact requires further exploration. Additionally, teachers play an important role in helping students manage these issues, but more research is needed to understand how they can best support low-achieving students in handling conflicts and improving communication in PBL speaking courses. This study aims to explore the following.

1. *What are the most common conflict management styles that low-achieving students use in teamwork during PBL speaking courses?*

2. *How can teachers support low-achieving students in managing and resolving conflicts during PBL speaking courses?*

By addressing these issues, this study helps improve understanding of how low-achieving students handle conflicts in PBL teamwork and how teachers can support them. The findings identify common ways these students manage conflicts, allowing educators to develop better strategies to improve teamwork and communication. This research also provides useful ideas for curriculum design, teacher training, and classroom activities, making PBL more effective for low-achieving students.

2. Research overview

2.1. Project-Based Learning (PBL) in ESL/EFL speaking courses

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that actively engages ESL students in real-world projects, combining teamwork, research, and presentations to improve their speaking skills (Simbolon et al., 2019). Unlike traditional rote memorization, PBL encourages authentic communication through discussion and problem solving, improving fluency, accuracy, and confidence. This method also increases motivation by connecting language learning to meaningful, real-life contexts and fosters critical thinking and problem solving skills, shifting the focus to student-centered learning (Habók & Nagy, 2016). However, challenges arise, particularly for students with lower language

proficiency, who may find difficult, complex speaking tasks. Therefore, teachers must carefully balance providing guidance and promoting learner autonomy while using clear criteria to assess both language and content.

The success of PBL depends on several key factors. First, engaging students in authentic communication tasks makes language use more natural and relevant (Firdaus & Septiady, 2023). Second, fostering student autonomy encourages greater motivation and active participation, especially when learners take ownership of their projects. Despite promoting independence, effective teacher support is essential to provide clear instructions and timely feedback that help improve speaking skills (Wang et al., 2018). Finally, collaboration within groups allows students to exchange ideas, develop communication strategies, and build confidence through interaction (Siminto et al., 2024). By integrating these elements, PBL can create a rich and supportive learning environment that improves both language proficiency and the confidence of the learner in ESL speaking courses.

2.2. Communication challenges and conflict in PBL group work in Vietnamese universities

The benefits of Project-Based Learning (PBL) for students in general and for speaking skill development in particular, as discussed earlier, are undeniable. These include increased speaking confidence, enhanced motivation, improved fluency, and greater autonomy of the learner.

However, while the pedagogical benefits of PBL are evident, its implementation in contexts such as Vietnam also presents notable challenges, particularly with regard to communication, time management, and group coordination. Similar issues have been reported in other Asian EFL settings like Thailand and China, where difficulties in managing group work, ensuring equal participation, and assessing individual contributions have hindered effective application (Wimolmas, 2018).

In Vietnam, one major issue is unequal participation. Low-achieving students tend to lack confidence, often relying on stronger peers to take the lead. This leads to an unbalanced task distribution, where some students contribute significantly while others remain passive (Thanh,

2024). Without clear delegation, miscommunication arises, affecting group productivity. Language proficiency is another challenge, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Many students, particularly in rural areas, have limited exposure to spoken English, making them hesitant to express ideas. Fear of making mistakes and language anxiety further discourage participation (No, 2020). As a result, some students prefer written contributions over verbal ones, limiting real-time collaboration in PBL discussions.

Vietnamese cultural norms also influence communication. Students are accustomed to high-power distance, meaning they defer to authority rather than challenge ideas. In PBL, this translates into hesitation to express opinions or engage in debates (Huong, 2008). In addition, indirect communication styles can cause misunderstandings, as students may avoid direct disagreement, leading to unresolved conflicts. Lastly, decision-making difficulties and conflict avoidance affect collaboration. Low-achieving students often struggle with critical thinking and negotiation skills, leading to groupthink or withdrawal from discussions. Since Vietnamese students value harmony, they can avoid addressing conflicts directly, causing inefficiencies in teamwork (Linh & Loi, 2024).

In conclusion, while PBL offers significant benefits in developing student speaking skills, its effective implementation in Vietnamese universities depends on addressing challenges related to group coordination, participation, and conflict management within the local educational and cultural context.

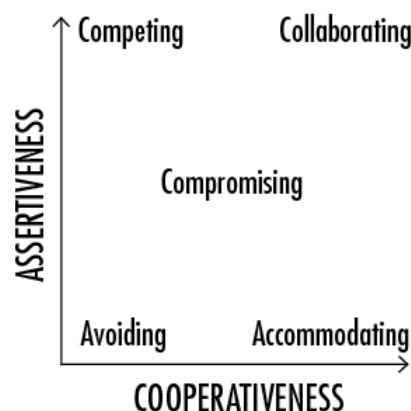
2.3. Theoretical framework: The Thomas-Kilmann conflict model in PBL

As mentioned above, conflicts often occur in teamwork, especially in PBL speaking courses, where students with different backgrounds, language abilities, and attitudes work together. If not handled well, these conflicts can create misunderstandings and make collaboration difficult. Teachers play an important role in helping students manage conflicts by providing support, teaching communication strategies, and encouraging cooperation. By understanding how students respond to conflicts, teachers can guide

them toward more effective solutions. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model (Thomas, 2008) provides a useful framework for analyzing different ways students handle conflicts and how teachers can assist them in improving their conflict resolution skills.

According to Thomas (2008), the model explains five ways people handle conflicts based on two factors: assertiveness, which is how much a person prioritizes their own needs, and cooperativeness, which is how much they consider the needs of others. The five conflict management styles, competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating, help people understand how to handle disagreements. In the English learning scene, these styles influence how students and teachers interact in classroom activities and group work.

Figure 1. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model



Competing style occurs when a person strongly defends his own ideas and does not consider the opinions of others. This approach is useful for making quick decisions, but it can also cause conflicts in group work. For example, in an English project, a student may insist on using his own ideas for a presentation and refuse to listen to classmates. Although this might help complete the task efficiently, it can also create tension among group members who feel ignored.

On the other hand, the collaborative style involves both assertiveness and cooperativeness. People who use this style try to find a solution that satisfies everyone. This requires open communication and teamwork, but it can take time. In an EFL speaking activity, two students who are preparing for a debate might disagree on their argument. Instead of arguing, they discuss their

points and combine their ideas to create a stronger argument. This helps both students improve their critical thinking and teamwork skills.

The compromising style balances assertiveness and cooperativeness by making mutual adjustments. It is useful when a quick and fair solution is needed, but it may not fully satisfy either side. For example, if an ESL teacher wants students to submit an essay in one week but students ask for two weeks, they might agree on a deadline of ten days. In this way, students have extra time to improve their work, while the teacher maintains the course schedule.

In contrast, avoidance style occurs when a person does not engage in the conflict. This can help reduce tension, but may leave unresolved issues. In an EFL classroom, a student who lacks confidence in speaking might stay silent in group discussions to avoid criticism. Although this prevents immediate discomfort, it also limits their speaking practice and learning progress.

Lastly, the accommodating style occurs when a person prioritizes the needs of others over their own. This helps maintain harmony, but it can lead to frustration if used too often. For example, in a group project, a student may agree to use the idea of his partner even if they feel uncomfortable with it. Although this avoids disagreement, the student may not fully engage in the task, which affects their learning experience.

Understanding these five conflict handling styles can help ESL/EFL and teachers manage classroom interactions effectively. Knowing when to use each style can improve communication, resolve conflicts in a positive way, and create a more supportive learning environment.

3. Research methods

3.1. Research design

This study adopts a mixed methods research design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of how students handle conflicts in PBL-speaking courses. The quantitative component involves administering a questionnaire to 48 students, allowing a broad analysis of common types of conflict and management styles between different individuals. Of the 48 survey participants, 10 students were purposively selected for focus group interviews based on

gender diversity, varied conflict experiences, and different initial conflict management strategies reported in the questionnaire. Priority was given to those willing to participate to ensure diverse and meaningful insights. These interviews explore the experiences, perceptions, and challenges of the students in more depth. Using both methods ensures a well-rounded understanding of the research problem.

3.2. Participants and learning settings

The participants were students from PolySchool Binh Duong, a private vocational school. These students had completed ninth grade and did not gain admission to public high schools, so they enrolled at PolySchool to continue their education. They follow a dual-track curriculum that combines general education subjects, similar to traditional high schools, with vocational courses related to their chosen fields. The level of English proficiency of the participants is pre-A1, indicating very limited language skills and difficulties with basic communication. Many of them do not consider English an important subject, which affects their motivation, engagement, and attitudes toward speaking tasks.

Table 1. Participant background

N = 48		Total	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	17	35.4
	Female	31	64.6
Major	Information Technology (IT)	15	31.3
	Digital Marketing (DM)	13	27.1
	Graphics Design (GD)	20	41.7

In addition, all participants are taught by the same instructor. This ensures consistency in teaching methods, project guidelines, and conflict resolution support. The speaking course lasts six weeks and focuses on practical communication skills. The course is designed to help students develop speaking skills in real life through teamwork-based tasks that allow them to apply language knowledge in a collaborative setting. The central component of the course is a project-based assignment that follows a structured process.

First, the instructor provides an introductory session in which students learn about the project framework, essential vocabulary, mind mapping techniques, and the process for submitting script drafts. They also receive guidance on revising their scripts, producing a final recorded video, and understanding the grading criteria. After this, the students work in groups of five, which encourages collaboration and peer learning. Each group selects one of two topics: introducing itself or describing their appearance to strangers. Throughout the project, students receive additional support through Zalo, a popular chat application in Vietnam. The instructor provides feedback, answers questions, and helps students navigate challenges related to teamwork and language use. This structured PBL environment serves as an ideal setting for studying how students with low English proficiency handle teamwork conflicts and how teachers can support them in developing communication and collaboration skills.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Quantitative data collection

Quantitative data from this study are collected through a questionnaire administered to 48 students to ensure an adequate representation of different conflict management styles and team dynamics. The questionnaire consists of three main sections. The first section gathers demographic information, including age, sex, and major. The second section assesses the conflict handling styles of the students using questions adapted from the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). These Likert scale questions measure students' tendencies toward five different conflict handling styles: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. The final section explores the perceptions of the students about conflict in PBL, their attitudes toward different resolution strategies, and their expectations of teacher intervention in teamwork conflicts.

3.3.2. Qualitative data collection

Qualitative data is collected through focus group interviews with 10 students. Participants in the focus groups are selected from 48 students in the survey. Focus group interviews follow a semi-structured format, allowing participants to discuss

their personal experiences with conflict, their reasoning behind specific conflict handling choices, and their perspectives on how teachers can support conflict resolution.

3.4. Data analysis

3.4.1. Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis follows a structured process. First, all questionnaire responses are cleaned and coded to ensure precision and consistency. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores, are calculated to identify the most common conflict handling styles among students. If necessary, inferential statistical tests, such as correlation or regression analysis, are performed to examine the relationships between conflict management styles and variables such as English proficiency or previous teamwork experience.

3.4.2. Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is performed using thematic analysis. First, all interviews are transcribed verbatim and researchers familiarize themselves with the data by reviewing the transcripts multiple times. The key phrases and recurring ideas are identified and coded to categorize the student's responses into meaningful themes. These themes are then examined to identify patterns related to student attitudes toward conflict, the challenges they face in teamwork, and their expectations of teacher support. Finally, qualitative analysis findings are compared with questionnaire results to provide a complete understanding of how students handle conflicts in PBL-speaking courses.

4. Results

4.1. Group conflicts and management styles

Frequency and Reasons for group conflicts

Table 2 shows the relationship between the sex of the students and how often they experienced conflict during teamwork. Of the 48 students, 64.6% were men and 35.4% women. Most of the students said that they experienced conflict rarely (39.6%) or sometimes (29.2%) during a course. No student reported having conflict very often and only 4.2% said it happened often. When comparing male and female students, male students reported conflict more frequently. All students who chose "often" were men, while no female student chose this option. These results

suggest that although conflict was not common, male students were more likely to experience it than female students.

Table 2. Frequency of sex and team conflict

Sex	Conflict Frequency	Count	% of Total
Female	Never (0 times)	5	10.4%
	Rarely (1 to 2 times in a course)	7	14.6%
	Sometimes (3 to 4 times in a course)	5	10.4%
	Often (almost everytime)	0	0.0%
	Total	17	35.4%
Male	Never	8	16.7%
	Rarely	12	25.0%
	Sometimes	9	18.8%
	Often	2	4.2%
	Total	31	64.6%
Total		48	100.0%

Table 2 shows how often students from different majors experienced conflict during teamwork. Of 48 students, 31.3% studied Information Technology (IT), 27.1% studied Digital Marketing (DM), and 41.7% studied Graphics Design (GD). Most students in all majors reported that conflicts occurred rarely or sometimes. Only two students (one from IT and one from DM) said that they often had conflicts, and no student chose “very often”. Students in GD did not report any cases of frequent conflict. This finding supports the earlier result that team conflict was generally low among students. Similarly to the gender comparison, the results suggest that certain groups (such as male students or students in IT and DM) may experience conflict a bit more often than others.

Table 2. Majors and team conflict frequency

Major	Conflict frequency	Count	% of Total
Information Technology	Never	3	6.3%
	Rarely	7	14.6%
	Sometimes	4	8.3%

	Often	1	2.1%
	Total	15	31.3%
Digital Marketing	Never	4	8.3%
	Rarely	4	8.3%
	Sometimes	4	8.3%
	Often	1	2.1%
	Total	13	27.1%
Graphics Design	Never	6	12.5%
	Rarely	8	16.7%
	Sometimes	6	12.5%
	Often	0	0.0%
	Total	20	41.7%
Total		48	100.0%

The causes of team conflict, as reported by students from three different majors in Table 3, are based on questionnaire responses from 48 participants. In general, the most common cause was having different ideas and not being able to agree, as mentioned by 27.1% of the students. This was followed by poor understanding among members (16.7%) and an unequal contribution to work (14.6%). When comparing by major, Graphics Design (GD) students reported the highest number of conflicts caused by disagreement over ideas (16.7%), while Digital Marketing (DM) students mostly experienced conflict due to poor understanding (10.4%). Across all majors, other reasons accounted for 12.5% of conflicts and included issues such as unequal English proficiency, poor time management, lack of seriousness, and logistical challenges (e.g. living far apart, conflicting schedules). Information Technology (IT) students gave more even responses on all causes, with disagreements and unequal work being the most common. These findings add to previous results, which showed that overall conflict was not very frequent, but certain patterns may exist depending on the gender or major of the students. Although male students and those from IT and DM experienced slightly more frequent conflict, GD students were more likely to face disagreement over ideas, showing that the nature of conflict may differ between groups even when its frequency is low.

Table 3. Majors and causes of conflict

Major	Conflict Cause	Count	% of Total
Information Technology	1. Different ideas, no agreement	5	10.4%
	2. Unequal work contribution	3	6.3%
	3. Poor understanding among members	2	4.2%
	4. Personality clashes	1	2.1%
	5. Leadership issues	2	4.2%
	6. Irresponsible behavior	1	2.1%
	7. Other	1	2.1%
	Total	15	31.3%
Digital Marketing	1. Different ideas, no agreement	0	0.0%
	2. Unequal work contribution	2	4.2%
	3. Poor understanding among members	5	10.4%
	4. Personality clashes	1	2.1%
	5. Leadership issues	1	2.1%
	6. Irresponsible behavior	0	0.0%
	7. Other	4	8.3%
	Total	13	27.1%
Graphics Design	1. Different ideas, no agreement	8	16.7%
	2. Unequal work contribution	2	4.2%
	3. Poor understanding among members	1	2.1%
	4. Personality clashes	2	4.2%
	5. Leadership issues	3	6.3%
	6. Irresponsible behavior	3	6.3%
	7. Other	1	2.1%
	Total	20	41.7%
Total		48	100.0%

Management styles and the relationship with conflict causes and solutions

When confronted with group conflicts, the students adopted a range of management strategies. In general, Collaboration was the first choice most preferred, selected by 47.9% of the students, followed by Compromising (27.1%). Among all groups, Graphics Design students chose

Collaborating most frequently (50.0%), suggesting a tendency to resolve creative disagreements through teamwork, likely reflecting the collaborative nature of their discipline. In contrast, students in Information Technology and Digital Marketing showed more varied preferences, with noticeable use of both Compromising and Accommodating strategies.

Table 4. Frequency of management styles in student projects

Major	Strategy	First-choice Strategies (n/%)	Subsequent Strategies (n/%)
Information Technology	Avoiding	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)
	Accommodating	3 (20.0%)	2 (13.3%)
	Collaborating	5 (33.3%)	9 (60.0%)
	Compromising	6 (40.0%)	1 (6.7%)
	Competing	0 (0.0%)	1 (6.7%)
Digital Marketing	Avoiding	1 (7.7%)	0 (0.0%)
	Accommodating	2 (15.4%)	2 (15.4%)
	Collaborating	8 (61.5%)	6 (46.2%)
	Compromising	2 (15.4%)	4 (30.8%)

	Competing	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.7%)
Graphics Design	Avoiding	3 (15.0%)	2 (10.0%)
	Accommodating	2 (10.0%)	1 (5.0%)
	Collaborating	10 (50.0%)	8 (40.0%)
	Compromising	5 (25.0%)	6 (30.0%)
	Competing	0 (0.0%)	3 (15.0%)
Total		48 (100%)	48 (100%)

When initial strategies did not resolve the conflict, the students switched to subsequent strategies, with collaboration still being the most common (47.9%), though slightly less than in the first choices. A notable change was the appearance of Competing, which no student initially selected, chosen by 10.4% as a follow-up option. This indicates that, while students generally avoid confrontational styles at first, some may adopt them if cooperative approaches fail. Other strategies such as Avoiding and Accommodating were used at both stages, suggesting that students

adjust their conflict responses flexibly based on how the group situation unfolds.

Furthermore, Table 5 shows that male and female students differed in their second choice of conflict resolution strategies when their first option failed. The second most common solution for both groups was Collaboration, chosen by 35.4% of males and 12.5% of females. However, females also leaned more towards Compromising (16.7%) than males (6.3%), while males had a slightly higher rate of choosing Competing (8.3%) as a second option compared to females (2.1%).

Table 5. Sex and second conflict solution choice

Second Conflict Solution	Female (n = 17)	Male (n = 31)	Total (n = 48)
1. Avoiding	0 (0.0%)	4 (8.3%)	4 (8.3%)
2. Accommodating	2 (4.2%)	3 (6.3%)	5 (10.4%)
3. Collaborating	6 (12.5%)	17 (35.4%)	23 (47.9%)
4. Compromising	8 (16.7%)	3 (6.3%)	11 (22.9%)
5. Competing	1 (2.1%)	4 (8.3%)	5 (10.4%)

The table shows that both male and female students most commonly selected Collaborating as their second choice for resolving team conflicts (35.4% of males and 12.5% of females). However, females appeared to prefer Compromising more (16.7%), while males leaned slightly more toward Avoiding and Competing than females. A chi-square test revealed a statistically significant association between sex and the second conflict solution choice, $\chi^2(4) = 10.33$, $p = .035$. This suggests that male and female students tend to adopt different approaches when their initial conflict strategy does not work.

4.2. Teacher support for low-achieving students in managing conflict in PBL speaking courses

The results of student interviews highlighted both the challenges low-achieving students face during group conflicts and the critical role teachers can play in supporting their conflict handling skills during PBL speaking courses.

Student experiences and responses to

conflict in teamwork

The findings of the interview support the results of the questionnaire by showing that the students often experienced conflicts during group work, such as unfair workload, different ideas, and leadership problems. These issues sometimes caused stress and made teamwork difficult. One student said: "We argued because one person refused to do his part and it affected the whole timeline." Another shared, "*We couldn't agree on who should present and that led people to get upset and avoid each other.*"

These examples match the questionnaire results, where the most common conflict-handling styles were collaboration (47.9%) and compromise (27.1%), while avoiding and competing were used less often. Students in the interviews also said they preferred working together to solve problems: "*We tried to talk it out and make sure everyone agreed before moving on.*" Others chose to compromise to keep the group

working peacefully. Some students avoided the conflict because they felt uncomfortable. As one said, *"I didn't want to argue, so I just stayed quiet even if I disagreed."* Others, especially those who were more confident, used firm communication: *"I had to explain my idea again and again until they finally saw my point."* When their first way of handling the problem did not work, many students changed their approach. One student decided to ask the teacher for help: *"I wrote everything down and told the teacher because they didn't listen to me in the group."*

These findings help explain and confirm the questionnaire data, showing how students manage teamwork conflicts in project-based speaking classes.

Expectations for teachers to support conflict resolution

The students shared different views on how teachers should help with group conflict. Some believed it was useful to try to solve problems on their own, which helped build teamwork skills. However, others felt that teacher support was important when conflicts became too serious or affected group work and emotions. One student said, *"It's good to solve problems ourselves, but sometimes we need the teacher to intervene when things get too serious."* Another noted the value of teacher involvement: *"Our teacher helped mediate and explained our responsibilities clearly, which really helped."*

The students also gave helpful suggestions for improving teacher support. First, they suggested short training sessions on conflict resolution at the beginning of projects. As one student explained, *"If we learn to handle problems early, we will be less scared when they happen."* Second, many recommended that teachers check in regularly with groups to detect problems early. A student shared, *"If teachers checked in more often, maybe we wouldn't let the problems grow so much."* Lastly, the students liked the idea of reporting issues anonymously, especially in situations where speaking up could cause discomfort. One said, *"Sometimes we cannot say things out loud; it would help to report problems without everyone knowing."*

Overall, the students wanted teachers to provide guidance while still respecting their

independence. They believed that a balance between autonomy and timely support would create a more positive and productive group experience.

5. Discussion

This study explored the frequency, causes, and management of group conflicts in PBL speaking courses, focusing on how teachers can support low-achieving students. The results align with previous research showing that group conflicts often stem from unequal workload, role disputes, and differing opinions (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003).

Most of students preferred collaborative and compromising strategies, consistent with the Afzalur Rahim (2002) conflict management model. In particular, no student selected competing as the first solution. However, when the first strategy did not work, some students switched to more assertive methods, including competing. The study also found a significant association between gender and the choice of the second conflict solution, with men more likely to use competing or avoiding strategies. This highlights gender differences in conflict management approaches, as noted in other studies (Noakes & Rinaldi, 2006).

Low-achieving students tended to avoid conflict or accommodate others, reflecting lower confidence and communication skills, as noted in previous studies (Lehr & Harris, 1988). These students often relied on the support of the teacher to express concerns or resolve problems. Therefore, teacher participation has become crucial in guiding conflict resolution, especially for less confident students. This supports the findings of Ciuladiene and Kairiene (2017), who emphasized the importance of mediation and proactive teacher roles. The students suggested early conflict management training, regular monitoring, and anonymous reporting to help manage conflicts effectively, echoing recommendations by DeChurch et al. (2013). A balanced approach was preferred in which teachers encourage autonomy, but intervene when necessary. This balance helps create a respectful and supportive learning environment that encourages participation and growth for all students, including those with lower levels.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the frequency, causes, and management of group conflicts in PBL speaking courses, focusing on how teachers can support low-achieving students. The results show that while group conflicts are common, most students prefer to solve conflicts through collaboration and compromise. Competing was not chosen as a first option but appeared as a second choice, especially among male students. Low-achieving students often avoid conflict or rely on teacher help, likely due to lower confidence and communication skills.

Teacher involvement is important in supporting these students to manage conflicts effectively. When students feel unsure or lack

confidence, timely and careful guidance from teachers can help improve the situation. Proactive measures such as offering conflict resolution training early in the course, monitoring group interactions regularly, and providing confidential ways to report problems help students feel supported and more engaged.

In summary, balanced teacher support helps create a respectful and productive learning environment. By guiding students while encouraging them to develop their own problem-solving skills, teachers can ensure that all students, regardless of ability, have the chance to participate, improve, and succeed in project-based speaking activities.

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GIẢI QUYẾT XUNG ĐỘT TRONG HỌC KỸ NĂNG NÓI TIẾNG ANH THEO MÔ HÌNH DỰ ÁN: NGHIÊN CỨU TRƯỜNG HỢP SINH VIÊN HỌC LỰC YẾU

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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu cách sinh viên học lực yếu tại Việt Nam xử lý xung đột trong các lớp học nói theo hình thức học tập dựa trên dự án (PBL) và vai trò của giáo viên trong quá trình này. Phương pháp hỗn hợp được sử dụng, bao gồm khảo sát bảng hỏi ($n = 48$) và phỏng vấn nhóm. Dữ liệu được phân tích theo mô hình quản lý xung đột Thomas-Kilmann. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên thường ưu tiên các chiến lược ban đầu như hợp tác (47,9%) và thỏa hiệp (27,1%), trong khi ít chọn cạnh tranh hoặc né tránh. Tuy nhiên, khi chiến lược ban đầu không hiệu quả, một số sinh viên, đặc biệt là nam, chuyển sang các chiến lược quyết đoán hoặc né tránh hơn. Phân tích Chi bình phương chỉ ra mối liên hệ có ý nghĩa thống kê giữa giới tính và sự điều chỉnh sang lựa chọn khác ($p = 0.035$). Dù nhiều sinh viên cố gắng tự giải quyết vấn đề, họ cho rằng giáo viên nên hỗ trợ khi xung đột ảnh hưởng đến kết quả nhóm. Sinh viên đề xuất giáo viên cần hướng dẫn sơ bộ về giải quyết xung đột, theo dõi định kỳ và tạo kênh phản hồi riêng tư. Kết quả cho thấy giáo viên đóng vai trò quan trọng trong việc hỗ trợ sinh viên tự tin và tham gia nhóm hiệu quả hơn.

Từ khóa: Các khóa học kỹ năng nói; Hỗ trợ từ giáo viên; Học tập dựa trên dự án (PBL); Quản lý xung đột; Xung đột nhóm.