



Collaborative Digital Mashup Poetry Project: Exploring EFL Students' Perceptions and Experiences

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Abstract

This study explores EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions and practices of learning as the results of their collaborative digital mashup poetry project experience. Specifically, the study seeks to describe the nature of students' mashup poetry projects, their collaboration strategies, and their perceived benefits and challenges of working on the multimodal project collaboratively. Involving 27 students in a Poetry in ELT class, data were generated from the results of group interviews, responses to online questionnaires, individual reflective notes, and samples of students' work. The data were transcribed, coded, and categorized into relevant themes. The study revealed students' positive perception regarding their collaborative project in terms of soft skill and digital literacy skill development. Concerns about ethical issues as well as technical difficulties were also found. This study suggests careful consideration for pedagogical implications on the use of collaborative digital poetry projects in the EFL higher education context.

Keywords: *collaborative learning, mash-up poetry, digital video, project-based learning*

INTRODUCTION

Education these days is demanded to not only produce graduates who are cognitively competent, but also highly skillful in the 4Cs: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. The mastery of ICT literacy skills adds value to these competencies (Maiier & Koval, 2021; Vanttinen, 2024). As Nugroho and Mutiaraningrum (2020) put it, given its significance in language learning, the ability to integrate technology effectively into the language classroom is an essential competency for twenty-first-century educators and should be strongly emphasized in teacher education and professional development programs. The statement underscores the need to shift the teaching and learning paradigm from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered one, with the integration of technology in the classroom becoming essential (Karimaliana et al., 2024; Legarde, 2023). Project-based Learning (henceforth, PjBL) is an approach to be regarded as effective for all these purposes. When implemented carefully, project-based learning could provide students with rich and meaningful learning (Galatsopoulou et al., 2022; Hirsch & Macleroy, 2020; Miller & Bruce, 2017; Silitubun, E., Costa, B., & Nizam, 2020; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018; Stanley et al., 2020). In addition to building language and content knowledge, PjBL is a pedagogical strategy that may engage and empower students by helping them acquire academic abilities including "planning, researching, analyzing, synthesizing, producing, and reflecting" (Slater & Beckett, 2019, p. 1).

PjBL is an approach in which students involve themselves in a project aiming at solving particular problems and presenting the solution (Rambe & Suganda, 2023). According to Allison and Do (2018), project-based learning in English language learning can be understood as “students involved in doing a project themselves, from choosing a topic, solving problems, and generating products in the form of meaningful solutions” (p. 7). In the process, students are engaged in an inquiry process in search for the solution of a problem. The authors further argue that PjBL helps improve students’ language skills and soft skills. They add that PjBL allows students to develop their knowledge of various cultural perspectives while working on the project. As PjBL is learner-centred, the role of a teacher is “more as a mentor or facilitator than a lecturer” (Suherdi, 2019, p. 68).

Furthermore, a fundamental principle of PjBL is student collaboration, where learners work together to complete a shared project. PjBL and collaborative learning are closely interconnected, particularly in EFL settings where language development benefits from authentic, interactive, and meaningful use. PjBL emphasizes student engagement through real-world tasks that require critical thinking, creativity, and active participation in the learning process (Andriyani & Anam, 2022; Kos, 2024; Zaim & Aufa, 2024). Within this framework, collaborative learning becomes a key strategy, as students work together to plan, negotiate, and complete a shared project. This interaction allows learners to practice language in context, co-construct meaning, and develop communicative competence. In EFL classrooms, collaboration in project-based tasks provides opportunities for peer learning, reduces anxiety, and fosters a supportive environment where learners can express ideas, solve problems, and make joint decisions using the target language (Silitubun, Costa, & Nizam, 2020; Song et al., 2024; Yaprak, 2022). Thus, combining PjBL with collaborative learning promotes both language acquisition and essential skills such as teamwork, digital literacy, and autonomy.

Literature, including poetry, has been widely integrated into ELT. The use of literature in EFL classrooms supports language development by exposing students to authentic language, rich vocabulary, and varied sentence structures. It also fosters cultural awareness, critical thinking, and emotional engagement, making language learning more meaningful and reflective (Kuru Gönen, 2018; Syed & Wahas, 2020; Viana & Zyngier, 2020). As a form of literature, poetry is defined as a way to present ideas and express meaning through the use of various elements such as figurative language, rhythm, and imagery (Bonn, 2010). Such elements in poetry emphasize the beauty of expression aiming to create a “specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm” (Cruz-yeh, 2005, p. 88). Additionally, a study by Alvi and Alvi (2019) has demonstrated that poetry improved students’ pronunciation and vocabulary mastery. They also mentioned that teaching using poetry could increase students’ self-confidence. Moreover, participants in a study by Cruz-yeh (2005) reported that having poetry as a topic for discussion and task-based projects positively affected their analytical skill and provided them with “a different perspective in looking at their own culture and the society that they live in” (p. 88). Likewise, Morrison (2020) reported his research findings that using poetry in teaching in universities could develop student civic engagement and responsiveness toward social problems. Sigvardsson (2019) also emphasizes that pre-service teachers need to be taught the aesthetic content of poetry and are encouraged to do more exploration on poetry in order to be able to teach it well.

Findings from the aforementioned research provide a strong foundation for the inclusion of poetry in the curriculum of the English Education study program of FKIP Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak. Poetry in ELT is a two-credit course aiming at

providing students with opportunities to use English to create and appreciate poetry as a form of literary work. Within the course, students learn the basic concepts of poetry, its elements, and analytic devices. They are also exposed to a range of famous poetry works, be it classic or contemporary poetry. In addition to understanding and evaluating the work of famous poets, students also develop their skills in creating their own poetry. Students are expected to use poetry as a way to enhance their English language learning and other competencies related to the 4Cs.

One way to maximize the development of the 4C skills through poetry is by implementing PjBL in which students work in groups to collaborate, communicate, be critical, and creative in creating their work together. In doing so, it is also important that students integrate technologies to develop their positive character such as self-regulation, confidence, motivation, and autonomy (Lee & Drahati, 2019; Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020; Suherdi, 2019). In the context of pre-service teacher education, all these characters are essential for the students' future career as a teacher (Lestariningsih et al., 2020; Maiier & Koval, 2021; Syafryadin et al., 2021).

One of PjBL tasks which gets increasingly popular is student digital poetry video which recognizes the multiple modes of communication and meaning (Chen et al., 2024; Guenier, 2023; Kangasharju, 2021; Kempster, 2023; Miller & Bruce, 2017; O'Halloran, 2022; Stanley et al., 2020). Focusing on multimodalities, Miller and Bruce (2017) argue that "using images, sounds, gestures, space, and movement to represent meanings is becoming the new human condition in the digital age" (p. 14). In such a project, poetry is introduced and produced by combining "computation and poetry" (Seiça, 2016, p. 101). Research indicates that students perceive digital video positively as it is fun and easy and it encourages new ways of learning through the use of multiple modes in meaning-making (Kangasharju, 2021; Miller & Bruce, 2017). Miller and Bruce (2017) further argue that composing digital video collaboratively involves both low and high achieving students as well as students who may struggle in academic literacies. The project affords them with ample opportunities to represent meaning through a wide range of compositional modalities thus creating meaningful ways of learning. Adding to these merits of digital poetry video composing, Ayotte and Collins (2017) state that the multimedia skills needed and practiced in the process could develop students' proficiency in new literacies and technologies. They also highlight that students could become effective writers as they have to adjust with the limited textual space to achieve their goals. Finally, the authors argue that the use of simple mobile applications with many easy templates to combine images, videos, and music aids students "to create professional-looking products within a relatively short timeframe" (p. 21).

The merits of the PjBL approach and digital poetry projects in ELT have been highlighted above. However, most of the discussions have focused on digital video project of young learners (e.g., Hirsch & Macleroy, 2020), the nature of digital storytelling as a project responding to specific materials (Guenier, 2023), or particular elements of the video project such as style (O'Halloran, 2022). While such insights are useful to the understanding of the use of digital video projects in the poetry classes, more studies are still needed to explore the perceptions and experiences of students coming from different context and age characteristics such as EFL pre-service teachers. It is also imperative to investigate not only the product but also the process of knowledge construction and meaning making when doing the project. Another gap this research aimed to address is the project, that is collaborative mash up poetry project which has not received much attention (e.g., O'Halloran, 2022; Stanley, 2021; Stanley et al., 2020, to name a few).

Specifically, this study investigated students' perceptions and experiences when making group digital mashup poetry videos in a Poetry in ELT class. A qualitative case study exploring in-depth students' meaning-making of the experience was employed. The research questions are threefold: 1) How do students perceive their digital mashup poetry video project experience for their learning? 2) How do students accomplish their group digital mashup poetry project? 3) What challenges do students encounter in the project accomplishment? Answers to these questions will shed light on how digital mashup poetry video project could enhance students' language learning experience and the development of their 21st century skills.

METHODS OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to understand the students' experience resulting from working on a digital mashup poetry project. Specifically, it inquired into how students engaged in the collaborative project and how they perceived learning through such task. The qualitative research methodology was employed to meet the research goal, that is providing a rich description (Mackey & Gass, 2022) of the collaborative digital mashup poetry project and the student meaning-making of such experience. Participants of this research were 27 fourth-semester EFL pre-service teachers of a state university in Kalimantan who were enrolled in Poetry in ELT class. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 20 years old, 5 of whom were male and the rest 22 were female. Poetry in ELT is a 2-credit course held once a week. The collaborative mashup poetry video project investigated in this study was part of the course assignments. Specifically, the project refers to a collaborative activity in which students worked in small groups of three to four members to create a poetry video. In this project, students selected and combined lines from different poems and song lyrics to form a new, unified poetic composition. They then recorded themselves taking turns reading the lines aloud, and edited the recordings into a single video. This process of mixing different sources into one creative piece is what defines the "mash-up" approach. The activity encouraged students to work together, engage with literary and musical texts, and use digital tools to express meaning through spoken performance and multimedia presentation.

Data for this research were collected using four methods: survey, group interviews, observation, and analysis of related documents and artifacts. The survey was administered at the end of the semester, after the completion of the digital mash-up poetry project. It aimed to capture students' perceptions and experiences regarding their participation in the project as part of the Poetry in ELT course. The questionnaire consisted of seven close-ended items using a Likert scale (e.g., "I found the mash-up poetry project engaging" or "Working in a group helped me understand poetry better") and nine open-ended items designed to elicit more detailed reflections (e.g., "What did you enjoy most about the mash-up poetry project?" or "What difficulties did you face while working on the project?"). Following the survey, group interviews were conducted with all student groups involved in the project. These interviews were carried out immediately after the completion of their video submissions and were guided by a set of open-ended questions (Creswell & Creswel, 2018). The purpose of the interviews was to confirm and elaborate on the survey responses, providing richer qualitative data about students' collaborative processes, engagement with the task, and perceived learning outcomes (Creswell & Creswel, 2018; Mackey & Gass, 2022). Sample interview questions included: "How did your group decide which poems and song lyrics to include?", "Can you describe how responsibilities were divided among group members?", and "What challenges did your group encounter, and how did you overcome them?" In addition, classroom observation was conducted throughout the

project timeline to document student interaction, participation, and engagement during group discussions and project development stages. Field notes were taken focusing on aspects such as communication patterns, problem-solving, use of digital tools, and peer support. Lastly, document and artifact analysis was carried out to examine relevant materials produced and used by students during the project. These included group planning sheets, poetry scripts, reflective journals, and the final mash-up poetry videos. This analysis helped to triangulate the findings and provided further evidence of students' learning processes, creativity, and collaborative efforts throughout the project. Simple descriptive statistic was employed to summarize the results of the survey and present them in numbers or percentages. Additionally, the thematic analysis approach was used to analyze data gathered from the open-ended questionnaires, interviews, relevant artifacts, and students' sample work. First, these data were transcribed and coded to generate "frequent, dominant, or significant themes" (Mackey & Gass, 2022, p. 320). Then, constant comparison of the themes was conducted to build categories in the light of the research objectives. The findings were then described and discussed pertaining to the reviewed literature and findings from the previous related studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research sought answers to these problems: students' perception, experiences, and perceived challenges regarding their collaborative mash-up poetry project. In general, the students' responses to the survey, interviews, and the displays of their collaborative process and produced poems show positive perceptions on the mashup poetry instruction. The themes generated in this category include: enjoyable experience, affordances of soft skills development, and opportunities for Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) literacy skills development. Additionally, the identified challenges the participants encountered were ethical issues and technical problems. Each theme is presented and discussed below.

Students' Perception and Experiences

Enjoyable Experience

The first set of research findings relate to the students' perceptions regarding their experiences when doing the group mashup poetry project. Overall, Students reported to have positive perceptions toward the project as shown in Figure 1 below:

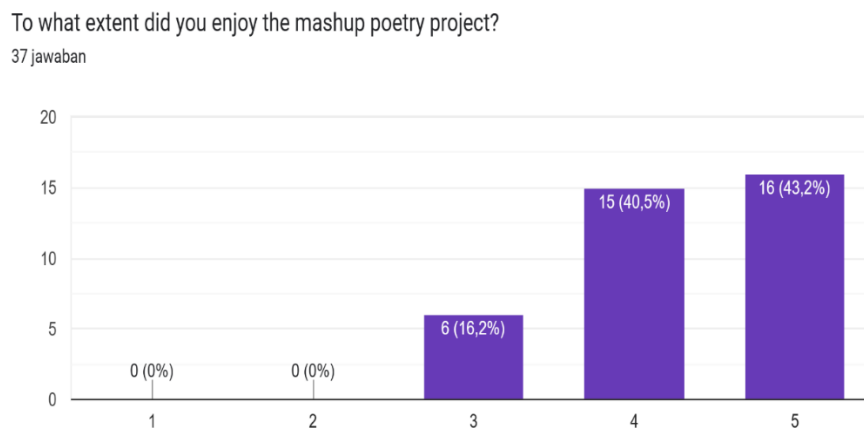


Figure 1. Students' perception toward the project

As shown in the chart, all participants indicated their enjoyment toward the group mashup project. The responses range from Moderate, Agree, and Strongly Agree with 16.2%, 40.5%, and 43.2 % respectively. Although 6 participants responded with moderate opinion regarding how much they enjoyed working on the project, the majority of the students displayed very positive responses categorized Agree and Strongly Agree.

Supporting the findings from the survey as presented above, the results of the group discussion further confirmed students' positive perceptions on the mashup poetry project. Among others, some students stated that they enjoyed the group project especially when they created poems and videos together with their friends. Additionally, they enjoyed the mashup project because they loved searching for the poems and songs which are related to their topic, making the video, recording their voice, and editing the video. One student stated, *"I think the best part is when I setting the background song, and adding the effect to the speaker's audio and when putting the image into the video"*. These accounts confirm the notion proposed by Chen et al. (2024), that music and technology could give a profound effect toward students' emotion leading to motivation to learn.

Furthermore, another student stated in the FGD session, although creating a mashup poem is not easy, they enjoyed the project as it was a creative writing work which allowed them to create a poem, use figurative language, and select and combine music, song lyric and verses from other poets.:

I quite enjoy this project. It's like a new thing and challenge for me, and it's fun. It's challenging because to mash-up the poems with a song and make it to become 1 poem it's not easy but I love this project so far especially in making some figurative language, it's hard and not easy but I enjoy it. I hope through this project I can be better in making a poem.

Likewise, another student also expressed her enjoyment stating, *"It is when we create the poem together, we laugh, we try another stanzas till we create the final version"*. This shows students' enjoyment on the project due to its non-threatening nature of having to do things with their peers. These findings provide more validation to the previous similar studies on students' positive perception of collaborative learning especially in relation to digital literacies (Hava, 2021; Rezeki & Surmiyati, 2021).

Affordances of Soft Skills Development

Another important theme generated from the findings is the affordances of the mashup project for students to develop their soft skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Following the students' responses to the questionnaires, some students mentioned that the project was good as it challenged their critical thinking and creativity. They argued that the projects required them to collaborate and think critically and creatively in a few aspects. First, they asserted that creativity was needed when they had to combine and remake their poem by using the lines from the suggested lists of poems and the lyrics from a song. For example, one student stated, *"What I enjoy about this project is the collaboration between partners and developing each other's creativity into extraordinary creativity."* Another student contended liking the project *"because this project is fun which is we can exchange ideas in a group as well as we can practice our creativity."* Last but not least, another supporting statement confirmed the affordances of collaboration (Kurtz & Peled, 2016) through the mashup project:

I like to make this project because I learn how to create poem with partners, discuss it together, starting to define what topic we would choose, and absolutely I enjoy when searching for the poems, and songs related to our topic. Then, I also like to edit the video, adding our voices into the video and so on.

The above statements demonstrate students' awareness of learning which takes place through the process of collaboration from the beginning to the finishing of the group project.

Next, students cited critical thinking as an important skill exercised in the project. In terms of critical thinking, for example, they explained that they had to make sure the poem they made was correct grammatically. In addition, a student stated, "we have to focus and think critically in order to produce maximum results, like looking for the suitable poem and song in our mashup theme." As Amgott, (2020) puts it, in multiliteracies project, as experienced also by the students in the current research, students gained benefits from the metalinguistic awareness developed when they have to shift between "Available Designs, Designing, and Redesigning" (p. 3). It can be concluded that the students viewed the group mashup project as an opportunity to practice their critical thinking skills not only in terms of language-related aspects such as grammar, but also the materials or resources they selected to accomplish the project.

Opportunities for Digital Literacy Skills Development

In addition to providing opportunities to develop their soft skills as highlighted previously, students also perceived the benefits resulting from their group project in terms of the development of their digital literacy skills, as they were involved in producing multimodal artifacts (Kangasharju, 2021; Stanley et al., 2020). They argued that they must be able to do some technology-related skills in the process and in finishing the mashup project, such as searching for the sourced poems and songs, recording the videos, putting variations, and editing the video. Supporting this finding, one student argued:

The best part in doing this project, in my opinion is when this subject or this project is involving the technology in doing the task, for example in editing the video, in other way at the same time this project is indirectly teach us to independently learn and edit the material by ourself.

The students' takes on the affordance for them to practice their ICT skills was evident in all stages of the project, from preparation, process, and project completion. Figure 2 shows the platforms students used to communicate and aid their discussion:

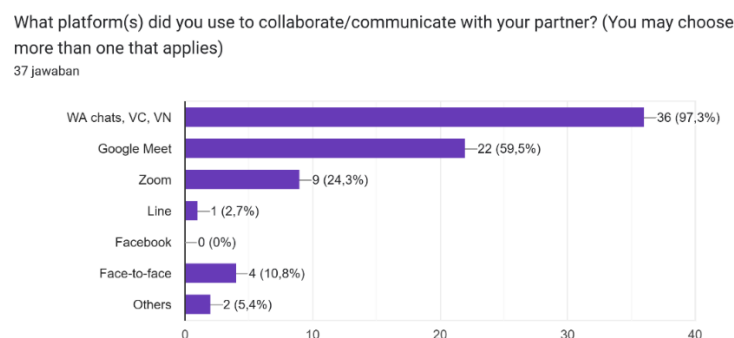


Figure 2. Platforms students used to collaborate

The chart shows that WhatsApp has been reported as the most used application to communicate in the project, followed by Google Meet and Zoom. First of all, since the project was part of the online class, students had to communicate from a distance and thus they must choose effective platforms to do so. Based on the observed group communication, it can be seen that WhatsApp chats (texting, video call, and voice notes), Google Meet, and Zoom video conferences, are among the mostly-used platforms and applications reported by the students. For example, through WhatsApp, students communicated their ideas, exchanged opinions, and discussed their project progress through WhatsApp. Such communication involved the uses of various WhatsApp features such as text/messages, videos, images, emojis, stickers, and voice notes. In addition to WhatsApp, students also communicated through Google Meet and used Google Doc to work on their draft. When using Google Doc while having online discussion through Google Meet, for example, students typed their contribution for the group's poem in different colors to distinguish each group members' turn or portion for the mashup poem.

Moreover, students' development of their digital literacy skills was also enhanced by their uses of numerous digital applications to create the group mashup poetry video as shown in the following chart from the survey presents:

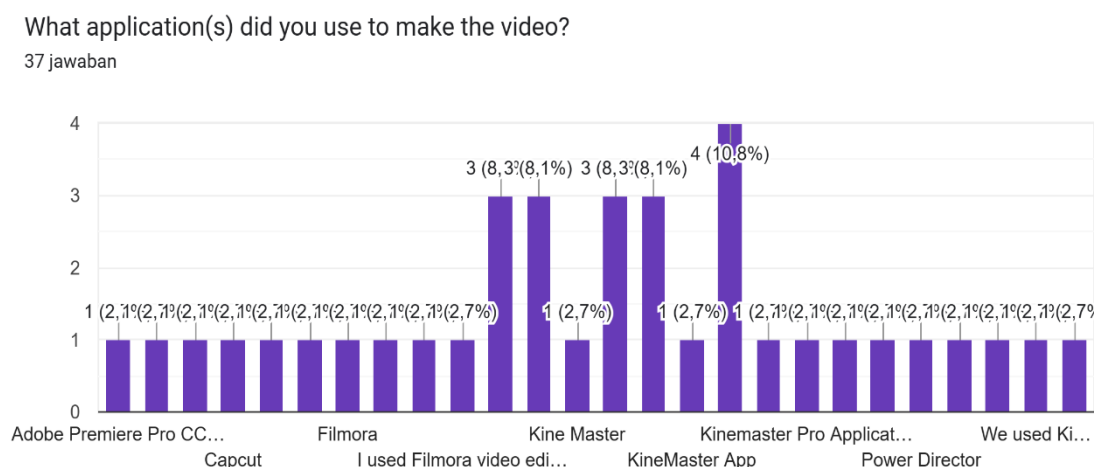


Figure 3. Applications used to complete the project

The chart illustrates that Inshot and Kinemaster were the two applications the students mostly used to create, edit and finalize their mashup video. When asked about their reasons to choose and use such applications, some students explained:

Because KineMaster give more features to edit your video in any case and a lot of people suggesting in the social media that KineMaster have the most complete features in your smartphone than the other application.

Because kinemaster is very simple to use, and it easier than edit the video through app on pc. I prefer use kinemaster, I can learn fast to use it, and if I didn't know some feature on it, I can search on youtube to get some tutorial.

InShot is easy to use. It also has many features that can be used to create videos according to what we want.

From the above statements, it can be summarized that students considered the ease to use/operate, the flexibility, the features offered, and the cost when choosing supporting applications for the mashup project such as Kinemaster and Inshot. In doing so, students practiced and thus developed their digital literacy skills to ensure that the digital tools or resources they used were qualified, relevant and useful for their project (Kurtz & Peled, 2016; Tiernan, 2021). In doing so, students communicated through various synchronous and asynchronous platforms that included multimodalities (text, images, video, and sound) in the process. These findings confirmed that learning takes place in the ways students make important and critical decisions in using various sources such as images, videos, music, song lyrics, and lines of verses in the “multimodal production” (Thibaut & Curwood, 2018, p. 51) of their project. While many EFL teachers in Indonesia struggled in using digital tools in their teaching (Salam et al., 2023), it is reasonable to conclude from the current research findings that the collaborative project experienced by the students offers promising pedagogical instructions for students’ digital literacy skill development which are crucial for their future career (Polednov & Moln, 2023).

Challenges of Doing the Project

While students have expressed their positive perceptions and experiences in doing the mashup poetry project, they also reported difficulties or challenges they encountered when accomplishing the work. The findings indicate students’ identified difficulties in a few areas: the technical problems related to creating the video and the contents, the relevant sources to make the video, and the time management in working remotely with their peers. For example, some students described their struggle to record and match both their voices in the video: *“It is the part when I have to find a way to make the audio of my friends that was on low volume to the highest volume so it can match with others audio, because others’ audios have been set lower than his already”*. Some also mentioned their concern regarding legal use of sources, that is an ethical issue commonly concerned within digital practices (Curwood et al., 2019), *“The most difficult thing in this project is finding ideas for poetry that avoid copyright and create very new poems.*

Additionally, *“The most difficult is when editing the video. New ideas may come up while I’m editing the video, so I have to repeat several times while editing it”*. Others expressed difficulties to decide the poem verses and song lyric that match with one another: *“I think the most difficult part is when we mash-up the poems, it’s quite hard for us honestly to combine the perfect sentence and making some figurative language, but we enjoy it, and also try our best”*. Last but not least, students reported the troubles to decide the perfect time for all members to discuss and work on their project: *“Choosing and reading the poem. It was kinda difficult when you have to choose and do all of the things alone. When comes to reading the poem, we find it difficult to agree with the way how to read it, not to mention about me and my partner can’t meet each other, I also couldn’t give the proper opinion about how to read it properly and sync to my audio”*. These reported issues by the participants suggest that instructors need to employ careful assessment which could fairly evaluate the learners’ language as well as digital proficiency (Insani et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The purposes of this research are threefold. First, it investigated the students' perception of their collaborative mashup poetry project experience. Second, it explored students' strategies when accomplishing the project. Last, it identified the challenges or difficulties faced by the students when working on the collaborative mashup poetry project. To summarize, the findings in this research showed students' positive perceptions regarding the mashup poetry project. The study also revealed the ways in which students' strategies for task accomplishments include the utilization of technologies and displayed multimodalities. Finally, the findings suggested some areas the students found challenging in working on their collaborative mashup project such as technical and ethical issues. While the findings have added insights into the students' perceptions, experiences, and issues related to the collaborative mashup poetry project by EFL pre-service teachers, more need to be done to increase its potential benefits. Future researchers could further investigate the topic for example by exploring more deeply the strategies and resources students employ in the process of creating digital mashup poetry. More investigation could also be done by focusing on the product, in this case, the students' digital mashup poetry videos. For instance, researchers may look closely into what, why, and how resources are utilized in the construction of knowledge through the collaborative mashup poetry project.

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