Abstract
Today, the course of education is experiencing a dramatic shift in thinking, not only from a technological perspective, but from a pedagogical one as well. Increasingly, education is focusing on alternative ways of teaching our students. This paper presents a project that required learners to engage with a community through an outreach programme. In this programme, learners created a book to raise money to help educate underprivileged children. The project used a constructivist framework and presents qualitative data in the form of learners’ recollections from reflective essays. This study reveals that students were able to perceive their world differently, in terms of a deeper appreciation and understanding of self, and a sense of achievement. Additionally, they reported increased confidence in a number of language skills, as well as soft skills such as collaboration, teamwork and research.

Key words: Project-based learning, community outreach, book project, constructivism

BACKGROUND
Often, the classroom can feel confining, as students learn from pre-structured curricula (Harris & Katz, 2001), that dictate specific learning outcomes. As such, adopting unconventional projects can be an ideal way of expanding the learning process. Today, students from all over the East, Southeast and Central Asia attend a university pre-sessional English course at a private university in Malaysia to learn the English language before pursuing foundation and degree programmes. This course regularly uses projects to expose learners to the English language within a natural setting. Nevertheless, the researcher (also the teacher) observed that while the hypothetical projects seemed engaging, they lacked a real world and meaningful outcome that ventures beyond the classroom. For this purpose, a refugee book project, entitled Stories from was created.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Influence of Constructivism

Traditional notions of the classroom have been gradually changing, due to the influence of the constructivist theory (Jones & Brader-araje, 2002). In no place is this more obvious than the actual classroom, where increasingly the furniture is being rearranged to encourage collaboration. Some teachers are now incorporating group work, tasks and projects into their daily lesson repertoire. Though it is difficult to pin down constructivism with a definitive definition – as there are numerous available – Naylor and Keogh (1999) state that “Learning is an active process in which learners construct meaning by linking new ideas with their existing knowledge” (p.93). Likewise, this notion of creating knowledge by building on existing knowledge has been suggested by many theorists, such as John Dewey (1938), Jean Piaget (1969) and Lev Vygotsky (1978), where they seem to agree that learning by doing is the basis of learning in this theory. As constructivism is a theory of learning, some researchers have attempted to create frameworks for educationalists who aim to provide a constructivist-learning environment. Jonassen (1994) proposed an 8-point guide for creating constructivist environments; some of which include providing multiple representations of reality, representing the complexity of the real world, using meaningful tasks, employing real-world settings, encouraging reflection and constructing knowledge through social negotiation.

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

The learning theories proposed by constructivist thinking have now spawned many approaches such as experiential, task-, problem-, and project-based learning (Ocal, 2010). The research on project-based learning (PBL) is growing, giving rise to a number of outcomes.

In a review on PBL research, Thomas (2000) discovered that some teachers faced problems with PBL as it can be challenging to plan and implement a project. Lubienski (2000) found that some students struggled in the constructivist environment, as it differed from the traditional teacher-centred approaches that they were more familiar with. Similarly, Edelson, Gordin, and Pea (1999), reported that some students who had struggled during the project process had little knowledge or experience with the theme of the project. Students also faced problems in terms of the social skills that are required to execute such collaboration (Achilles & Hoover, 1996).

The findings of these studies show PBL is very demanding on some students, especially when they come from an education system which is more anchored in a traditional sense of learning with a strong teacher-centred approach. PBL requires students to participate in learning, which is very much an active role and therefore, may not be conducive for some learners.
The constructivist theories underpinning PBL require learners to construct knowledge instead of using it, to collaborate, and to construct knowledge through social negotiation (Jonassen, 1994). PBL, then, encourages learners to be more autonomous and for the teacher to assume a more facilitative role (Ocak, 2010). This in turn changes the dynamic of the classroom, which may explain why studies report that students feel apprehensive in PBL.

The PBL approach has been compared to traditional classroom settings in terms of academic achievement in subjects such as maths, language, and economics. The findings suggest that PBL produces equal or improved test scores as compared to the traditional approach (Finkelstein, Hanson, Huang, Hirschman, & Huang, 2010; Walter, Mosborg, Bransford, Vye, Wilkerson & Abbot, 2011). Thomas (2000) found that PBL was popular among students and teachers; it increased a positive attitude towards learning, it raised academic achievement, and developed good skills such as collaboration, communication, and problem solving. Other research has also reported that implementing PBL can increase enthusiasm to learn, where it was noted that students were able to work independently and effectively (Omar, Taib & Basri, 2012), and grew more confident (Duxbury & Tsai, 2010). Finally, PBL helped to develop new skills such as collaboration (Slavin, 1991), problem solving (Finkelstein et al., 2010), and critical thinking (Mergendoller, Maxwell, & Bellisimon, 2006).

**Going Beyond the Project: How Authentic is Authentic?**

Jonassen (1994) suggested that the constructivist-learning environment emphasises authentic tasks in a meaningful context. Much of the research reported in this review has looked at project-based learning from a classroom context. Generally, projects such as these provide an authentic learning environment in the sense that the students are not limited to specific learning outcomes, as opposed to projects that remain within the confines of the classroom.

Lombardi and Oblinger (2007) defined authentic learning as using role plays, projects, and problems to solve real-world problems. The authenticity is represented in the problem, but the solution still remains a classroom activity. There is limited information available on projects that both take place in the real world outside of the classroom and emphasise authentic tasks in a meaningful context. Moreover, many of the PBL studies reported here have been investigated from the researcher’s point of view. Thus, there is a need for research to be carried out on a project that takes place in the real world and has objectives that are not limited to the classroom, that go beyond confined spaces and that accomplish a meaningful outcome. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how ESL students in a Malaysian private university (i) view a social outreach project in facilitating their learning of English, and (ii) perceive their sense of self after engaging in a social outreach project.
METHODOLOGY
This study is driven by an interpretivist approach to research, which contemplates the existence of multiple realities and multiple ways of knowing. In this study, we did not incorporate a positivist approach to research, thereby embracing interpretivist ontologies. The researchers include Simon Williams, a British-born teacher who has been working in Asia for 10 years, and Mary-Ann Sylvia Sugumaran who is a Malaysian and has been teaching for 10 years. We decided to collect these data in order to better understand the learning and thought process that our students go through during a social outreach project.

Method
Data collection
Data for this study were collected from two major sources: reflective essays and reflective documentaries. The documentaries created contain the compiled answers from the students’ interview with each another about their experiences during the project. They reflected on what was good and bad about the project; what was learnt and what they would do differently, if they were to do the project again. In addition to the documentary, upon completion of the project, the students were asked to write a reflective essay, individually, using the same questions as a guide. In both situations, the learners were encouraged to reflect on what aspects were important to them. They were not bound by a tight and rigid structure but instead, they were asked to write about what impact the project had on them, if any.

Data analysis
Data were analysed using an inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), whereby data were coded without establishing prior research questions. In an inductive approach to coding, the data drives the analysis, as opposed to the researcher who may be looking for specific information to confirm a theory or answer a specific question. Braun and Clarke also proposed a six-step approach to coding (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Framework for coding and thematic analysis](image)

The framework set out by Braun and Clarke aims to provide researchers with a structure in which to follow when carrying out analysis of qualitative data. The six steps assist researchers to ensure that the coding process is in line with strict research methodologies.

First, the researchers must familiarise themselves with the data by re-reading it numerous times while making notes along the way. Next, a list of ideas is generated based on the notes that were taken in the familiarisation step. Then, by searching through the ideas,
the researchers attempt to code the data. The next stage requires the researchers to review the codes to identify clear patterns and then for validity purposes, re-code any themes that may have been neglected or overlooked. The define stage requires the researchers to explain each theme in detail. Finally, the research paper is produced, whereby themes are explained in a way that readers are able to comprehend a complex process.

Data
In total, 28 essays were collected, coded and analysed, with 8 additional documentaries also collected, coded and analysed, following the framework in Figure 1. The students who created the written reflections were also the same students who created the reflective documentaries.

Ethical procedures
Each participant was made aware of the study before the individual reflective essays were collected and analysed. Each participant was advised that if they did not want to participate in the study, they were free to retract their paper and documentary. Participants were also told that at no point would their personal information be seen or published.

Participants
The project was conducted on two classes where students’ English levels ranged from IELTS 4.5–5.5. There were 28 participants in total ranging in age from 18–23. The participants came from a number of countries, such as Vietnam, Korea, China, Japan, Indonesia, and Malaysia to enroll in an English proficiency course, before pursuing main university programmes such as hospitality and tourism, business, architecture, and design.

Threats to Validity
Some researchers may allude to the self-reported data as being the main and only source of data. Some may raise issue with the validity of this kind of data set in terms of bias, therefore, leaving the researcher to make “inferences to unobservable phenomena” (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher and the participants, then, are the major threats to validity. The researcher may fit conclusions into their own perceived notion or understanding; similarly, the participants themselves may also report based on their own bias or preconceived notions of what they think they should report.

To increase trustworthiness and authenticity, the researchers first established a relationship with the participants as teachers and learners. Before the project commenced, the researchers saw and taught the participants for two hours a day, five days a week for four weeks. In addition to this, the researchers also cross-checked each other’s analysis in order to corroborate findings, and to critically assess the findings presented. In total the researchers analysed 28 reflective essays, including 8 documentaries containing 28 reports. The final method in which the researchers can further validate their findings is by
admitting these threats exist and that future studies could reduce them by triangulating more data points, conducting interviews with the participants to confirm what was reported, and implementing the study over a longer period of time.

**The Project Overview**
The project had five stages (Table 1) over the duration of a month. Within this time period, the participants were expected to complete all the stages.

**Table 1.** A detailed explanation of each stage of the project

| Part 1: Learning about refugees and stateless people | The participants were involved in a project, which asked them to understand the concept of refugees and stateless people. Most of the participants had never heard the word “refuge” and had limited knowledge on this subject. So, a series of classroom-based activities were designed to introduce the participants to the concept of people without a country. |
| Part 2: Pre-school visit | The participants were informed via a briefing that they would be part of a team that would go to a school for underprivileged children. And, while there, they would learn about the mission of the school, which is to educate underprivileged children, become teachers and teach reading to the younger kids, meet and interview 15 children (from henceforth referred to as the “storytellers”), listen to their personal stories and conduct an interview with them. |
| Part 3: Research | Once the team had returned from the school, they were in charge of: transcribing the stories and interviews, researching the storytellers’ home country and why there are refugees, and uploading all the information, audio, video and text to wiki pages to be shared later with other team members. |
| Part 4: Film festival | During the visit to the school and throughout the research (part 3), the team shot videos and took a number of photos. With this footage, they were asked to create a reflective documentary, in which they would include the pictures and videos and interview each other to reflect on the experience. The teams were then given a budget and two weeks to learn how to create the documentary and organise a film festival. |
| Part 5: Reflective essay | Finally, to conclude the project, each team member was asked to write a reflective essay. In the essay, they were asked to write about what they had learned, how they had grown, and what they would do differently, if they had the chance to do the project again. |

**RESULTS**
The data used in this study were taken from parts 4 and 5 of the project and consist of reflective essays written by the participants, as well as spoken reflections. As previously mentioned, the reflections were analysed and organised into themes, which are described below in more detail.
Increased Confidence with Language Skills

Firstly, the listening skills of students in the ESL/EFL classroom play a definite role in their ability to derive meanings, understand speech (pace and patterns) through a variety of contextual clues. It is believed that materials in the real world assist in increasing students’ comprehension and synthesis of this skill as well as through the application of the skills learned in the classroom. To emphasise, “it is not enough to practice specific techniques in isolation. Teachers also need to provide extended learning tasks, in which the processes that have been acquired can be employed more freely in conjunction with each other” (Field, 2010, p.328). Therefore, Excerpt 1 correlates with this aspect:

Excerpt 1:
Listening is hard for me before doing this project especially when people speak faster, I can’t even know what he/she was talking about. Whereas, I choose to transcribe the interview of the refugees student as I want to strengthen my listening skills. I have took more than 4 hours to transcribe the whole story which is just 14 minutes. It’s awkward! But, I think my listening skills have improved a lot as I have done the whole transcription by myself without missing any word! Besides that, I can hear and know most of their conversation during the interview and teaching activity. I am proud of myself as I can listen to them and have long conversation with them. It proved that my listening skills have become better.

Moreover, a similar related skill to listening would be speaking skills. In this case, students conversing with others outside the parameters of the classroom definitely enrich their oral communication skills as seen in Excerpt 2:

Excerpt 2:
I have always been shy to speak in front of many people. I have a lot of things to say in my mind, but it times to speak, I cannot speak anything such as when I had a presentation. I always felt nervous and cannot speak it fluently, this is what I worried about it. For this project, I had to make a video and interview a friend. This was a bad news for me, and I didn’t ever have this kind of experience. By the time, I tried hard and planned what I wanted to say for interview. After interviewing a few of people, I found that the process became easier and it was not a hard job. Now, I still make some mistakes and it was hard to express myself sometimes. But I believed that my speaking has improved and I had more confident for speaking English.

This type of collaborative communication coaxes the students to “engage in a process of negotiation as well as to maintain social relationships” (Brown, 2001, p.274). Through this process, learners identify different codes (linguistic, pace, style, meaning) in a
conversation, hence applying this to their own speech and understanding. In language learning, grammar and vocabulary acquisition is an important aspect for a second language learner. This would enable them to accomplish becoming better in the other language skills. Mehring (2005) in citing Nation and Warring (1997) stated “vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, and knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use and so on” (p.3). Excerpt 3 illustrates this point:

Excerpt 3:
First of all, I needed to gather the information about the refugee that I interviewed such as her country and the refugee situation of her country. Therefore, I must do a lot of research from Internet. In order to avoid plagiarism, I need to paraphrase the sentences instead of just ‘copy paste’. By this way, I had improved a lot in my grammar and vocabulary.”

Each participant reported overcoming a personal obstacle, and in terms of this project, they were paraphrasing information (Excerpt 3), listening to people who speak quickly (Excerpt 1), and overcoming shyness to speak in front of many people (Excerpt 2). Each participant reported facing difficulty with these particular obstacles, but through their own reported perseverance and effort, they were able to feel a marked improvement within themselves.

A Sense of Achievement
Due to the increased confidence in terms of language skill acquisition, students exhibited a substantial amount of achievement in their reflections. Based on the students’ reflections, it was noted that there was a sense of confidence in terms of accomplishing new skills. Kang (2005) mentioned MacIntyre et al. (1998) who stated, “communicative self-confidence was suggested to be mainly shaped before communication situation by factors outside of the situation, such as previous experiences of encountering similar situations and language knowledge and skills” (p.289). Based on this, Excerpt 4 portrays a sense of achievement in a skill relevant to communication:

Excerpt 4:
I almost died when the teacher told me we would have to do this. Anyway, I tried hard and after interviewing a few people my pronunciation is better and the process started to become easier. I guess my pronunciation has improved now. I still make mistakes, but I will try my best fixing my pronunciation and this reason also help me may be self-confident when communicating with everyone.

Additionally, technological skills also saw a marked improvement. Here, it is noted that the Gen-Y generation “have never known life without computers and Internet and therefore see information technology as an integral part of their lives” (Reily, 2012, p.4).
Conversely, based on this project, students were unfamiliar with many Internet tools and this is demonstrated in Excerpt 5:

Excerpt 5:
If you had asked me what a wiki was before doing this project, I would have responded with a blank stare. I didn’t have much time using technology. For this project, I had to create a video, upload it to YouTube, which I never done it before. I was really proud of myself, because in the end I did it and it gave me a sense of achievement. I’m not denying that it was very hard, but with help me to get a high score. Everything was deserved. I’m sure that when I get into degree, I will be able to use these new skills again. Now the project had done, I have learned some new.

Thus, it is observed that this project, then, also offers participants opportunities to learn skills that are not solely limited to language but tools that would be of practical use all throughout their academic life.

In both instances, the participants reported that they attained a sense of achievement in terms of their pronunciation (Excerpt 4) and use of technology (Excerpt 5). While observing the class, the researcher noticed that for many students, pronunciation was an area that needed to be improved. Excerpt 4 shows that the participant realised a problem with her pronunciation and by adjusting, she was able to make herself to be better understood by the interviewees. The main point is that the participant’s self-realisation led her to take it upon herself to improve. For her, it was a sense of achievement to realise a weak point – call attention to it, practice, and feel greater confidence about speaking in front of others.

A Sense of Teamwork

Group work is an essential aspect of projects and this is seen especially in higher institutions of learning. However, the researcher noticed that some participants seemed unfamiliar with the process and even slightly uncomfortable. Some of the participants mentioned a similar situation of which they had little or no experience with project work. Part of Excerpt 6 highlights this point:

Excerpt 6:
I seldom work with others in a group. But in this project, we had to separate the work so we can complete the project on time.

On the contrary, towards the midpoint of this project, the participants had a new take on this approach to group work and began to develop into a team. Brown (2001) emphasises this by asserting that group work “places responsibility for action and progress upon each of the members of the group somewhat equally” as well as to see the merits of a team.
This is explained in the next part of Excerpt 7 and 8:

Excerpt 7:
Besides that, when I faced any problem while doing the project, my group members and the other groups’ member will help me as well. We discussed everything together and we tried our best to help each other. In addition, we also shared our ideas to make the project becomes more perfect. This made us learning how to work in a team.

Excerpt 8:
At the end of the day, it was a good experience to work on this project. I really feel I have become closer with my classmates and we have created something that we can look back on in the future and be proud of.

Ironically, the researcher observed that many of the participants created an environment whereby they focused on the teacher or themselves for support, which may be attributed to previous learning experiences. Yet in spite of that learning style, towards the end of the project, many of the students had formed a close team bond with many of the other students. Thus, due to this stronger bond, a class that started at the onset being reliant on the teacher and themselves, learned to be more reliant on each other. Excerpt 9 illustrates this point:

Excerpt 9:
Though in the process of making the project was short of time, we also can make it in time. I was very proud of my team member; they really work hard and put all the effort to complete the project. Therefore, I also gained much knowledge that can’t learn from the book and my English were better than previous I came to university.

Perception of Others and Self
From the very beginning of this research process, participants were asked about their knowledge on refugees and the responses were limited to a few remarks about people in war-torn countries, which shows clearly that many participants were unaware about the refugee situation in Malaysia. As mentioned by Pronin (2006), “perceptions can be biased by their beliefs, expectations and context, as well as by their needs, motives and desires” (p.37). Due to this unfamiliarity or lack of firsthand experience with people less fortunate than themselves, the participants had the opportunity to meet people from a way of life much different from their own. Excerpts 10 and 11 correlate with this aspect:

Excerpt 10:
The time to visit the refugees. We have had a lunch with them after that we met our storyteller. It was amazing because we could listen to their stories face-to-
face. The time that I could feel what they feel in their life. It is hard, difficult and challenge for them to survive in the country that is full of wars and dangerous. I really feel pity for her thus I hope that she will carry on her life and make the dreams comes true in the future.

Excerpt 11:
We have learned to be grateful for with lives cause not everyone has the same life as ours. We are reminded by this project to be more care for others. It is a good interesting project for us because it has taught us about life. This is our first experience about the real life about refugees. We hope all the students in this school can achieve their dreams.

Many of the participants in the project had moved to Malaysia to further their education. Therefore, hearing stories “face-to-face” from refugees who moved in order to find a better life or escape danger might have caused the participants to compare their lives to the lives of the people they were meeting. It was a powerful moment for the participants to be suddenly confronted by people with a life vastly different from their own. Excerpt 10 then further affirms this when a participant shared: “we are reminded by this project to be more care for others”.

It seems that for the participants, the experience of meeting people with backgrounds that are in complete contrast to their own, helped them to see the world as a slightly bigger and more complex place. Before this project, the participants’ sphere of understanding in terms of refugees was limited. Consequently, by the end of the project, the participants had taught, met, interviewed, researched and reflected on the experience, which gave them a greater respect for people who have had to leave their homeland. As a result, it may have caused them to look deeper within themselves and their own situation.

**Self-Awareness**

By the end of the project, the participants were able to reflect on what they had achieved, and for some, it gave them a chance to look within themselves. Reflection allows learners to “…recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it” (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 2013, p.33). Excerpts 11–15 illustrate that some of the participants were able to reflect on their own situation as they compared themselves to the lives of the people they had met.

Firstly, the participant from Excerpt 11 observed people with very little who continued to study hard. This had an effect on the participant who stated that: “I learned that I should study hard”. Participant from Excerpt 12 also compared his life to the people that he met. Whereas he was unsatisfied with his life before, he now realised that he has much more than some people. At this juncture, the students also go through a type of self-evaluation whereby they look “between the actual self-aspect observed and an ideal representation of that same self-aspect” (Morin & Everett, 1990, p. 338).
Excerpt 11:
They do not have good environmental, they just 6 years old. Though they want to learn and they want to talk with people. By contrast, my life is more happiness than their. I learned that I should study hard.

Excerpt 12:
Before this project I always complained about my life, but now I am satisfied with my life.

Aside from the comparison of different aspects of life, participants found themselves questioning their own attitudes towards their lives as well as their studies. Here, their inner voice played a huge role in terms of their self-awareness. In other words, “inner speech parallels the state of self-awareness and is more frequently used as introspection purposes (Morin & Everett, 1990, p.342). Hence, Excerpts 13 and 14, looked at the question: “Am I doing my best?” Asking them these questions resulted in them re-evaluating their current situation. Participant from Excerpt 12 mentioned that she has better conditions than the people she has met, yet she does not learn enthusiastically like them. Reflecting on this project seems to have given some of the participants the opportunity to look at themselves and their own learning. Finally, participant from Excerpt 12 summed up his experience quite profoundly by saying: “I went to refugee school to teach them, but actually I learned a good attitude from them.” To sum up, it must be acknowledged that most private self-aspects like beliefs, attitudes, personality traits or personal virtues, can hardly be brought to consciousness without self-verbalisations” (Morin & Everett, 1990, p. 343).

Excerpt 12:
After the project I had some time to think about myself. Am I doing my best? The students were so energetic about learning new things. I went to refugee school to teach them, but actually I learned a good attitude from them.

Excerpt 13:
At the end of the project, I feel group work made us become closer with classmate. The project made me to think more deeply about myself. Am I doing my best? I have better conditions than refugee, but I don’t think I tried to learn things enthusiastically like them. I need to work harder not to regret.

DISCUSSION
Previous studies have highlighted possible issues with a project-based approach, such as embracing a constructivist approach (Boaler, 2002; Lubienski, 2000); free riders—members in the group who do not contribute (James, McInnes, & Devlin, 2002); lack of experience or prior knowledge on the theme of the project (Edelson et al., 1999); social difficulties that arise with PBL (Achilles & Hoover, 1996), and difficulties faced with
implementation (Thomas, 2000). This research concurs with all the findings above as reported by the reflections of the participants. Yet many of the participants seemed to turn the reported difficulties, such as embracing a constructivist approach, social difficulties and lack of experience, into a challenge that could be overcome.

The participant who reported being shy whilst speaking in front of others said: “I still make some mistakes and it was hard to express myself sometimes. But I believed that my speaking has improved and I had more confident for speaking English. It means I must talk to more people and don’t be shy, then I am sure I will improve my English.” In a study on language anxiety – the fear of speaking in front of others in a second language – it was reported by Duxbury and Tsai (2010) that some participants were able to increase their confidence whilst working on projects.

As reported by Achilles and Hoover (1996), the social aspect of PBL can be demanding for some students; the participant in Excerpt 6 demonstrated this. However, both participants in Excerpts 7 and 8, and eventually Excerpt 6, saw the benefits of group work. For these participants, the social pressure of the group created stronger bonds between friends, as well as attaining new knowledge from collaboration. Excerpt 8 highlights this point by reporting that: “I gained much knowledge that can’t learn from the book.”

Aside from the participants reporting improvements in their own listening, speaking, teamwork, writing and collaboration skills, the participants also reported a change in the way they perceived themselves. In Excerpts 9 and 10, the participants reported how meeting these people gave them a newfound respect for them. Then, in Excerpts 11–14, the participants discussed how they looked at their own situation and compared it to the people they had met. Their conclusion is that they should be thankful for the life they have now.

This finding is supported by Nikitina (2011) who also reported that students were able to view their perceived reality differently after finishing a project that required them to go beyond the traditional classroom. This notion is further substantiated by other research that demonstrated through reflection and in engaging in real-life experience, people can create their own understanding and knowledge of the world around them (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978).

The findings suggest that while the participants did face difficulties with PBL, they were able to overcome them through self-determination and the help of their teammates. Finally, the participants were able to gain more than just language and soft skills, as the real-world and meaningful approach to helping people seems to have given them the opportunity to critically reflect on who they are.
CONCLUSION
The first purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how ESL students in a Malaysian private university view a social outreach project in facilitating their learning of English. By collecting and analysing reflective essays and documentaries, the researchers were able to establish that the learners were able to generate their own learning outcomes, garner an appreciation for teamwork, and obtain a sense of confidence and achievement. These attributes were identified by the learners and were closely linked with the overall outcomes for the project. The participants were able to reflect on language skills that for them were initially challenging. However, the participants in their words, were able to work on and even improve these skills by working on the project with the help of team members.

The second purpose of the study was to see how students perceived their sense of self after engaging in a social outreach project. Many participants reflected critically on their own lives as well as how they saw themselves. This deeper reflection was not anticipated on the outset of the project, and on deeper analysis revealed that meeting the refugee had, in some way, impacted how the participants viewed themselves and others. This study cannot make any definitive conclusions or deductions based on this finding, as there are not enough data to support any assumptions. Nevertheless, this last finding will provide the researchers with an avenue in which to further explore in a future study.

NEXT STEPS: FUTURE STUDIES
The initial aim of the study was to investigate how students believe a social outreach project can help them learn a language. Though the participants revealed that personally they believe that certain language aspects had become better, the researchers also noted a deeper understanding of self and how each participant viewed the world. A number of studies have investigated the learning outcomes of project-based learning; however, future studies may want to look past what students learn and focus on how they learn. Studies could then look at projects that have meaningful outcomes and investigate how student beliefs and views on self, change from interacting with people who are less fortunate than them. A third possibility would be to extend this research from a different point of view in order to further deepen and understand the analysis and results produced. A narrative analysis would be an elevated way of studying students’ reflections in projects such as this.

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