

На наш взгляд, такая работа школьного Евроклуба сможет раздвинуть рамки школьных занятий, открыть выход в широкий мир познания, включая диалог культур.

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PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Experiential learning refers to the organization of the learning process on the basis of the pedagogical principle of “learning by doing”, which means that learners acquire knowledge after having experienced or done something new. Experiential learning is defined as the exploitation and processing of experience, aiming not only at acquiring knowledge, but also at transforming the way of thinking and changing attitudes. In experiential learning learners participate “in concrete activities that enable them to ‘experience’ what they are learning about” and the “opportunity to reflect on those activities”, since “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”.

Experiential learning is related to the project method. The project method is “a natural extension of what is already taking place in class”, an open learning process, the limits and processes of which are not strictly defined, which progresses in relation to the specific teaching context and learners’ needs and interests.

The implementation of the project method is based on the following pedagogical principles, expressed by many progressive educators: a) promotion of manual activity instead of memorization and verbalism, b) learners’ active participation in the learning process, and c) exploitation of facts relating to the immediate reality as a source for learning.

Many benefits of incorporating project work in second and foreign language settings have been suggested. First, the process leading to the end-product of project-work provides opportunities for students to develop their confidence and independence. In addition, students

demonstrate increased self-esteem, and positive attitudes toward learning. Students' autonomy is enhanced, especially when they are actively engaged in project planning (e.g. choice of topic). A further frequently mentioned benefit relates to students' increased social, cooperative skills, and group cohesiveness.

Another reported benefit is improved language skills. Because students engage in purposeful communication to complete authentic activities, they have the opportunity to use language in a relatively natural context and participate in meaningful activities which require authentic language use. Authentic activities refer to activities designed to develop students' thinking and problem solving skills which are important in out-of-schools contexts, and to foster learning to learn. While activities are 'anything students are expected to do, beyond getting input through reading or listening, in order to learn, practice, apply, evaluate, or in any other way respond to curricular content', authentic activities are tasks with real world relevance and utility, "that integrate across the curriculum, that provide appropriate levels of complexity, and that allow students to select appropriate levels of difficulty or involvement". Among other characteristics, authentic activities have real-world relevance, provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, enhance collaboration and reflection, and allow competing solutions and diversity of outcome. In addition, project-based learning provides opportunities for "the natural integration of language skills".

A further benefit is that because project work progresses according to the specific context and students' interests, students have enhanced motivation, engagement and enjoyment. From a motivational perspective, projects being authentic tasks, are more meaningful to students, increase interest, motivation to participate, and can promote learning. Enjoyment and motivation also stem from the fact that classroom language is not predetermined, but depends on the nature of the project.

Another set of reported benefits pertains to the development of problem-solving and higher order critical thinking skills. These skills are very important, since they are life-long, transferable skills to settings outside the classroom.

Finally, among other potential benefits, project work encourages motivation, fosters group cohesiveness, increases expectancy of success in target language, achieves “a rare synthesis of academic and social goals”, reduces anxiety, increases the significance of effort relative to ability, and promotes effort-based attributions.

Effective project-based learning requires the teacher to assume a different role. The teacher’s role is not dominant, but he/she acts as a guide, advisor, coordinator and facilitator. In implementing the project method, the focal point of the learning process moves from the teacher to the learners, from working alone to working in groups. Most cognitive, emotional and psychomotor aims of project work have been achieved by the majority of students. More specifically, in relation to language skills, most learners’ willingness to participate in learning activities has been increased. They were more eager to experiment with new language, since they were less concerned with “sounding silly”. At the end of the school term, most students showed an improvement in all four language skills. Their speaking and listening skills, in particular, had the greatest improvement. This was particularly important, since it is not uncommon for students to have good knowledge of the linguistic system of the target language, but little listening comprehension and speaking skills, because they are not provided with opportunities to participate in real and authentic communication activities.

As far as motivation is concerned, findings seem to support the view expressed in many studies that project work results in enjoyment and sense of self-esteem. For some students with low performance, however, increased self-esteem seemed to last only for the duration of the project. It seems, therefore, that project work alone cannot adequately address issues of self-esteem. Most importantly, however, most students seemed to have developed intrinsic motivation, participating in learning activities for “the spontaneous feelings of interest and enjoyment”. As what a low performing student said: “I really liked it (the project). I wish we did it more often”.