APPLYING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING TO ENGLISH CLASSROOM TO PROMOTE STUDENTS' AUTONOMY, COLLABORATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

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SUMMARY

The world is changing, so it is clear that students needboth knowledgeandskills to succeed. This need is driven by not only workforce demands for high-performance employees who can plan,collaborate, and communicate, but also by the need to help all youngpeople learn civic responsibility and master their new roles as globalcitizens. However, motivating and engaging students in active learning is challenging even for the most experienced teachers. Therefore, Project-based Learning (PBL) is important in the learning process as it refers to students designing, planning, and carrying out an extended project that produces a publicly-exhibited output such as a product, publication, or presentation. This article aims to introduce some basic theories as well as some practical steps in constructing a PBL class in order to promote students' autonomy and lifelong learning. Besides providing useful information on PBL, ideas to address issues and overcome obstacles are included to ensure teachers practise PBL.

Key words: *project-based learning, ELT, autonomy, lifelong learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Project-based Learning (PBL) is a model for classroom activity that shifts away from the usual classroom practices of short, isolated, teacher-centered lessons. PBL learning activities are long-term, interdisciplinary, student-centered, and integrated with real-world issues and practices. It promotes understanding, which is true knowledge. In PBL, students explore, make judgments, interpret, and synthesize information in meaningful ways. In other words, learners in PBL had the opportunity to construct knowledge by generating their projects based on their interests and individual differences. They made connections between their new knowledge and their existing knowledge and were able to apply them to similar settings. They learnt in a meaningful context while creating the end product [16].

PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF PBL

The characteristics of PBL are consistent among educators who studied and implemented this teaching method [3], [5],

[12]. Features of PBL include: (a) complex explorations over a period of time; (b) a student-centered learning activity whereby students plan, complete and present the task; (c) challenging questions, problems or topics of student interest which become the center of the project and the learning process; (d) the de-emphasis of teacher-directed activities; (e) frequent feedback from peers and facilitators, and an opportunity to share resources, ideas and expertise through the whole process in the classroom; (f) hands-on activities and the use of authentic resources and technologies; (g) a collaborative learning environment rather than a competitive one; (h) the use of a variety of skills such as social skills and management skills; (i) the use of effort in connecting ideas and acquiring new skills during different stages of projects; (j) the production of meaningful artefacts that can be shared with peers, teachers, and experts in a public presentation; and (k) assessment in both the process of working from the first stage to the last stage and the finished project.

It is clear that PBL has several distinct characteristics which build upon the essence of

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authentic learning. Therefore, it is important to study how authentic learning facilitates a project based learning environment.

Authentic learning

Authentic activities are one of the main features of PBL as students have an opportunity to connect to real world situations while completing their projects [6]. Authentic learning allows students to experience relevant and real-world tasks. It makes their learning more meaningful by connecting prior knowledge to their current study. Students have real-life roles which are similar to the real world outside the class room and these necessitate teamwork, negotiation, and the use of problem-solving skills [14].

In addition, a PBL project allows students to engage in authentic situations and practices. They have the opportunity to use other than their textbooks, they need to search and investigate their project through the use of other resources (e.g. Internet, local community, advertising materials, and verbal communication in the real world.)

Roles of Teachers and Students in PBL

A teacher in PBL is a *facilitator* of skill acquisition and an advisor. As a facilitator, the teacher generates activities and students have opportunities to draw and strengthen their skills in inquiry, critical thinking and problem-solving [8]. To ensure the successful environments flourish, teachers can help learners develop goals, monitor the process of learning, answer questions raised by students and suggest options whenever students reach a deadlock[15]. Furthermore, teachers need to maximize students' thinking and learning and help students who struggle to find solutions [8]. In the early stages of PBL, teachers need to help students to develop an assessment tool such as a rubric, which is used at different stages of the project lifecycle. In addition, [8]stated that teacher as the *advisor* should establish rapport with students and care for students by helping them to achieve their journey of

learning. To make students feel confident and motivated throughout their project, teachers should be aware of the abilities, aptitudes and learning styles of students who have different paces of learning [6].

The role of the student in PBL is of great importance. As PBL involves student-directed learning, the student needs to beinvolved in three major roles: (a) as a self-directed learner, (b) as a team member/collaborator and (c) as a knowledge manager/leader [7]. As *self-directed learners*, students choose the topic that is related to their experiences and interests. Besides being responsible for their own learning, as team members with shared goals students also need to work collaboratively for the success of the project. As *team members*, they need to have a sense of ownership and empowerment of their own project [7]. Since the final outcome is in part their responsibility as part of the whole class or group work, students need to be team members willing to work and put in effort to make it right [9].

It can be concluded that the roles of teachers and students in PBL are equally important and that they need to be flexible for successful participation with each other. The teacher is not a leader but a facilitator, an advisor, and a knowledge master, while the student is not a passive learner but a self-directed learner, a team member/collaborator, and a knowledge manager/leader.

Learner autonomy

Learner autonomy is promoted through project work. In PBL, students are allowed to select the project topic and to be involved in designing and planning their project and the process of learning with support from teachers [6]. [11] mentions thatPBL classroom settings can narrow "the gap between traditional classrooms and more learner and learning-centered settings". When students have responsibility for their own learning, they are motivated and feel more competent and self-determined.

It can be concluded that students in PBL involved in the various project work stages (selecting and investigating topics, collecting data, interpreting and presenting data, assessing the project) will have enhanced connection with and self-control over their own learning. Therefore, PBL fosters learners to become autonomous and lifelong learners [4].

Cooperative learning

In PBL, students' learning activities are normally organized in small groups with the emphasis on achieving the objective under the direction of the group members who have shared goals. Each member of the group is a center of learning, and responsible not only for learning but also for helping other members learn and to give support. Learners work through the project with support from the teacher and feedback from teachers, peers and field specific experts throughout the project [6],[8].

BENEFITS OF PBL IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

PBL plays an important role in developing learners' target language for real-life purposes. It helps language students become more competent in the use of the target language and promotes learners' autonomy, learner centeredness, learner motivation and integrated skill practice [11].

Research has shown that there are many benefits to using PBL in the language classroom. These are:

• Gaining language proficiency, self-efficacy and self-esteem.

• Using real-life language and experiencing language in meaningful life situations.

• Developing motivation, self-confidence and the cognitive domain in second/foreign language learning.

ASSESSMENT OF PBL

In disciplines other than language teaching, various assessment practices can be integrated. For example, homework assignments, laboratory exercises, final project papers and presentations can be employed to measure content outcomes, while implementation evaluation, informal evaluation and project papers are used to assess scientific process learning outcomes. In addition, assessing the overall outcomes of students can be done through a peer review form, a faculty review panel, a final research presentation and a final paper [1].
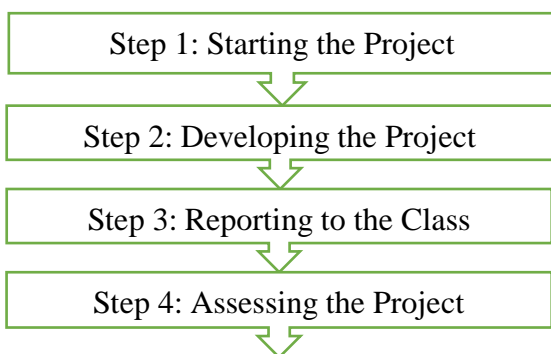
In language learning, students in PBL use real communication, authentic language and learning experiences to achieve the goals of learning. Therefore, performance assessments are crucial in PBL as they allow a variety of assessments to evaluate students' process of learning and tasks. Therefore, multiple types of formative and summative assessment should be integrated as a part of an effective assessment program [9],[10].

In PBL, students can evaluate their own team members' work or peers' work by offering suggestions for improvement or giving support. Having experience withpeer assessment during the learning process helps learners to evaluate their peers' final projects more easily and also allows teachers to assist and supervise the learning process among students [2].

Self-assessment enables students to evaluate their own work by reflecting on the performance, work progress and overall learning process that leads to their achievement Peer and self-assessment promote lifelong learning, self-awareness and critical reflection skills [2].

STEPS OF PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The process of PBL is an ongoing process undertaken by students with support from teachers. PBL's complex, systematic but flexible framework helps students to shape their projects and understand what is expected of them. To understand each stage clearly, this articlesummarizes the four general steps of project development from the following educators [6],[13]. The four main steps of PBL are shown below:

Step 1: Starting the Project

Step 2: Developing the Project

Step 3: Reporting to the Class

Step 4: Assessing the Project

The following is the summary of the four project steps:

Starting the project: this stage involves selecting the topic that is of interest and relevance to students. The teacher can create guiding questions so that students have an idea of what to do and are encouraged to study or develop. Students then establish the project outline and plan the method of development, the final outcomes and individual's responsibilities. The project should be challenging and motivating suchthat students can develop and have the flexibility to work attheir own level, while team members within the group offer advice and assistance. This is an important feature as it contributes to a successful outcome.

Developing the project: this stage involves the research which isundertaken by all group members either individually, in pairs, or as a group. This should be decided by the group before commencing the project. Students search for information to answer their driven question, note down the results they achieve, any problems they encounter and ways to solve them. This is an efficient process that can be used to improve the project as it progresses.

Reporting to the class: this stage involves presenting and receiving feedback from other students on the progress of and improvements to the project. The steps occurring throughout the project are assessed to make sure that students comprehend the problems and apply the skills and concepts necessary to complete the project.

Assessing the project: the final product can be evaluated by an individual student, students as a group, a teacher or external audience. This stage allows students to apply and present what they have learned.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that PBL is a systematic methodology that is able to be implemented in classroom settings including foreign languagecontexts [11]. The development of PBL in a classroom can be carefully employed under a process that guides practitioners and students in organizing projects.

APPENDICE

Frequently Asked Questions about PBL

Why should I use Project-based Learning?

PBL is extremely effective as a method for engaging students in their learning. With engagement comes focus, discipline, and mastery of academic content. Further, students have the opportunity to work on problems and issues relevant to their lives, as well as learn vital work and life skills necessary to succeed in schools or in working environments.

Does Project-based Learning incorporate content and standards?

PBL encourages learning of specified subject matter, concepts and standards. Projects begin withcurriculum standards and alternative assessment tools are used to determine what students have learnt. Projects are designed around a Driving Question/Essential Question which knits together intended outcomes and project activities.

How does Project-based Learning differ from Problem-based learning?

PBL and problem-based learning are similar, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Both are based on inquiry into an authentic problem or question. Problem-based learning is a term commonly used for research in colleges and universities, while Project-based Learning is a term used in schools.

How long should projects last?

A period of 2 - 6 weeks is recommended for projects as it ensures maximum effectiveness and solid assessment.

I have heard that PBL requires too much time.

PBL changes the nature of teachers' planning process where more time is required for planning because materials, performance assessments, and activities must be mapped out before the project begins. However, teachers often finds time spent working closely with students, rather than preparing new lessons once the project has begun.

Can other teaching methods be used along with Project-based Learning?

Yes, PBL incorporates all traditional teaching tools, methods, lectures, text-books, and conventional assessments. However, the nature of PBL demands students spending the bulk of the project working in groups to find answers to questions and deriving conclusions

Do I have to train my students to participate in a PBL classroom?

Not only do you have to train your students in soft skills, e.g. collaboration, facilitation, oral presentation; the habits of mind like inquiry and resilience buttheir parents, administrators and fellow teachers as well. PBL is an excellent way to get the community into the classroom to function as tutors, experts, guest speakers and panel members. Transparency is the key to aPBL classroom, "We want the public in our classrooms." If teachers in traditional schools complain about the lack of parental involvement, it is not true in a PBL classroom.

Do I have to have Internet access in my classroom to effectively employ PBL?

It's imperative that studentsare given access to as many resources as possible, and the Internet is certainly a powerful resource. However, a functioning school resource center or library provides greater advantages to students.

How can I effectively monitor the many project groups engaged in PBL?

Assigning and rotating students' roles in small groups are useful ways to allow groups to progress without having the teacher within the group most of the time. This will allow teachers to circulate at a slower pace. Rotating roles among students, and teachers providing feedback on how they performed in their roles will allow each student to experience having to both talk and listen as well as to lead and follow.

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TÓM TẮT
ỨNG DỤNG HOẠT ĐỘNG HỌC THEO ĐỀ ÁN VÀO DẠY VÀ HỌC TIẾNG ANH NHẰM THÚC ĐẨY QUÁ TRÌNH TỰ HỌC VÀ HỌC TẬP SUỐT ĐỜI CỦA SINH VIÊN

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Thế giới đang thay đổi. Vì vậy rõ ràng là học sinh cần cả kiến thức và kỹ năng làm việc (như lập kế hoạch, phối hợp làm việc và giao tiếp) để thành công trong học tập cũng như khi ra trường. Tuy nhiên, việc thúc đẩy và khuyến khích sinh viên tích cực trong học tập là thách thức ngay cả đối với những giáo viên giàu kinh nghiệm nhất. Do đó, Học theo Đề án (PBL) đóng vai trò quan trọng trong quá trình học tập, bởi vì để học PBL, sinh viên cần thiết kế, lập kế hoạch, và thực hiện một dự án mở rộng mà kết quả là một sản phẩm cụ thể. Bài báo này nhằm giới thiệu một số lý thuyết cơ bản cũng như một số bước thực tế trong việc xây dựng một lớp học PBL để thúc đẩy tính tự chủ của học sinh, sinh viên và để thúc đẩy việc học tập suốt đời. Ngoài việc cung cấp thông tin hữu ích về PBL, đề án học tập PBL, bài viết cũng góp phần giải đáp phần nào những khó khăn, thắc mắc từ phía giảng viên khi tham gia giảng dạy học theo đề án (PBL).
Từ khóa: *học theo đề án, tự học, học tập suốt đời, học ngoại ngữ.*

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