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Introduction

My research is about **Project-based Teaching Learning (PBL)**. PBL or project-based instruction is an instructional approach designed to give students the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills through engaging projects set around challenges and problems they may face in the real world.

PBL is more than just “doing a project” as you might remember from your own school days. We live in a project-based world, reinforced by how the private, government and public sectors work nowadays. The truth is that our modern world is sustained and advanced through the successful completion of projects.

When we help students have authentic experiences, we prepare them for the real world. In its purest form, PBL prepares students to be self-sufficient, creative, and critical thinkers that can take on any challenge.

PBL is a student-centered learning process in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects. It helps them understand the subject content more deeply through self-learning and learning by doing.

In this paper, I will present the main advantages of PBL and how it works in practice, offering insights from my own experience as a teacher of English.

Key words: project-based learning; projects; 21st-century skills

Chapter 1. The History of PBL

The PBL process was pioneered by **Barrows and Tamblyn** at the Medical School program at McMaster University in Hamilton (Canada) in the 1960s. It was influenced by existing pedagogical currents, particularly by John Dewey's ideas about intrinsic interest "learning by doing", Bruner's "learning by discovery" and the case-based learning of Harvard Business School (Schmidt, 2012).

Project Based Learning (**PBL**) is a social practice in which students are socialized through a series of group activities involving the simultaneous learning of language, content, and skills (Slater, Beckett, & Aufderhaar, 2006). PBL is also "an approach to instruction that teaches curriculum concepts through a project" (Bell, 2010, p.41). In brief, this approach in teaching English can show how a language is learned (Richards & Schmidt, 2010) and gives ways of teaching something, which uses classroom activities or techniques to help learners learn (British Council, 2008).

In essence, the approach espouses **four main principles** (Hedge, 2000). The **first principle** is learner-centered teaching. It encourages students to share responsibility for their learning (Merlot Pedagogy, 2016), in which a teacher offers support and guidance during the learning process (Stoller, 2002). The **second principle** is autonomy. It suggests, "learners to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for their learning" (Richards, 2015, p.742). Brown (2007) posits that teachers should provide opportunities for students to solve problems in small groups and practice their language outside their classroom to achieve a value of learner autonomy.

The **third principle** is collaborative learning is an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in groups to achieve a common academic goal (Gokhale, 1995, p.23). Besides, a collaborative work encourages students to explore and to apply their course materials as an attempt to search for understanding, solutions, or to create a product (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). Then,

the **last principle** is learning through tasks. In essence, a task refers to an activity that enables students to achieve a particular learning goal (Richards & Schmidt, 2010) using their available language resources and leading to a real outcome (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Further, PBL is a type of contextualized cooperative learning designed within **five main phases** highlighting the essence of students' participation. The stages start with **(1)** selecting a topic, **(2)** planning for the project, and **(3)** finding information about a topic of the project. They continue to **(4)** developing and implementing plans to complete the project and **(5)** presenting and evaluating an output of the project and students' efforts to finish the project.

Hmelo-Silver (2004) emphasized **5 goals** of PBL. These include helping students to develop **(1)** flexible knowledge, **(2)** effective problem-solving skills, **(3)** self-directed learning skills, **(4)** effective collaboration skills, and **(5)** intrinsic motivation.

In essence, the PBL model consists of **7 characteristics**.

- 1.** Focuses on a big and open-ended question, challenge for the students to research and respond to solve it.
- 2.** Brings what students should academically know, understand and be able to do into equation.
- 3.** Is inquiry-based, stimulates curiosity and generates questions as it helps students seek answers.
- 4.** Uses **21st-century skills** such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.
- 5.** Builds student choice into the process.
- 6.** Provides opportunities for feedback and revision of the plan and project, just like in real life.
- 7.** Requires students to present their problems, research process, methods, and results.

PBL has been “advocated as an effective means for promoting language and content learning in **EFL classrooms**” (Guo, 2006, p.147). Besides, it helps students to achieve a greater understanding of a topic, increase their learning motivation (Bell, 2010, p.39) and inspires them to obtain a deeper knowledge of a particular subject. A project work also leads to mirroring real-life tasks and provides opportunities for students to work cooperatively in a small group, in which they can share resources and ideas in completing a particular project. Furthermore, research into language teaching reports that PBL supports, facilitates, and improves a learning process (Tamin & Grant, 2013) and helps English language learners achieve their language-learning goals (Beckett & Slater, 2005, as cited in Foss, Carney, MsDonals, Rooks, 2007).

What is the **opposite** of PBL? While in **PBL** students have to produce and demonstrate their mastery of content, in **Problem-Based Learning**, students have to present a solution to a clearly defined authentic problem.

Projects can represent a range of tasks that can be done at home or in the classroom, by parents or group of students, quickly or over time. While **PBL** also features projects, in PBL the focus is more on the process of learning and learner-peer-content interaction than the end-product itself.

The **4 advantages** of PBL include: deeper engagement and interaction with learning content; encouragement or higher order thinking and problem-solving skills; development of peer and professional networks.

The Disadvantages of PBL

PBL requires much time that must be provided to solve complex problems. So, it will lead to a lack of time available for the material / content and the organization and administration of PBL can be time-consuming.

Chapter 2.

The skills and abilities obtained in new situations is necessary to teach students to make use of reference books, to comprehend the main idea of the text and generalize it. The teaching contents should be aimed at extending the range of students' interests. It must be pleasant and take his or her feelings into consideration, stimulating the desire to learn. It should also develop students' imagination and help them think and act creatively.

In middle school, teaching deepens and strengthens students' knowledge, linguistic skills and abilities. This period of schooling is different from elementary years, since students have grown and have more mature way of thinking, including abstract thinking, as adolescents.

Getting acquainted with the economic, geographical, human and cultural peculiarities of a country, students expand their outlook – an important task of teaching to achieve. At this stage, a preference is given to the development of speech and written language, at the same time proceeding with the process of formation of pronunciation skills and listening abilities.

The development of the types of reading, especially the informative reading, is of utmost importance. While reading a text, students must learn about the civilization and culture of the country where that foreign language is spoken.

Teaching materials, such as texts, recordings, documents, should be selected from fiction, press, radio, television programmes, films and other sources, taking into account students' knowledge, psychologist, preferences and interests.

At the end of this stage, a student must partially master and efficiently use the four types of speech activity – speaking, reading, listening, and writing. In middle school, the methods and forms of work change greatly, aimed not only at communication but also at the development of cognitive activity.

Teaching at this stage has a more realized character, at the same time it helps to acquire certain knowledge and from communication abilities.

Upon graduating from middle school, students must be able to:

- Acquire information from the reported material (general comprehension)
- Bring out a certain required fact from a text (selective comprehension)
- Realize the intentions of the interlocutor (presumptive comprehension)

Why is PBL better than traditional classroom learning?

When it comes to preparing the next generation for the future, education becomes a primary concern. Traditional classroom instruction is classroom-based education, which at the moment is challenged by the ever-increasing complexity of the modern times and societies. Research in learning methods have opened up an opportunity to try new methods, such as PBL.

PBL focuses on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students. It is an inquiry-based method of learning to solve the problems given as projects to students, which results in active experiential learning.

Here are 12 reasons why we, as teachers and educators, or students should go for PBL:

1. **Scope of work** – it enables us to learn and adapt structures around projects rather than having lecture-based learning and reading – writing assignment of the traditional classroom learning. Students learn to comprehend the entire scope of the project and put the execution into a structure under the guidance of their teachers.
2. **Real-world problem simulation** – PBL focuses on enabling a student to face real world situations, simulated in the forms of the projects, so students learn while doing what they know and develop new learning around hobbies, careers. They often develop new hobbies and liking for new careers.

3. **Improves the interpersonal skills** – projects given often are more complex than in the assignments given in traditional classroom-based learning. Students need to structure their efforts in organizing their survey required for the projects, analyze the results. Finally, they improve their communication skills to collaborate with various stakeholders.
4. **Concept and creativity development** – PBL develops greater depth of understanding the concept than in traditional classroom-based learning and results in improved level of student creativity
5. **Determines the actual knowledge** – PBL determines in depth knowledge and experience of students. They develop skills and knowledge, while classroom-based learning has a shorter span of memory-based experience, derived from a rote approach.
6. **Choice of selecting real world problems** – projects are chosen by the students according to their interest and it gives the students unique ways of solving different problems, which are diverse, even in the same class.
7. **A new style of assessing students' skills** – teachers can directly assess the development of these skills among their students when they perform activities of their projects.
8. **Visit to the field, sites of real-world problems** – this helps students to see issues first-hand and delve into their impact to people and communities.
9. **Direct demonstration of the capability** – teachers get greater opportunity to assess their students' capabilities demonstrated in the performing activities and events, organized in the projects, as opposed to assessing through essays and exams of the traditional classroom learning.
10. **Inclusion of technology** – PBL is an effective way of including technology in learning, be it through labs, the Internet or computers.
11. **Tracking of progress** – teachers and students can both track their activities in projects, learning also how to monitor and evaluate. Throughout this process,

students have opportunities to develop skills related to observation, survey research, reporting, presentation, communication and collaboration.

12. **End-to-end problem-solving skills** – students undergo various stage of problem-solving through the structure of their projects, from scoping, work planning, activity performing and tracking, as well as presentation of the project and closure. Through implementation they learn to collaborate, work in teams as well as lead teams.

Who benefits from PBL?

PBL develops children’s ability to work with his/her peers, building teamwork and group skills. It allows teachers to learn more about each student as a person, contributing to their planning of how to further motivate and develop them as students. It helps the teacher communicate in progressive and meaningful ways with the child or a group of children on a range of issues.

PBL is a transformative teaching method for engaging all students in meaningful learning and develop 21st century skills and competencies in them, including in critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, creativity and communication.

Gaining knowledge should be fun and interesting. Giving a project to students is better nowadays, rather than making them sit in a class and speaking it all out for them. This makes them go out into the real world, learn on their own, giving them a better understanding of the topic – something that they are genuinely interested in to pursue. This way they learn to take up an initiative on their own and hence know more on topics that they have chosen.

Putting it to practice

A few years ago, I decided to do a project with my 6th class students, focusing on cooperative learning. Students had to work on individual pieces of work and add them

unto a unified project – a poster (samples in annex). The assignment also included collaborative learning – students working together on one piece of work – an essay.

For this to be effective, I took the following three steps:

1. Brainstorm on what kind of topics they are interested in. We made a list of all topics, after which I asked students to vote on the topics they wanted to take up. Two were chosen, particularly 1. The US Government, 2 The American Presidents.
2. I then assigned students into groups of four. Each group member was to contribute a story to the poster.
3. I gathered each group together for regular meetings. It gave each group member a chance to show their progress and seek support from me and other members. It also gave me the chance to guide them throughout the project.

As I had been teaching them for a few years, I already knew their level and how they could each work together to succeed. Having collected too much material on both topics, I tried to be as realistic as possible when planning the project assignment for them.

Here are my lessons learned from this experience:

- The main question when planning the assignment is – what will students know or be able to do at the end of the project that they didn't know before?
- A project plan doesn't need to be a long, detailed document. It doesn't even need to be written down. It can simply be a mental process.
- Planning assignments carefully can help you minimize common challenges faced in the classroom, such as students feeling bored, confused, or that they are learning anything at all.
- It can also help you be flexible when unpredictable things happen or when you realise that you have too much or too little material.

- It can be useful for both students and teachers to follow a general assignment template, such as Introduction, Starter, Input, Development, Review.

Some of the challenges that I faced included, ensuring that every group member could contribute equally to writing the essay or designing the poster. Depending on personalities, sometimes a particular students would dominate the discussion or ignore inputs from other team members. It was my role to make sure that students didn't feel inferior or that it didn't limit their learning experience. Therefore, I asked them to assess their team-mates' performance.

I gave students flexibility to arrange their time to design the poster and decide who would do what to contribute. After everything was completed, each group had to present their poster in front of the class and receive feedback from me and peers. A question and answer enabled all students to be active, while the peer assessment method allowed to ensure that every student was involved in the process of the project. Each group also had to share what problems they encountered during their work and how they solved it.

When using PBL, it is always hard to strike a balance between excessive teacher control versus absence of teacher's feedback and guidance during the project. Building a consultation process allowed me as a teacher to stay involved to monitor and guide when necessary.

The end result was better than I had expected. Each student worked hard and I was impressed with their commitment to it.

Conclusions

In challenging circumstances, the most common approach is “**chalk and talk**” or “**sit and listen**”, where the students are generally passive. But the students are not blank slates. They have rich knowledge and experiences, which can add considerable value to the classroom. It’s important to see your students not just as a ‘class’, but as a collection of individuals, who have their own personalities, issues and challenges.

Many teachers, especially those who lack experience or confidence, feel more secure when they can control what is happening, and when they have the ‘safety’ of the textbook in their hands. They may worry that allowing students to work together, or giving them more responsibility, could result in chaos.

However, there are many reasons why a student-focused approach to learning is better and more effective. Generally speaking, a student-centered approach:

- Maximizes the opportunities for language practice;
- Engages the students more deeply and more effectively;
- Creates more trust, and better relationship, between teacher and students, as well as between students.

There are many ways in which PBL can be considered a success from a student’s perspective. For example, the student may:

- feel valued because the teacher showed interest in what they had to say;
- interacted successfully with other students;
- received praise or positive feedback from the teacher or other students;
- learned something about the world which they didn’t know before;
- benefited in some other personal way, which the teacher has no idea about.

Reflecting on your PBL results doesn’t have to take a long time. It can’t just be a few seconds, immediately after the projects are presented and over or at the end of the

semester. Reflecting on the following three questions can help you develop as a teacher, and help you become the best that you can be within your specific context:

1. Did the projects go according to the initial plans? If not, why not?
2. What was I pleased with?
3. What would I do differently in future?

When you start teaching it's 90% planning and 10% management. But for an experienced teacher, it's 10% planning and 90% management. Planning doesn't need to (and shouldn't) take a lot of time. Although a written plan can be just a few notes on a piece of paper, planning is also something which can be done mentally. It will help you anticipate specific challenges in your classroom and be prepared to respond appropriately should they occur.

It can also be collaborative. You can share your planning decisions with a colleague, preferably one who is familiar with the class or has sufficient experience in PBL. This can help you with your own professional development.

Using PBL in class is not a one-off event or a single experience during the semester. Which is why planning on using PBL should be done spanning a series of lessons, or a term, or an entire course. It should help you teach better. If there is no positive impact at the classroom level, it is a waste of time.

When planning on how to best use PBL in class, you should always ask these two questions:

- What will the students know at the end of their projects, which they didn't know at the start?
- What will the students be able to do at the end of their projects, which they couldn't do at the start?

At the start of the process when students decide or are assigned their projects, you should explain the main objective to the students. This is motivating and empowering

for them and helps to develop trust, as well as understand the process ahead and how they will be monitored and evaluated.

Think of using PBL like a bus journey, in which you are the driver, and your students are the passengers. As the driver, you obviously know the destination of the journey, but you should also tell your passengers as they got on. However, you don't need to tell them the exact route. Indeed, things may happen during the journey (e.g. and weather, an accident, a closed road) which mean you have to take a different route than you had planned. This route may be more interesting (and more beautiful) than the one had initially planned.

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Appendix

Lesson planning

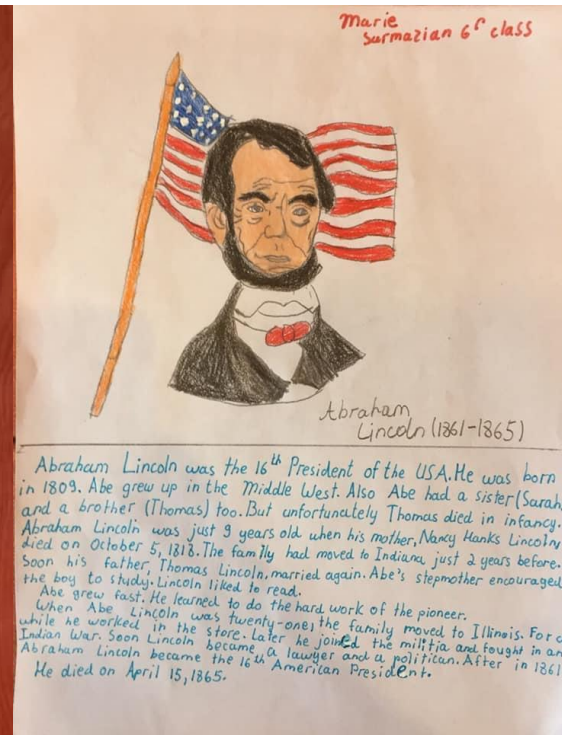
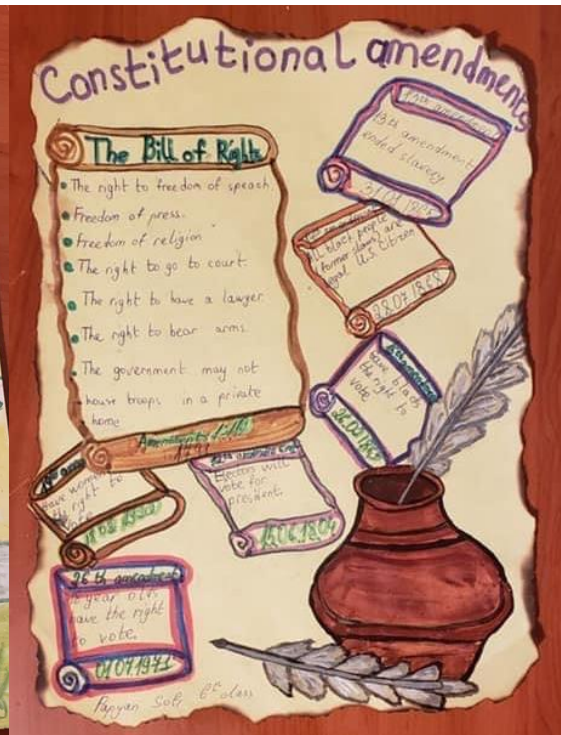
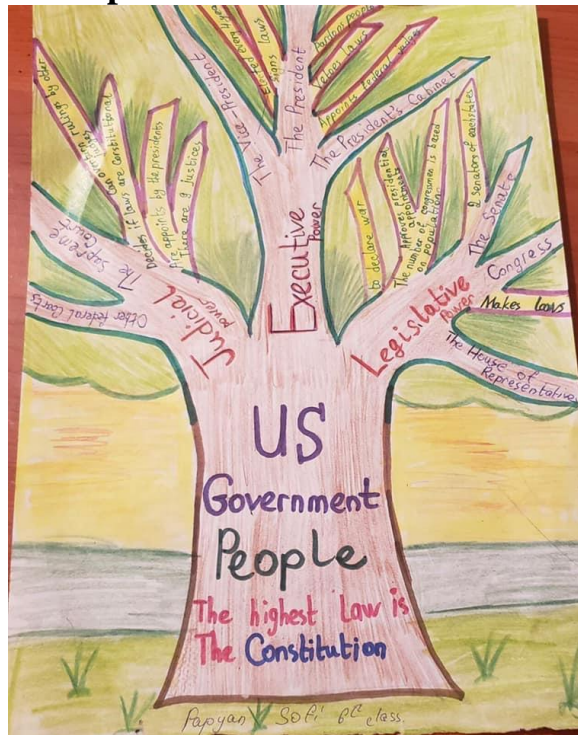
Theme	Hours	New vocabulary		Grammar	Text for reading	Auding	Tongue-Twister
Political outlook	6	Passive use	Active use	Past Perfect in Reported Speech	Who rules the country?	A very important person /VIP/	Copper Coffee Pots
		Constitution An election A senate The press A Congress The Cabinet To guarantee	To represent A trunk To support A term To obey To Declare To vote A citizen				Today's quotation: Real success comes in small portions every day. Song: America, the beautiful

Table. The peer assessment rubric

	Unsatisfactory	Partially proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
Contribution to the project	Does not collect any relevant information, no useful suggestions	Collects information when prodded, tries to offer some ideas, but not well developed	Collects basic, useful information related to the project, occasionally offers useful ideas	Collects and presents to the team a great deal of relevant information, offers well-developed ideas
Taking responsibility	Does not perform assigned tasks, often misses meetings,	Performs assigned tasks but needs many reminders, attends meetings but generally	Performs all assigned tasks, attends meetings regularly, generally reliable	Performs all tasks very effectively, attends all meetings very reliable

	relies on others to do the work	does not say anything constructive		
Valuing other team members	Often argues with team-mates, doesn't let anyone else talk, does not listen to alternate approaches	Does not pay much attention when others talk, often assumes their ideas will not work	Generally listens to others' points of view, always uses respectful language, tries to understand others' ideas	Always listens to others and their ideas, helps them develop their ideas, always helps the team reach a fair decision

Pictures of posters





Mario Sarmazian 6^o class

George Washington (1732-1799)

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732 in Virginia. His family was rich. The boy went to a private school and, later, 2 private teachers taught him to be a soldier. George learned to ride a horse, to hunt, shoot, sail and swim.

George Washington was among those who wrote the US Constitution in Philadelphia. People respected him for his courage, honesty and wisdom.

On April 30, 1789, before a large crowd Washington promised to "serve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States!" This is how George Washington became the first American President. People called him "The Father of the Nation!"

He died on the evening of December 14, 1799, at Mount Vernon. He passed away of a throat infection.