ELT Ireland

Project-based Learning – Easier Said than Done

**by Peter Lahiff,
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Different
Innovative
Exciting

First an Acronym Check

Projects

Tasks

Discovery

Problems

Enquiry / Inquiry

& Students???

What can learning be based on?

BL

____

BLANK based learning

Which do you use?

www.menti.com - 15 86 47

A different kind of adult programme

FUTURE LEARNING ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE _____

We believe that all learners choose to study English for a purpose and our courses are designed with a sense of that purpose; personal, social, professional and academic. We also emphasise the importance of learner autonomy, and our courses invite the learner to take responsibility for their progress, help them to develop their learning skills and the ability to develop themselves.

Our adult course is divided into three stages according to English language level. At each stage the exit criteria are those specified in the relevant Integrated Skills Exam (ISE) for ILEP purposes by Trinity College London.

All of our courses are **project-based** which means the students will learn English while **working together** and making **use of technology** as a basic tool of communication and a support for language learning. Our course has 15 hours of project-based tuition per week (morning or afternoon) and we have the add-on option of a daily **Communication Workshop** which brings the total tuition hours to 20 per week. Self-study tasks are also set at least two a week with individual feedback given on them.

Students' Initial Concerns

How can I improve if I don't do more grammar exercises?

I don't mind helping, but my team mate is too slow to understand or explain

Our team mate is not here today so we can't finish our project

My group are always speaking their own language

I'm tired of this topic, it is not relevant to me

I am too shy to speak in front of the class, they are all so confident

This class is not serious enough for me, I need to change to a different level

If we were working from a book I would be able to study ahead and revise better

I wasn't here yesterday and I don't understand what we have to do

I thought "innovative approach" would mean a more fun way to learn grammar

How do I know if I have passed or failed my project, where's the grade?

The projects are fine, but they take too long and need a lot of technology skills.

What our Teachers Said

Molly: When taught well PBL is so realistic and holistic that students can feel cheated by the absence of that dull ache of repetition and monotony that said to them "you're learning". Proving that you haven't cheated them at all is half the battle, and that they shouldn't feel guilty for enjoying themselves in school

David: When you're doing PBL it's easy enough to think of "things to do", but which of those actually add up to worthwhile projects? When you've got the project that worthwhile, it can be hard to point to where the actual learning is happening in a way that makes it obvious to the learners.

Gabi: Students are expected to have a more active posture towards their learning - the skills required are not just communicative or language use skills, but also, organizational skills, leadership skills, interpersonal and critical thinking.
 The format of the projects needs to be clear and specific from the start, with a model of what we are asking students to do, otherwise it is too confusing for them. They do not really know why they are doing what they are doing if there is a lack of clear criteria, and the language outcomes are blurry.
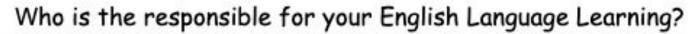
In response we made commitments to;

- Show language objectives at the start of the week and tick it off after.

- Do two grammar review hours each week (explain, examples, practice).

- Do two skills practice tasks which are related to the final exam and mark one.

- When project work task is completed to standard, set individual language work.

- Encourage conversation between the students on topic and give corrections.

- Give students time and a way to note of their corrections and analyse them.

- Flag the language that was used and the skills practiced in each activity.

- Set 2 individual writing tasks a week (1 formal, 1 informal) and give feedback.

- Connect project topic to students' experience and goals (in life, work and study).

- Make agreement about acceptable use of phones in class.

- Vary group combinations sometimes over the day / week.

- Variety of tasks and project outcomes with alternatives to presentations.

- Alternate Individual and group projects and give feedback (teacher, peer, self)

- Swap teachers from time to time for specific activities

Commitments go both ways

Who is the responsible for your English Language Learning?

or [school image] or **yourself**

Or all the options above?

- Autonomy means the ability to take control of one's own learning, independently or in collaboration with others.

- An autonomous learner will take more responsibility for learning and is likely to be more effective than a learner who is reliant on the teacher.

- Example: An autonomous learner will set their own goals, reflect on their progress, and seek opportunities to practise outside the classroom.

future learning

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Any Questions?

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