PROJECT BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AS A MEANS TO DEVELOP STUDY SKILLS OF ESP LEARNERS.

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Cover Page Footnote

Erratum

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PROJECT BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AS A MEANS TO DEVELOP STUDY SKILLS OF ESP LEARNERS.
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Abstract: The article discusses how PBL can be the means to develop study skills of the ESP students of the higher education. Moreover, it is being talked about the ways how project works can help to develop study skills.

Key words: project based learning, study skills, ESP, higher education

As Bülent Alan and Fredricka L. Stoller in their article “Maximizing the benefits of project work in foreign language classrooms” say that in some settings the tasks that are fairly non-elaborated, confined to a single class session, are labeled as projects. Whereas, in other settings, elaborate sets of tasks that establish the process for completing the project and span an entire instructional unit are considered projects. In settings like these, the benefits of project work are maximized because students are actively engaged in information gathering, processing, and reporting over a period of time, and the outcome is increased content knowledge and language mastery. Moreover, they say, students
experience increased motivation, autonomy, engagement, and a more positive attitude toward English. [1] In such kind of setting besides increasing passion to English, learners can develop study skills like time management, task management, note taking, presenting skills, problem solving, team work, task management, critical and creative thinking skills, research skills, critical reading skills, reflecting, leadership, action planning, setting educational goal, organizing learning, and ICT skills. (Stella Cottrell, 2008) [2]

A review of numerous case-study reports reviewed by Sheppard and Stroller (Allen 2004; Gardner 1995; Gu 2004; Ho 2003; Lee 2002; Levine 2004; Papandreou 1994; Tomei, Glick, and Holst 1999) reveals that successful project-based learning: focuses on real-world subject matter that can sustain the interest of students; requires student collaboration and, at the same time, some degree of student autonomy and independence; can accommodate a purposeful and explicit focus on form and other aspects of language; is process and product oriented, with an emphasis on integrated skills and end-of-project reflection. The end result is often authenticity of experience, improved language and content edge, increased meta-cognitive awareness, enhanced critical thinking and decision-making abilities, intensity of motivation and engagement, improved social skills, and a familiarity with target language resources. Conducting different project works effectively in ESP classes require certain stages

- Students and instructor agree on a theme for the project
- Students and instructor determine the final outcome of the project
- Students and instructor structure the project
- Instructor prepares students for the demands of information gathering
- Students gather information
- Instructor prepares students to compile and analyze data
- Students compile and analyze information
- Instructor prepares students for the language demands of the final activity
- Students present the final product
- Students evaluate the project [3]

Organising project based language teaching process is a bit challenging as it requires both teacher and student readiness. ESP classes being organized around the content gives the English teacher great opportunity to organize project works devoted to the spheres of the learners. Authentic task and authentic materials brought by the ESP teacher to develop language around the project will be much more beneficial and meaningful for the learners rather than just Grammar-translation. Projects can be around different topics presented by Stroller and Alan such as: Mainstream class subject matter; Vocational topics; Sociopolitical issues General human interest topics; Local issues; Global issues.

As for product for a project work teacher can decide with learners. Stroller and Alan suggest the followings as products for project works in ESP classes that can develop study skills: Brochure; Oral presentation; Class newspaper or wall newspaper; Pin and string display; Bulletin board display; Poster; Debate; Research paper; Graphic display;
Scrapbook; Guide book; Simulation; Handbook; Survey report; Information packet; Theatrical performance; Letter; Video or film; Maquette; Website; Multimedia presentation; Written report and others depending on the sphere of the learners.

Working on the projects in teams in most cases learners will assist each other not only develop English language skills but also study skills. For example in order to prepare poster presentation in group of 3-4 student will improve the skills that are working with materials, selecting materials, organizing materials, design the poster, working in group, presenting materials and reflecting on the presentation. Thus, each project will assist an English teacher to develop study skills besides English language skills in ESP classes.

Successful students adopt positive attitude towards study and don’t waste time or energy. Research shows that academic skills will increase by focus on some kind of intervention directed towards learning strategies, study skills, and study behaviors such as time management, using information resources, taking class notes, communicating with teachers, preparing for and taking examination. Soares, Guisande, Almeida and Paramo indicated relationship between learning behavior, learning approaches and academic achievement in higher education. [4].

Anyone who is engaged in learning can be beneficial to develop his or her study skills. In all academic settings regardless which is it, a student can improve their abilities to learn, retain and retrieve information. As there is no best way to learn, students may vary in their learning styles, strategies and preferences. Implementing project work in English classes will help students to learn in different ways regarding their own paths and ways. As project works mostly are organized in groups of 4,5,6 students have the opportunity to distribute the tasks depending on their abilities.[5]

According to Wingate study skills should be taught in an integrated way. He argues that learning how to study effectively at university cannot be separated from subject content and the process of learning. Each individual institution value the independence and prioritise skills differently according to their context, there is wide diversity of practice across universities. Most universities develop their agenda depending of the demands of their curriculum. Mostly the skills framework are like communication, information technologies, numeracy, problem-solving, working with others, managing own learning and performance.[6]

As different departments require different skills developing study skills through project based language teaching gives the teacher opportunity to be flexible and make the decisions depending on the curriculum requirements and students` need.

A realistic and effective approach for universities would be to promote the embedding of skills on a smaller scale, by encouraging academic staff to integrate the development of learning into their teaching. Undoubtedly, the teaching quality in higher education has improved through the learning and teaching enhancement initiatives of the past decades.
Reference:
2. Stella Cottrell “Study skill handbook”, 2013, Palgrave and Macmillan