A PROJECT -BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING MODEL STEERED BY CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY FOR DEVELOPING ENGLISH 141 AND EFL STUDENTS' SKILLS AT BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This case study documents the process of implementing a project-based language learning supported by the principles of the constructivist theory to improve English 141 Students' language skills at Birzeit University. The qualitative method was used and the sample consisted of one experimental group of 25 (male and female) students. The study aimed at marrying between theory and practice. It showed the principles of projects-based learning, the role of students, activities, problems and procedures implemented. Two units were taught within eight weeks anticipating to transfer acquired skills into applicable factual situations Students worked cooperatively and conducted fieldwork activities relevant to the units under study, practiced communicative tasks like interviews, discussion circles, presentations and Jigsaw. The results revealed that if students were allowed to implement non-curricular activities, they would be able to transfer the acquired skills into similar real-life situations. Moreover, it was noticeable that students' language skills developed fairly well and they became independent learners. Their motivation was increased and cooperation enhanced. This study is expected to be of great benefit to EFL students as well as to teachers of other subjects. It encourages them to indulge in running learner-centered projects in varied fields.

Keywords*: Project-based Learning, Constructivist Approach, English Communication*

Introduction

The project method is a natural extension of what takes place in class and cross-curricular approach to knowledge. It was linked to the internal reform of the educational process and based on certain components like opening schools to the local community, providing equal opportunities to all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, and

studying problems of everyday life at school (Fragoulis & Tsiplakides). Class projects are a great way to put into practice skills that have been learnt during an English course (Zehni, 2006).

An interesting element of project-based learning (PBL) pedagogies is that they offer sufficient scope for student-centered exploration, where participants develop their cognitive abilities and subject knowledge as they attempt to solve problems and create comprehensive solutions in the form of reports and presentations (Kelsen). Kelsen claimed that relatively few researchers have investigated whether project-based settings lead to use of the target language. Farouck argued that PBL "provides learners real-life contexts with specific requirements, and learners need to integrate language skills and other skills to meet those demands" (3) . To improve students' language skills, there is a need to place them in an appropriate learning environment that would empower them to learn and use the foreign language.

Constructivist Learning Design (CLD), on the other hand, seeks to satisfy Dewey's pedagogic creed that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Situation is the first CLD element that connects formal learning with his only true education of real-life in social situations (Gagnon and Collay).

Constructivism has recently been a prominent approach to teaching and represented a paradigm shift from education based on behaviorism to education based on cognitive theory (Gagnon & Collay, n.d). Here learners are active individuals who cooperate to construct their own knowledge based on interaction with their environment rather than being passive recipients of information. Students focus on both increasing their own achievement and increasing the achievement of their group mates. Individuals follow a variety of ways that characterize promotive interaction like :

Providing each other with efficient and effective help and assistance; exchanging needed resources, such as information and materials, *and* processing information more efficiently and effectively; providing each other with feedback in order to improve their subsequent performance; challenging each other's conclusions and reasoning in order to promote higher quality decision making and greater insight into the problems being considered; advocating the exertion of effort to achieve mutual goals; influencing each other's efforts to achieve the group's goals ((Johnson and Johnson, 1994, p.4).

Literature Review

This section discusses the theoretical framework focusing on the definition of terms and presents literature related to the topic of the study.

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

PBL has been praised for its benefits in language education and professional development. It provides learners with opportunities for using language in real-life contexts, which helps learners to develop language and other social skills (Na).

Ke stated that the term "project" as used in EFL context was first put forward by Fried-Booth (1986: 8) who indicated that language tasks arise naturally from the project itself, developing cumulatively in response to a basic objective, namely, the project.

The definition of the term was based on a variety of pedagogical practices and principles, (qtd in Ke):

- A project work was defined as involving multi-skill activities that focus on a theme of interest rather than specific language tasks (Haines, 1989).

- A project-based learning should be viewed as a natural extension of fully integrated language and content learning, making it a viable option in a variety of instructional settings including general English, English for academic purposes, English for specific purposes, and English for occupational/vocational/professional purposes (Stroller ,1997).

- Projects are extended tasks that usually integrate language skills by means of a number of activities. These activities combine in working towards an agreed goal and may include the following: planning; the gathering of information through reading, listening, interviewing, and observing; group discussion of the information; problem solving; oral and written reporting; and display (Hedge, 2002).In general, "PBL opens the door from disciplinary to authentic life. It assists learners to „get field of study competence" (Kavlu, 2017, p.70).

To wrap up, the researcher of the current study elaborated her own definition of a project- based learning. It relies on the Constructivist Approach as its theoretical basis, taking advantage of literature and benefiting from her own experience. Thus, a project-based learning is defined as a project chosen, planned, and implemented by cooperative and active participants in a non-threatening atmosphere. This might extend beyond the classroom setting to investigate a learning case, design activities, arrange matters to accomplish learning, and above all, solve problems and transfer learning to real- life situations. This definition concurs

Special Issue   **223**   **June 2020**

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with John Dewey's assertion that the aims of education in a democratic society should go beyond the mastery of subject matter to preparation for participation in social and political life. Dewey saw learning as an adaptive process, in which interaction with the environment generates problems that must be solved in order for individuals to satisfy their needs .

Teacher Role in Project-Based Learning

In conducting a project, the core of the learning process depends on the learners as active participants in a learner-centered classroom, where learners are supposed to work cooperatively in groups rather than working individually in a teacher-centered classroom. 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 (Fragoulis and Tsiplakides).

The researcher of this study believes that teachers are counselors who help and stimulate learners to communicate with some ease in English in a variety of authentic situations. This could help in retaining the knowledge, ideas and vocabulary items, and recalling them faster when needed, and eventually, transferring learning to similar situations.

Constructivist Approach

Constructivism refers to the fact that knowledge cannot be taught but must be constructed by the learner. Piaget emphasized the constructive nature of the learning process and saw cognitive development as essentially a process of maturation. The development of mind is viewed as a balance between what is known and what is currently being experienced (Ke). Key stated that project-based learning has many qualities. Some of these are focusing on content learning through language learning; being student-centered with the teacher playing a role in offering support and guidance throughout the process; being cooperative rather than competitive, and having students work on their own, in small groups, or as a class to complete a project.

In an article entitled Constructivist Learning Design, Gagnon and Collay (n.d.) mentioned that constructivist learning comprises assumptions, which are almost in concord with the qualities of project-based learning. For example, learners usually construct knowledge by being involved in active learning, or by making their own representations of action and explaining things they do not understand.

Referring to one type of constructivism in his article Social Constructivism Emergency Perspective on Learning, Teaching, and Technology, Kim pointed out that social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge on this understanding. To achieve this, students are actively involved in a project based on their curriculum and learning experiences, the

thing that gives them the opportunity to participate "in concrete activities that enable them to 'experience' what they are learning about" and the "opportunity to reflect on those activities" (Silberman, 2007:8 as cited in Fragoulis and Tsiplakides).

Being supportive to this view, Rowell & Palmer (2007) quoted Maxim's words to explain the relationship between cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Both have much in common, but they are different in the way students and teachers are involved. Social Constructivists place more emphasis on communities of learners, where expert peers provide help for the less skilled ones. On the other hand, Cognitive Constructivists encourage learner-centered classrooms where individual students make knowledge in a variety of ways that suit their interests and supports their needs. Thus for "cognitive constructivists, learning is primarily an individualistic venture" (4).

Therefore, the focus all through this research will be on social constructivism.

English Communication 141 Course (ENGC 141)

This course reinforces the development of the four language skills- reading, writing, listening and speaking- and raises the students' language proficiency to the level of efficient communication and accuracy. Emphasis is placed on reading and writing. The writing component enables students to write cohesive and coherent paragraphs and essays. The aural/oral skills are to be practiced mainly in connection with the reading materials. Writing mechanics like structure and spelling, punctuation marks and cohesion and coherence are also emphasized (Department of Languages and Translation).

Birzeit University(BZU) is the oldest university in the city of Birzeit/Palestine

Statement of the Problem

Based on the previous discussion, the researcher tried to articulate a constructivist approach as the basis for carrying out a project-based learning to achieve the intended learning outcome, which is developing ENGC 141 and EFL students' language skills. PBL is used instead of relying merely on traditional teaching methods, which have been concentrating on the principle of transmitting information to learners (Erogluo), and on the behaviorist epistemology, which focuses on intelligence, domains of objectives, levels of knowledge, and reinforcement (Ganon & Collay, n.d).

In brief, it is hoped to develop students' language through developing ENGC 141 curriculum by conducting a project named *Exploring the Present and Conserving the Heritage*. Wiles and Bondi defined curriculum development as a "process whereby the choices of designing learning experiences for students are made and then activated through a set of coordinated activities (qtd.in Barabas 10). This can be accomplished through tying

class activities to real cases in the local community and using cooperative skills to accomplish tasks in authentic communicative situations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

1. What is the proposed project? How will the ENGC 141 students conduct the project-based learning?

2- What activities can 141 students perform in a project-based learning?

3. What is the effectiveness of the project in improving EFL students?

Significance of the Study

The current study highpoints the major importance of the project-based learning and its usefulness in enhancing cooperation among students. It also implements exercises that help university teachers apply cooperative learning strategies successfully. It is anticipated that this project would encourage students to appreciate their work and represent a model for other students. "Using students' own work as teaching materials can save teacher time, increase students' motivation, and access students' needs. Teachers can collect students' work in many ways and publish it to the delight of their students" (Renaud, Tannenbaum and Stantial). Therefore, this study is expected to be important for students and teachers to develop other courses using similar approaches and strategies.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the following:

- Conducting the study on one section of ENGC 141
- Employing cooperative strategies like interviews, jigsaw and presentations to improve students' language skills.

Researcher's Philosophy

The core of the current project was based on the researcher's philosophy and strong belief in the old Chinese saying "Don't give them a fish, teach them how to fish", which was written by Lao Tzu, the Chinese founder of Taoism.

The researcher also strongly believes that carrying out such projects and field-based work could enable students to develop higher- order-thinking skills (HOTS). They could think of new ways and strategies to analyze current conditions and suggest alternative remedy

or solution, or innovate and create new ideas and recommendations to handle or solve specific problems. Bloom terms critical thinking as the ability to gain knowledge through the exploration of ideas concerning the following six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Knowledge and comprehension belong to the low level of thinking skills, while the other elements belong to the higher level of thinking skills.

Besides, the researcher is in the same line with Noor's ("Pedagogical Issues) argument that there is a lack of higher-order thinking ability among students and there is a need to prepare students to be effective problem-solvers and thoughtful decision-makers. Noor found it necessary for students to be independent thinkers since an increasingly wide range of jobs in future requires capable workers/employees who have the ability to think (56).

Another important philosophy for encouraging students to carry out field trip projects is to create opportunities for the learners to work freely in a non-threatening atmosphere to present new ideas, apply skills, transfer knowledge, and practice speaking English outside classroom. Authentic activities refer to activities designed to foster learning and develop students' thinking and problem solving skills that are important in out-of- school contexts. Other characteristics of authentic activities are characterized by being more meaningful to students, having real-world relevance, providing the opportunity for students to examine the task from different viewpoints, enhancing cooperation and reflection, and allowing competing solutions and diversity of outcome.

Employing various activities and tasks can help increase students' interest level. However, lessons, which always consist of the same routines, patterns, and formats have been shown to lead to a decrease in attention and an increase in boredom (Lightbown and Spada, 57). From the pedagogical point of view many progressive educators expressed that the implementation of project method was based on some principles like promoting manual activity instead of memorization and verbalism, encouraging active participation in the learning process, and using real facts as a source for learning (Fragoulis and Tsiplakides,).

To sum up, Farouck maintained that "learner-centered learning allows students to investigate questions, propose hypotheses and explanations, discuss their ideas, challenge the ideas of others, and try out new ideas" (146). In PBL, students increase their knowledge of the material by actively constructing their understanding through cooperating and using ideas in real, meaningful problems that are similar to what scientists, mathematicians, writers, and historians do.

Stages of the Teaching Plan and Methodology

To researcher stimulated all students to take part in the project to apply the learnt skills and transfer them to similar situations. According to Brinia, the initial stimulus may

emerge from the curriculum or after a discussion about a contemporary local or wider topic of interest, or from reading a newspaper or magazine article" (qtd. in Fragoulis & Tsiplakides). Therefore, instead of doing a theoretical internet research, students might carry out a real project-based work, which could be a channel to integrate the four language skills.

The PBL Phases for this Study

To answer the first question *What is the proposed project,* the following phases were conducted:

Phase One: Brainstorming Ideas and Planning

Question One

Researcher: Do you think we can describe a city similar to the ones you are studying about? You always complain about the problems you face while studying at Birzeit University or residing temporarily in Birzeit, can we take Birzeit as an example?

"Birzeit" was suggested because many students came from many districts to reside in Birzeit, and they also complained about the high prices of restaurants, the shortage of water and the problem of streets which caused traffic congestion (at the time of the study).

The answer was taken unanimously, "Yes, of course. We can write many things about Birzeit." One student added, "Especially nowadays since we are face the problem of traffic congestion, and we come lately to university as a result of repairing and put tar on the roads in Birzeit". The message was conveyed in spite of the grammatical mistakes.The researcher was happy to hear that, mainly because students used the newly learned signal words -as a result, due to, and because of- to express cause /effect relationship.

Question Two

Researcher: Will you be able to work together in groups, go outside campus, meet and interview people, write reports and present them to the rest of the students?

The answer was definitely positive. The assignment for the next class was to think about vital topics and ideas that might be of great relevance, being either temporary or permanent residents in Birzeit.

The researcher's goal was to activate background knowledge besides giving enough time for students to think critically of annoying problems that influence the majority of students. In addition, thinking deeply about the problems might be beneficial for suggesting

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ideas, analyzing problems, and finding solutions, which are all considered higher- order thinking skills.

On the other hand, since the project was an extension, the researcher had to continue with the rest of the material to cover the curriculum and prepare the students for the final exams. Therefore, she had to allocate only three in-class sessions for discussion.

Phase Two: Clarifying Philosophy, Suggesting Topics and Describing the Project

Here, it was the researcher's role to clarify her teaching philosophy, the main goals for conducting the activities and the strategies suggested for application.

No sooner had the class started than most of the students commenced on suggesting a variety of topics. They expressed their happiness, especially when they realized that they would work outside campus; do field research, visit historic places and meet people in restaurants and municipality. This reinforces the argument that survey projects are always a favorite because students can leave the class and work out to find their data (Zehni).

At the end of the session, and with the help of the researcher the title of the project was chosen: *"Life in Birzeit/ The University Town: Exploring the Present and Conserving the Heritage"*.

Description of the Project

Since BZU is a crucial part of the whole community, with a large number of students residing in Birzeit, it has been suggested to conduct a collaborative study that focuses on current issues and interesting places that concern students.

Therefore, this project sheds light on Birzeit. It describes the background to the development of the city and the facilities it offers to the citizens and students. On the other hand, the project represents a collaborative work of the students enrolled in ENGC 141. The idea was inspired by the researcher to motivate students to work together and apply the skills they learned through the course. For example, students would explore a series of the problems to be addressed, the activities to be focused on, the people to be interviewed, and questions to be anticipated for conducting interviews. They would also make notes, compose narrative and descriptive paragraphs and present facts and results. The following units were the focus of the study:

Unit I- Urban Planning

This unit deals with a variety of aspects of urban planning, for example developing cities, giving priority to public services, and solving major problems such as population increase, public transport, and traffic congestion.

Unit II- Conserving the Past

This unit aims at enabling students to deal with longer texts, indicating reason or result, adding information, and writing paragraphs. It takes the form of teaching students the skill of writing narrative paragraphs about past events, or describing famous and interesting places (Philpot and Curnick).

Objectives of the Project

The researcher expected students to improve their macro language and develop their personalities by depending on themselves, making decisions, and solving or suggesting solutions to problems. Therefore, the following were the core goals of the project:

Cognitive goals: To enable students to develop language skills and communication strategies; identify the major problems the resident students suffer from; evaluate the role institutions; formulate reports ,integrate artifacts and present materials required for evaluating the whole project.

Affective goals: To develop a feeling of sympathy and affection with the people or students suffering from the problems under study; develop a sense of appreciation towards the cooperative work and hard efforts of the people in charge.

Psychomotor goals: To do field research, conduct interviews, and write reports; develop the observation skills of students ; visit places, take notes, and observe changes.

Activities and Roles:

To answer the second question *How will the ENGC 141 students conduct the project-based learning*, the following activities were sequenced:

- Subtopics were suggested by the students. Five issues most of the students suffered from during the period of the project were to be approached: Street conditions; water problem, especially in the summer; available restaurants, prices and types of food

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served for students; archaeology in Birzeit and renovation of the old town; the role of Mayor and Municipality

- Students were divided into five groups of five students with roles like note taker, interviewer, and the coordinator, etc.. Sitting in groups, cooperating and helping each other was a great incentive for the weak, shy, and lower-ability students to break the ice and be assisted by those of higher abilities. Working in groups "is more dynamic than pair work since more people react and there is a greater possibility of discussion, information sharing and experience exchanging" (Abed 97).

- Questions were formulated to conduct interviews, and feedback was provided by the researcher, whose role was represented by counseling and supporting in class and during office hours; and accompanying students when necessary.

Phase Three: Conducting Group Tasks

During this session, students worked in their own groups revising, commenting, and reviewing their work. They analyzed the gathered data, crossed out irrelevant information, and organized material in well-written paragraphs and layouts to be presented. Artifacts such as drafts, posters, maps, and booklets were attached. Each student worked cooperatively within the group knowing that the success of each individual leads to the success of the whole group. The teacher was available for help and supervision. According to Ur ,because the teacher is less able to attend to every individual, the students must develop strategies for helping themselves and their classmates through peer teaching and collaboration, thus fostering an atmosphere of cooperation.

In their free time the groups visited the assigned places, arranged matters with personnel, organized appointments, and conducted interviews. They had several field trips to restaurants, Birzeit Municipality, Jerusalem Water Undertaking, and archaeological sites in Birzeit. Enough time was allocated during the teacher's office hours to support, provide feedback, or accompany students to certain sites when needed.

Phase Four: Implementing the Jigsaw Activity

It aimed at exchanging ideas and sharing experiences about the new achievements and considerations with the rest of the groups. First, separate groups, being experts in their field of study, were placed together to revise the material and remind themselves of the data collected, problems studied, and solutions suggested. Next, one student from each group left to form a new group that consists of five heterogeneous individuals with each individual being an expert in his problem. The role of each individual lay in informing the rest of group members about the problem

he / she investigated and tried to solve. Some asked questions, others clarified ambiguous points, suggested solutions, and acquainted students with results. In their article *Forum on Public Policy*, Rowell and Palmer stated that the jigsaw technique is one form of cooperative learning developed by Aronson and associates. A broad topic is divided into subtopics and teams of four-five students are placed in heterogeneous groups and assigned a subtopic on which to become an expert on the content. Students work together to be prepared to teach others about the subtopic on which they have become an expert (8).

Project Asessment

To answer the last question about the effectiveness of the program and evaluate the overall project. the following were conducted.

Students' progress was assessed on the concepts, skills, and strategies they learned and applied as part of the average. The following points were marked:

- Presenting their artifacts- documents and papers they prepared.

- Crediting sources or references: Writing paragraphs, summarizing texts or booklets with reference to original source.

- Delivering presentations, taking part in all the activities related to the project, reflecting and evaluating the work.

Experts claim that assessment of curricula is always subjective and reflects preferences and values; for them "curriculum development as a process is neutral and can be judged by its efficiency" (Barbas 17). The process of evaluation involves assessment of the experience at individual and group level, identification of errors and problems, and appraisal of the rich cognitive and experiential material gathered. In general, evaluation includes evaluation from others besides self-evaluation (Fragoulis and Tsiplakides).

Researcher/teacher Reflection

The teacher: It was an interesting and fruitful experience for both teacher and students. On the first day, I liked the answers students gave when they were asked to describe a city similar to the ones they learned about. They used the signal words they learned -as a result, because of, and due to- to express cause /effect relationship.

One advantage was that most of the students commenced on suggesting a variety of topics, brainstorm, and explore ideas that might be of great relevance to them. The views and ideas they recommended inspired me to address the issue seriously. All students were willing to participate and organized their own groups. They expressed their happiness, especially when they realized that they would meet outside campus.

Another advantage was of great importance. Students had a great chance of being engaged in authentic activities. They applied the skills they learnt such as using vocabulary items in real-life situations, writing sentences and well-organized paragraphs. Above all, they developed self-confidence, which was clearly shown in the interviews, group work, jigsaw, and presentations. In a similar study, Fragoulis and Tsiplakides (2009) mentioned that because students engage in purposeful communication to complete authentic activities, they have the opportunity to use language in a relatively natural context.

Furthermore, it was a great opportunity to measure students' linguistic abilities and diagnose their points of weaknesses. Besides, being seated in groups, cooperating and helping each other, was a great incentive for the weak and shy students to develop language skills and self-confidence. They participated in their groups, delivered presentations in front of the whole class, the teacher, and the external people videotaping the project. In addition, their computer skills improved, mainly, surfing the internet to search for information. They even expressed excitement and willingness to participate in similar projects with the same teacher.

In their project, Fragoulis and Tsiplakides noticed that after the project work students knew that being a team member entailed certain obligations; most of them developed skills for solving in-group conflicts, and learned to be responsible in relation to the roles assigned to them. Most importantly, all students, regardless of language performance, or motivational intensity, seemed to have developed their cooperative skills.

On the other hand, it is also worth admitting that the experience was so tiring and demanding for a variety of reasons.

The major obstacle, to call it in this context, was how to monitor students outside class to make sure they speak English during the researcher's absence. This was solved, thanks to cameras and mobiles. The researcher had to follow up students in every step in class and during office hours, in addition to teaching the material and implementing other additional activities for the rest of the units, which was a heavy load.

Another problem was observing the three students who were reliant on others. Their absence and lack of participation were unjustified. Thus, they were politely reproached and were not well -awarded.

To be frank, being successful does not mean facing no shortcomings or problems. Compared with the negative points, the researcher believes the project was a great success.

At the end of the project, the researcher thanked all stakeholders for their efforts in participating and believed that it was an interesting and fruitful experience for all.

Student Reflection

Students were interviewed for feedback, reflection and attitudes towards the experience. All their reports, artifacts, posters, handwritten material, formulated questions, attitudes and recommendations were all documented and videotaped. Some of the questions of the interview were adapted from Richards:

1- How effective was the experience? Do you think you achieved the objectives of the course?

2. How was group work helpful? What did you learn from this project?

3. What difficulties did you encounter during the project?

4. Any comments or recommendations?

5-Do you think your job in learning and developing the language was satisfactory?

6. Do you think the project helped you to improve your confidence to speak English?

Some of students' original comments are:

A: "I wish to study all English courses like this; we learn new words, meet new people and feel not boring in class". After clarifying the word "confidence", A expressed his happiness and thanked the researcher for the project, which helped him to be brave and confident to speak with the interviewees in English.

B: "I liked the experience; we know many new things about Birzeit and the restaurants. Also we were speaking English with people in the interviews"; "we not afraid from people and guests and thank you Miss Tagreed'. "We have not enough time to go to meet people because we are in classes"

C: "We were scared at the beginning, and the woman who takes pictures stopped us, then we read the questions again, but we forgot".

D: "We saw the old church and the doctor told us about the history of Birzeit and the archaeology we don't know before".

E: "We feel shy and afraid at the beginning, especially when we talk English", but we are happy because we will see ourself   and students will see us on website". "We start depend on ourself and do presentations in front of class and teacher".

F: "I want to do it again if they allow us to take 231 with Miss Tagreed next semester. We like it more than our book". However, F said that one of the problems they encountered was lack of time since they had four lectures a day and was not easy to make arrangements for conducting interviews and writing reports.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the objectives identified for the project were accomplished as shown in the evaluation reports, videotaped lessons and interviews. The study results showed that given the chance to choose, plan, construct and carry out projects cooperatively in a learning environment, which might extend beyond the classroom setting, students could learn, solve problems and transfer learning to real- life situations. It also revealed that students' participation, involvement, self-reliance and language level improved.

Specifically, the majority of students achieved the cognitive, emotional and psychomotor aims of project work. Most, if not all, participated and explained their roles in the group, and discussed the problematic issues and the procedures they followed to solve them.

Concerning the four language skills, students practiced speaking by conducting interviews, though the focus was placed on fluency rather that accuracy, taking and making notes, summarizing and paraphrasing information, documenting references and participating in jigsaw and classroom activities. Most students developed communicative competence skills, mainly discourse competence, which was defined by Canale and Swain (1980) as the ability to connect sentences to form a meaningful whole out of a series of utterances. Strategic competence, "the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence" (30) was also clearly noticed.

Recommendations

Project-based learning has important implications for practice in the fields of language learning and the process of education in general. Being well aware of the fact that language skills cannot be mastered in a short period of time, the researcher recommends offering students intensive training sessions to develop language skills and strategy use. EFL university instructors are advised to use a variety of teaching strategies to motivate students and facilitate the teaching/ learning process. They are also recommended to enhance self-reliance and cooperative learning rather than spoon-feeding. Teachers of all academic

disciplines are advised to introduce their students to project-based learning, the constructivist approach, and self-evaluation process to improve the quality and level of education. The researcher definitely agrees with Kavlu (2017) who proposed that PBL provides a cross-disciplinary approach, which means that the subjects taught at school are not separate subjects, but considered the bases for dealing with real-life problems that arise in various spheres of life.

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