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## PROJECT WORK WITH TEENAGERS

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### Abstract

The article deals with the peculiarities of conducting Project work in the ELT classroom. It can give the ideas to young teachers how to organize a project work and explains teachers role in it.

**Keywords:** project work, design, learners, ideas, creativity, presentation.

Common projects are class magazines, group wall displays about students' countries and designs for cities of the future.

A project involves students in deciding together what they want to do to complete a project whilst the teacher plays a more supporting role.

- Some advantages
- Planning the project
- Some possible drawbacks
- Example projects
- References

Some advantages of project work are:

- **Increased motivation** - learners become personally involved in the project.
- **All four skills**, reading, writing, listening and speaking are integrated.
- **Autonomous learning** is promoted as learners become more responsible for their own learning.
- **There are learning outcomes** -learners have an end product.
- **Authentic tasks** and therefore the language input are more authentic.
- **Interpersonal relations** are developed through working as a group.
- **Content and methodology** can be decided between the learners and the teacher and within the group themselves so it is more learner centred.
- **Learners often get help from parents** for project work thus involving the parent more in the child's learning. If the project is also displayed parents can see it at open days or when they pick the child up from the school.



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- **A break from routine** and the chance to do something different.
- **A context is established** which balances the need for fluency and accuracy. Haines (1989)

## Planning the project

- **Opening**

To give learners an idea of what projects are and what they should be aiming to produce, it is good to have examples of past projects: a photocopy of a previous group newspaper or a photograph of a wall display.

- **Proposing**

After explaining the idea behind the project I ask learners to propose a scheme of work:

- What they want to include in the project
- What form it will take
- Who will be responsible for what
- An idea of the time it will take to produce each part of the project
- Any material or resources they might need

I would then sit down with each group for 10 minutes to discuss their proposals (a copy of which both I and the learner would keep to refer to as the project develops). At this point the evaluation procedures would also be explained.

- **Time**

Allocate an agreed amount of time for the project. For a summer 60 hour course of 3 hours a day I would dedicate 5 hours to project work so approx. 6 sessions of 45 minutes each with a round up session at the end. I would also have the sessions on the same day each week - Wednesday, and Friday, for example, so learners know to bring materials to class on that day.

- **Space**

Show the learners the space they will have for the project, it could be wall space or a corner of the classroom, so they have some idea how much material they should produce and can plan the layout.



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## • **Materials and resources**

Provide the learners with materials they might need: card, scissors glue, paper etc. It is fairly common now for learners to want to use the Internet to find information for their projects. Encourage a keen student with Internet to do this at home! If there is time and Internet available in the school make sure the students have informed you of exactly what they're looking for - photos- or that they have prepared a list of information they want to find. Simply giving the learners time on the computers can lead to them aimlessly surfing the net. If the facility is available learners often like to write finished drafts of their work on the computer.

## • **Presentation**

Projects need to be seen, read and admired so schedule the last project session as a presentation. Ask the group to prepare a task for the others in the class to do connected to the project: it could be a quiz with questions for a wall display, a crossword using vocabulary for the project or comprehension questions for a video that learners have made.

## • **Evaluation**

As with any piece of work a project needs to be acknowledged and evaluated. It's not enough to just say 'that's great' after all the work learners have put in. I use a simple project evaluation report, which comments on aspects of the project such as content, design, language work and also evaluates the oral presentation stage of the project.

## **Some possible drawbacks to project work**

### • **Learners using their own language**

If the class are monolingual they may use their L1 a lot (it often happens anyway in YL classes) so you should decide whether the benefits of doing project work outweigh this factor.

### • **Some learners doing nothing**

By giving more freedom to the learners you may also be giving them the freedom to do nothing! If the project is planned carefully and roles decided at the proposal stage this is less likely to happen.



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### • Groups working at different speeds

One group may have 'finished' the project after a couple of hours and say they have nothing to do. Remind them it is their responsibility to fill the time allocated to project work and discuss ways they could extend the work they have already completed.

### Examples of project work

#### • A project based on readers

At a summer school I worked in learners were encouraged to have a reader during the month course. This is not always a popular requirement so I decided to have the learners use the readers in a way they might find motivating.

- First I chose 4 different readers that had also been made into films - The Full Monty, The Client, Dracula, Mosquito Coast. Each group were given copies of their reader.

- The learners were then given free rein to do whatever they liked as long as it was somehow connected to the reader.

- Examples of the work produced were:

- Summaries of the story.
- Crosswords / word searches of vocabulary from the story.
- Reviews of the book.
- Information found about the history of Dracula.
- Filmed scene from the book.
- Presentation of a clip from the film of the book compared to a scene in the book.
- Biographies and photos of actors from the film.

#### • Music Project

If your class loves songs this could be a motivating project.

- Make a CD Cover.
- Invent the band and the names and biographies of the band members.
- Video an interview with the band.
- Record a song. (Students often borrowed the music and wrote their own lyrics)
- Write gig reviews.
- Photo shoot of the band.
- Design a poster advertising gigs.



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