Analysis of Children's English Language Learning Evidences when Engaging in Project Work*

Análisis de las evidencias del aprendizaje del inglés en niños, cuando se involucran en un trabajo por proyectos

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In this article we want to share the great experience of working by projects because our fifth graders showed us the huge potential they have to explore, investigate, create and learn English. Teachers have to motivate students to work in class because they are anxious to acquire new knowledge. We can do this by integrating the contents of the syllabus for fifth grade, by contextualizing it and putting it into action. Of course, we have to take into account our students' needs, likes and expectations in order to steer them into a project. In this way, we can prepare our students to face the learning processes in an easy, funny and enjoyable way.

Key words: Project work, contextualized learning, managing learning process

En este artículo queremos compartir una gran experiencia de trabajo por proyectos, porque nuestros estudiantes de quinto grado nos mostraron las enormes potencialidades que tienen para explorar, investigar, crear y aprender inglés. Los docentes tienen que motivar a los estudiantes a trabajar en clase porque ellos están ansiosos por adquirir nuevas cosas. Nosotros podemos hacerlo a través de la integración de contenidos del programa para grado quinto, su contextualización y su puesta en acción. Por supuesto, debemos tener en cuenta las necesidades, gustos y expectativas de nuestros estudiantes para enfocarlos en un proyecto. De esta manera, podemos preparar a nuestros estudiantes para enfrentar el proceso de aprendizaje en forma fácil, divertida y agradable.

Palabras clave: Trabajo por proyectos, aprendizaje contextualizado, administración del proceso de aprendizaje

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Introduction

Considering that our students have not had a good language learning process for many reasons; namely, the absence of a permanent teacher, lack of English syllabus, low intensity, a big number of students per course and the necessity to make students level with a proper, practical and fast teaching-learning strategy, and in order to guarantee a better performance at the secondary level, we decided to incorporate project work into our teaching. According to Cuspoca (2002, p. 28), it is defined as a "set of teaching strategies that includes multi-skill activities, ideas and resources. It allows teachers to guide students through an in-depth investigation of a real world topic worthy of children's attention and efforts because it tries to solve one of their problems or any other of their daily activities that require a previous plan". We noticed that our students needed a change in the way English was taught, and this type of process could be implemented because of our children's good attitude towards the English class. Besides, we consider the most important issue is to make our classes and knowledge meaningful and contextualized. We believe that when our students can participate and be responsible for their teaching-learning process, this can leave a positive print on them and in our community.

Another important aspect that we con-sidered when selecting this type of work was that we wanted to integrate the contents of the syllabus for fifth grade, contextualize it and put it into action with the intention of getting good results. In our case, we chose the "Creation of a new planet" as the backbone of the project with topics such as "physical and personal description", "Solar System", "relief and housing" and "weather". We worked on those themes having in mind easy-to-follow steps and the creation of a final product as well as an oral presentation.

Taking into account all the previous description, we established a main research question and two secondary questions as our concern. They are the following ones:

– How is the students' English language learning evidenced when engaging in project work?

Secondary questions:

– What features can be seen in the student's production when she/he is taking part in the development of the project?

– What does students' production tell us about their learning?

Review of Literature

This section includes relevant theoretical aspects related to our research project; namely, children's characteristics and project work.

Children's Characteristics

Based on Piaget's book, *Seis estudios de psicología* (1955), and on our experience working with children for several years, we can assert that when a child is seven years old and begins the scholarliness, his mental development has transcendental changes. When talking about children's behavior and their socialization, we find interesting things. For example, it is really difficult to establish the differences among individual and collaborative work/learning because children talk but they do not really listen to each other. Sometimes, many students do

the same work but we do not know if they are helping each other or if they are talking about their daily situations.

After seven years old, children can distinguish between individual and group work because they can concentrate when they are working alone, but at the same time, they know how, when and where to cooperate when they have a social or common life, and because of the knowledge of their own point of view and the others'. We can notice children's negotiation throughout the dialogue. They justify, discuss and take decisions of their thought and not of their writing productions. The interesting point of these contrasts is that kids begin to be more social and intellectual and, at the same time, are able to coordinate new things that influence their thought and affectiveness.

In other words, children are engaged in logical thinking at one stage of their thought development, so it implies children's actions are a materialization of their intelligence and their will is an expression of their affectiveness. In addition, when children are growing up, we can notice the transformation of their thought when they talk about some perceptions or conceptions of time, space, action and reaction, as well as expressions of their intuition. This is a high level of thought development and here we can see the balance it can achieve.

Some deep transformations happen in the second stage of childhood affectiveness. When children cooperate among themselves, they coordinate their points of view and secure their autonomy and cohesion. So, the affectiveness between seven and twelve year olds looks like new moral feelings and mainly like a voluntary act that reflects a

better integration. The reciprocal respect reflects new kinds of moral feelings; this is evidenced in their obedience to the internal (family) and to the external (small groups) patterns.

Because of all of these children's characteristics, the implementation of a proper strategy in education and in social life guarantees success in children's intelligence and personality development.

About Project Work

Project work is a set of teaching strategies based on students' needs and interests that complements the teacher methodology, and can be part of the grade syllabus or the general curriculum. In project work, students participate all the time by choosing the main topic, developing and presenting it, sharing responsibility with the teacher and improving the teaching-learning process. In addition, it is the opportunity to begin, especially in our case with primary, the sensibilization of the research process. As Chard (1999) defines in Cuspoca (2002, p. 26), "a project is an in-depth investigation of a real world topic worthy of children's attention and efforts. This study can be carried out by a class or by small groups of children of any age." Also, this type of work allows creating a plan and designing some specific steps to arrive at a final product. According to Fried-Booth (1990), in Cuspoca (2002, p. 26), "project work is a systematic plan that includes multi-skill activities, ideas and resources, among others, having the tendency to solve a problem or any other daily activity that requires a previous plan. Otherwise, it will be a set of disorganized incoherent activities. For this reason, project work must have a logical organization with curriculum

objectives to avoid teachers carrying out activities without a specific purpose or orientation and to prevent the teachers' from improvising their work".

Of course, we are not developing a new methodology; instead, we are using a way to complement and enrich our teaching style or method in order to make it enjoyable for our students. It is primarily an approach to learning which complements mainstream methods and which can be used with almost all students' levels, ages and abilities. For Haines (1989, p. 33), "project work provides students with opportunities to recycle known language and skills in a relatively natural context. Project work can consist of intensive activities which take place over a short period of time or extended studies which may take up to one or two hours a week for several weeks, depending on the children's ages and the nature of the topic".

Characteristics

Project work allows children to feel a real sense of achievement. As highlighted by Cuspoca (2002), its main characteristics are:

Student–centered, not syllabus-centered: When you decide to work by projects, it has to start with the base of children interest; for this reason, the contents of the syllabus could change depending on that, and it can become a secondary element. The project is not designed to suit a syllabus, and the language required derives not from the textbook, but from the nature of the project itself.

Cooperative not competitive: For a project to succeed, a good working relationship needs to be established. The students must be able to cooperate not only with each other, but also with the teacher.

Skill-based, not structure-based: In a traditional way, the teacher worries about the grammar structure as the main basis of English learning, but in project work, students learn grammar unconsciously. During this process and through their questions, students understand the implicit structure in a meaningful way.

The importance of the end product: It is the opportunity for students to show their talent and learning. It should be carefully planned for and has to be the children's work, not the teachers'. It is the important evidence of their learning process.

The influence of project work on students' personality and knowledge: As Ribé & Vidal (2003, p. 6) mentioned, "A project involves the development of the whole child, rather than focusing narrowly on teaching language. Within the framework of a project we can include the full range of skills that children are developing in their other classes and during their time out of school such as:

– The intellectual skills of describing, drawing conclusions, using imagination, hypothesizing, reading, and planning.
– The physical/motor skills of coloring, painting, cutting, folding, gluing, and writing.
– The social skills of sharing, cooperating, making decisions together, and appreciating how individual contributions can make a successful whole.
– Learner independence skills such as making responsible choices, deciding how to complete tasks, getting information, trying things out, and evaluating results".

This approach encourages emotional and personal development. Wherever possible, children are given an opportunity to produce work which is personal and individual, which reflects their ideas, tastes, and interests; they are encouraged to express their feelings, and their opinions are sought and valued.

Types of Project Work

Project work can be classified into different types or categories. The most suitable format for a given context depends on a variety of factors, including curricular objectives, course expectations, students' proficiency levels, students' interests, time constraints, and availability of materials.

The type of project work we implemented was a production project proposed by Henry (cited in Stoller, 1997, pp. 2-9). For this reason, we want to explain in the following lines what it entails.

Production projects are the most popular types of work since they can be adapted to suit any age or level of students. Students may create a bulletin board display, a poster session, a writer's report, a letter, a handbook, a brochure, a travel itinerary, or a banquet menu. Students may also produce a traditional style publication or design their own ideal newspaper, concentrating on the kinds of stories or features they feel are missing from existing publications. This kind of project offers plenty of scope to students with artistic talents. In addition to writing, there are opportunities for individuals to work on design and layout, photography and illustration. Students can also produce music, news stories, comedy, interviews, educational games and radio programs.

In our case, we decided to work with our students on this kind of project because in primary school they need to be motivated to present or show their improvements and results through a final presentation and because it can be adapted to elementary school easily.

Research Procedure

We decided that our project was a combination of innovation and action research because we changed the way English had been taught in our schools and we applied a systematic process in order to solve some particular problems such as low level of learning, few hours per week, large classes, ways to assess students' learning process and the difficulty in meaningful learning. At the same time Burns (1994, p. 293) says "action research is the application of fact finding to practical problem solving in a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it involving the collaboration and co-operation of researchers, practitioners and laymen". The application of this research methodology allows implementing strategies, reflecting and evaluating to develop a better learning process in the classroom and to solve everyday problems.

Setting and Participants

We developed our project in two schools: IED Gustavo Restrepo and IED Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño, in different shifts. The level we worked with was fifth grade and we found that their population belonged to 1, 2 and 3 social strata. Students families' economy is based on informal jobs and the majority of them have no professional studies. It means that in these

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institutions there are children with a great necessity of a good education that provides them the opportunity to earn a university title or a better lifestyle. On the other hand, talking about English level, we could see that the previous process of language learning in IED Gustavo Restrepo had many difficulties because of the lack of a long-term teacher and the differences among students' rhythm of learning; some of them (1.2 %) had professional support (psychology and therapy) because of their low cognitive level and the integration that some students (0.6 %) had from special to regular education. In IED Liceo Femenino, where there was not always a teacher nor a syllabus that fulfilled the children necessities, we found pupils who were exposed to many lists of isolated words without a communicative purpose. Last year, when a teacher was appointed, it began to change a little. It means that for the project pupils had better conditions compared to the group of the other school. However, the main problem here was the lack of continuous classes because of the quantity of institutional activities. So, our selected population had a low level of English in both cases, not only for the reasons aforementioned but because of the particular conditions, too.

Techniques Used for Data Collection

Video Recordings

We decided to apply this technique because, as Hubbard (1999, p. 95) says, videotaping is useful for a detailed look at many unnoticed facts that occur at the same time during the development of a class, even more when unrolling a project work.

Video recording was the first technique

for data collection because when we explored students' interests, we could see the high level of motivation and decided to capture those attitudes through recording. In addition, and in order to prepare students for the final presentation, we video recorded them doing the presentations about their products at the end of each unit.

Journals

In spite of the differences among diaries and journals, one commonality Wallace (1998, p. 62) observes is "the main attraction of the diary, as opposed to other ways of articulating reflection, is that the writer can be totally honest and forthright in his or her comments".

This technique for data collection was useful for our action-research project, because we could compare the experiences in each school, we could make an analysis of the students' language learning process throughout the development of the guides and many other planned activities, and at the end, we could have evidence of students' results working by projects.

Immediately after having a class with the selected population, we wrote the activities, details, attitudes, feelings, behaviors and the development of the class providing the corresponding comments or analysis.

Tape Recordings

In order to register students' oral production, we decided to record their voices in a previous exhibition to prepare students for the final presentation. At the same time, we wanted to let them listen to the tape to check tone of voice, pronunciation, some possible mistakes and reinforce their performance.

As Hubbard & Power (1999) claim, "when teachers do transcribe tapes, they often choose snippets of conversations to illustrate key points in their research" (pp. 95-96).

Students' Works

Taking into account the type of project (production project) and the elementary school level we worked with, this technique was one of the most important in this process because it was our main evidence of the students` progress and motivation.

Pedagogical Design

Once we read different authors and their model proposals and having in mind our expectations, our population, topic and type of project, we considered that the Fried-Booth model fit our needs.

Fried-Booth (1990) proposes an easy-to-follow multiple-step process that can guide teachers in developing and sequencing project work for their classroom as follows:

1. Stimulus

This is the initial discussion about the main topic and possible suggestions to work on it. The most used language skills involved are speaking and listening, with possible reference to prior reading.

2. Definition of the Project Objective

During this stage, it is possible to develop activities such as discussion, negotiation, and argumentation. The longer the total time available for the project is, the more detailed this phase will be. The main language skills involved are speaking and listening, probably with some note-taking.

3. Practice of Language Skills

This stage includes those parts of the language the students feel are needed for the initial stage of the project, e.g. for data collection. It also includes a variety of language functions, e.g. introductions, suggestions, asking for information, etc., and may involve any of the four skills (particularly writing, in the form of note- taking).

4. Design of Written Materials

Some examples of these (questionnaires, maps, grids, etc.) are required for data collection. Reading and writing skills are prominent here.

5. Group Activities

These are designed to gather information. Students may work individually, in pairs or in small groups, inside or outside the classroom. Their tasks include conducting interviews or surveys and gathering facts. All four skills are needed at this stage.

6. Collecting Information

This activity can be done in groups in the classroom. The skills that are emphasized at this stage are reading, specially notes, and speaking when explaining visual material such as graphs. The emphasis is on discussion.

7. Organization of Material

At this stage the students are developing the end-product of the project and emphasize

discussion, negotiation, reading for cross-reference and verification. However, the main skill practiced is writing.

8. Final presentation

The manner of presentation depends on the form of the end product such as chart, booklet, video display or oral presentation, and on the manner of demonstration. The main skill required is likely to be speaking, but it could be backed up by other skills.

We considered Ribé & Vidal's web (2003, p. 11) composed of vocabulary, grammar functions, motor skills, etc., in a diagram useful in order to have a complete view of the project process, activities and language skills. In addition, it made it easier to understand the implications and to do the lesson planning.

As a consequence, our lessons were planned taking into account a series of activities and themes that is listed below. Throughout the adaptation of the above-mentioned project web to the theme, we chose for the project: "*Wow, we have a new planet in our Solar System*".

We discovered that it was possible to fulfill a part of the syllabus depending on the topic of the students' project. For this reason, our students worked on the proposal of a new planet and we developed four units with the main topics that we considered important in terms of students' required knowledge for the next grade. Then, we organized the units' contents in a web in order to see easily the topics the project developed through its implementation (See Diagram 2 and Appendix 1).
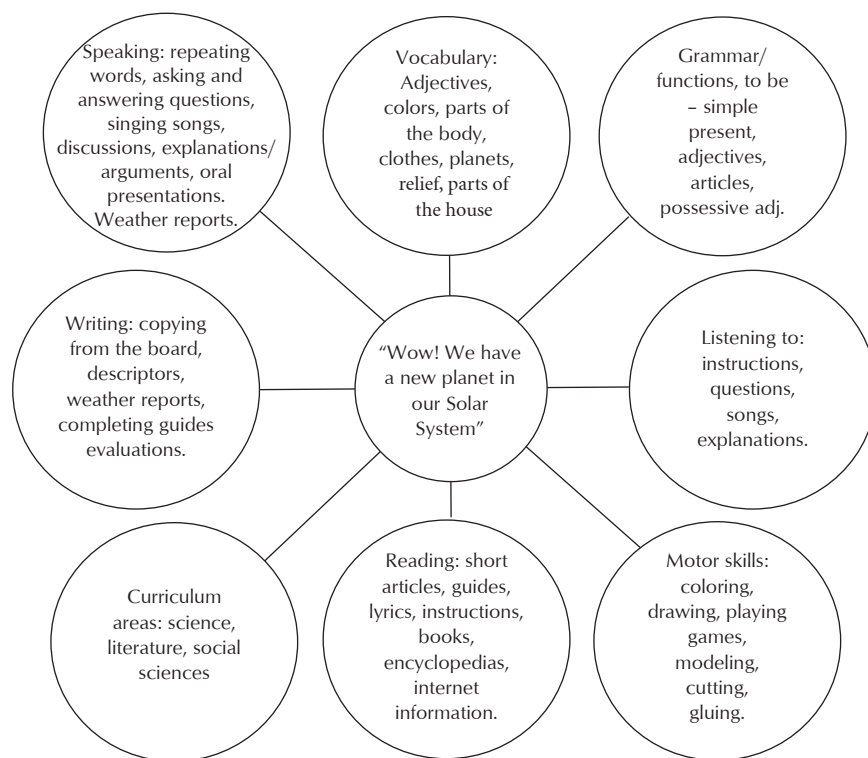

Diagram 1. Project Web: Lesson Activities (Based on Ribé & Vidal, 2003, p. 11).
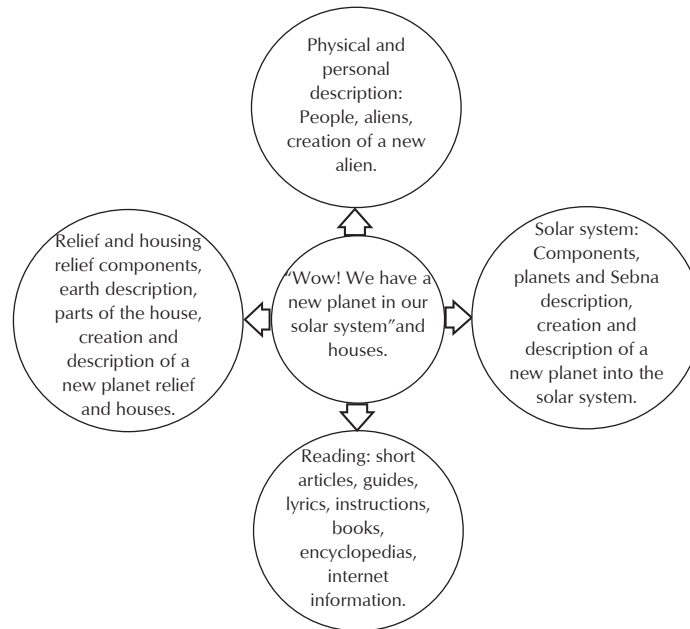
Diagram 2. Project web: Unit contents.

Data Analysis and Findings

Sometimes, starting an English learning process with children from a public elementary school is difficult because of their conditions and the context we mentioned before, especially when you try to speak all the time in English and you do not have enough time to work with them.

Bearing in mind the strengths of project work and that IED Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño had programmed in the syllabus one unit named "The Universe", students and the teacher talked about the different elements that comprise the Solar System. Children mentioned that in the news they had talked about the existence of one or two more planets in our galaxy. Without being conscious of that, we began a conversation about the possibility of the existence of life on other planets, how children imagine these worlds, the differences between Earth and other planets, etc. So, the teacher proposed

their working with this theme in a project in future classes and they immediately accepted it happily. Later, this decision was also made by the teacher working at IED Gustavo Restrepo and her group.

Considering this exploration of the topic, we decided to stimulate our students by giving them the opportunity to expand the selected topic using information and discussing it in Spanish. It was very meaningful for them and for us, so, we video recorded this to register the results of this teaching and learning strategy. Then, during the development of the project, we used a journal to collect and record aspects that we felt very important, little details that teachers usually do not pay attention to in a normal class. Parallel to that, we did a tape recording of students' final presentation to register students' oral production; it was a practice of the final exhibit and a way for children not to feel nervous. Finally, the day when pupils made

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the final presentation, we did a second video recording to compare with the first one and to see if there was progress.

It was very interesting to read, share and compare the results from both schools in our meetings though sometimes there were difficulties of time and scheduling. We had the opportunity to establish differences and commonalities in the project development from both schools. On the other hand, these discussions allowed us to analyze and specially to validate the impact of the project because we applied the same project in two different contexts with similar and, in some cases, the same results in the four techniques for data collection.

In the following paragraphs, we present the analysis of the data that we obtained in this experience, keeping in mind our main question and secondary questions.

What Can Be Seen in the Student's Production when S/he Is Taking Part in the Development of the Project?

Bearing in mind that the word "production" has a narrow meaning when talking about project work, we analyzed many aspects that are involved in it. Thus, we considered that aspects like oral expression, writing process, artistic creations, etc. could show us our students' strengths and weaknesses in the whole process and conclusion of the project. Thus, when examining students' production we divided our analysis in three main aspects: oral, writing and artistic production.

Oral production

In our case, we worked with fifth graders under some special conditions that we explained before; so, it was difficult for them to express themselves orally and to talk English clearly.

In the development of the first part of the project, students had the opportunity to look for information in Spanish about aliens and held a discussion about their existence. Students showed a high level of motivation throughout this activity. Although this exercise was not in English, it allowed us to see their need to acquire the corresponding vocabulary in the foreign language. Then, when the teacher gave them this vocabulary, students began to participate in class without the fear of making mistakes. During the unrolling of the other stages, student's oral production was characterized by grammar and syntactic errors e.g.

Student A: It has one flower green.
(Class No.15, line 7. 2005).

In other cases they had some phonological and semantic problems e.g.

Student A: This planet has hate rooms… eight rooms… moons… eight moons.
(Class No.15, line 8. 2005).

Another important aspect to remark upon regarding other students' oral productions was that they were silent when they did not feel secure to talk or present some description, maybe because of the lack of specific vocabulary and simple structures, but throughout the teacher's questions they gave the correct answers e.g.

Student B: Teacher cómo se dice calvo en inglés?

Student C: Teacher cómo se dice antenas o tentáculos?
(Class No.12, lines from 13 to 16. 2005).

This means that they could express orally but with mistakes e.g. "Finally, groups began to present their works but they were so shy and, because of that, they did it through teacher's questions".

> Teacher: What is its name? How old is it? Is it tall or short? Is it fat or thin? How many eyes? (Class No.12, lines from 30 to 33, 2005).

The success of working by projects in English was evidenced in the students' oral production because they could evidence their learning. As seen in the final presentation, student D, who looked nervous, said: "*My house doesn't have bedrooms, doesn't have kitchen, doesn't have bathroom…*" to mean that his house has those dependencies. Nevertheless, the audience understood what he said. We consider that the most important thing is to transmit a message, in this case, to their partners, parents and teachers. In the last classes, we could also see that students look for the way to make people understand what they wanted to say. In addition, their motivation to talk arrived via other contexts; for example, the use of some English expressions to ask for permission or to comment something short in math class or in the others.

Likewise, in the final presentation, in spite of their anxiety to speak in English and the wish to achieve the goals of the project, students could transmit the message; they talked taking into account the audience and felt satisfied with the results.

> Student E: Different courses and teachers had visited us and they had congratulated us because of our English and job.

> Student F´s mother: Teacher, I am really surprised to see my son's performance because he is very shy and he could speak in front of the audience and even more in English. Teacher, what did you do?

> Student A´s mother: Wow our girls are bilinguals.
> (Final presentation, 2005)

During the presentation of the planets, many girls pointed out the planet's characteristic by saying the following:

> Student G: It has big head, six arms…

> Student H: The name of the planet is Bobbylandia, it is green and red, it is round…

> Student I: Our planet Thunder has eight moons, two suns, one ring…
> (Final presentation, different lines, 2005).

As can be seen, they made sure the children from first grade and teachers visiting the exhibit could understand the main idea of the whole presentations.

On the other hand, in the final presentation of IED Gustavo Restrepo, fifth graders could let the audience see their knowledge in connection to their proposal of planets, houses, aliens, relief, etc. Some of them did it slowly, maybe because they were nervous or because they did not want to make mistakes. In one group we could especially see different features in the students' oral production when they presented their final products; one of them was a very shy kid, but in spite of this, he could describe his alien without mistakes. He had a challenge not only with himself, but with his friends. The second boy performed well in all areas and was motivating his classmates to make their presentations with effort, enthusiasm, security, and excellence. But this kid was saying the opposite. It means that he wanted to say that his house had different dependencies but using the expression "It doesn't have…" Fortunately everybody understood.

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Writing production

Taking into account the students' previous learning process where they only learned isolated words and did not write whole sentences nor paragraphs, when we applied the project we could note progress in both schools.

In IED Liceo Femenino Mercedes Nariño, the teacher guided students to work on key vocabulary and then asked them to write a descriptive paragraph of their alien without a specific model. The results were that some students wrote a list of sentences and others tried to build a paragraph, but both with grammar and syntactic errors / problems e.g. Natalie's group: *"The alien has curly, hair red and long".*

In this case, the teacher identified positive aspects: Students needed to look for more vocabulary because they tried to follow a model from Spanish texts. They wanted to be very specific and although students who wrote paragraphs had many grammar mistakes, they were not limited in their imagination and production.

At IED Gustavo Restrepo the teacher applied a different strategy to explore the writing process: students had to use the learned vocabulary in a model paragraph by writing specific information in the corresponding blanks. This strategy allowed students to make fewer errors or mistakes than in free writing of descriptive paragraphs. In addition, students could internalize simple structures to build a paragraph. For instance, they learned about the right order to describe body parts: subject + verb + quantity + size or length + body part (e.g. *"Our alien has three long arms and two short legs."*) and they learned to use the auxiliary "does" to write a negative statement (e.g. *"R-7 does not have hair."*, *"Tutti does not have legs."*). Nevertheless, there were limitations in expressing all they wanted and they sometimes preferred not to mention any other aspect to widen their description.

Likewise, for the final presentation students could understand and value the importance of organizing their thoughts in writing to improve their expression, while they could become spontaneous in their communication. In the case of IED Liceo Femenino, girls made a folder with four pages, each one with a paragraph describing the product of each unit. For example, in the first unit the paragraph was about alien's description. It was amazing to see how they improved; and they were able to build a complete paragraph using not only simple structures. Also, students lost their fear of writing in English.

Artistic production

When kids are engaged in a production project (Haines, 1989), they have the possibility to show their artistic abilities by creating an alien, a new planet, a relief and a house. In our case, it was a good starting point to catch students' attention and motivate them to work enthusiastically. In that sense, students with low levels of participation in class could increase their oral production, write better, and increase their knowledge throughout imaginative tasks.

The importance of this kind of production is that students could evidence their knowledge in an artifact and acquired new vocabulary. In other words, the artistic production encouraged them to learn more and better, as we mentioned in the literature review.

Our students' artifacts were characterized by big models in which they used recycled materials combined with plasticine, paints, lané, styrofoam, etc. Sometimes they made their models out of proportion; it means that they built a big alien but its planet was small, or their aliens were bigger than their houses. They usually used the third dimension where they could stand the scale models up and exhibit them easily.

Comparing the results at IED Liceo Femenino and at Gustavo Restrepo, we could find meaningful differences. The first is a female school and in the second one, the population is mixed. Productions differed in terms of details and points of view, and they were connected to students' gender. For example, the kind of materials they used were different: Girls used fine paper in several colors, some candies or some detailed objects as part of their works, while in the second school, some boys used simple paper without many objects. Girls were more worried about the aesthetic part and the mixed groups were more practical in terms of resources.

Final presentations were also different. For instance, at IED Liceo Femenino, girls organized an exhibition similar to the science fair, where each group were located in a specific place in their classrooms and the visitors walked around to listen to their presentation with the guide girl. In some cases, it was curious to see students' interests and motivation demonstrated in beautiful works, in the classroom decoration and in their disguises that some of the girls used for the final presentation (make up, antennas, etc.).

On the other hand, at IED Gustavo Restrepo, students prepared the technology room to present their final products. There, kids organized their scale models in some big tables and presented them according to the program they had established. Students presented in front of the coordinators, some parents, teachers and classmates. Kids expressed their artistic skills not only with their products but with the exhibition of large posters of relief, solar system and some big signs or labels they had done for the final purpose.

What Does Their Production Tell Us about Their Learning Process?

During the development of this action research and its corresponding analysis, we were worried about the learning process or the process that students followed to acquire knowledge in a permanent and continuous way.

Working by projects showed a great increase of **motivation** because students were inspired by their topics of interest and the process was not based on curriculum contents. Almost all teachers are worried about following a specific sequence of themes that children have to receive and manage according to age and scholarly maturity, but sometimes the results are children with little vocabulary that is not meaningful for them. In our case, we could complete most of the contents without a specific order but in a meaningful way because students had the opportunity to propose the theme and to be responsible for its development.

Students respected the internal (small groups/ classroom) and external patterns (teachers/parents) and it helped to establish rules, to cooperate and coordinate their points of view, and, as a consequence, they achieved better integration that allowed them to work

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together in order to complement and learn collaboratively. The living together troubles were solved during the development of the project. During the process we could see how students integrated their roles or functions into the group in order to obtain good results and they had the responsibility of working satisfactorily in front of the whole group; of course, in some cases, groups broke up maybe because one of the members could not assume his / her responsibility and maybe because he or she felt insecure; but finally they could face this reality without fighting and the results were significant. On the whole, students' level of participation in class increased.

In addition, we could say that it is necessary to **prepare or stimulate students** by giving them vocabulary and grammar explanations as a warm-up or to support them in order to have more results not only in their productions, but also in their emotional part so that they feel secure in their performance in class.

Conclusions

Taking in to account our research questions and the development of our project, we found English language learning evidenced in fifth grade students when engaging in project work via two main aspects: their behavior and their production.

About students' behavior we can say that when children are motivated, everything is possible. In our specific case, pupils were interested in the project all the time; they chose the topic, and they were responsible and happy with the process, although at the end, they were worried about showing their progress in it.

In addition, we were surprised to see students' ability to analyze, deduce and think logically. They could establish some simple comparisons; they could speculate about the weather of an imaginary planet according to its location in space and deduce the clothes that the inhabitants should use according to the climate conditions, etc. Our pupils were not afraid to propose a new planet using a foreign language.

Likewise, students learnt to work together, to solve their differences and to join together as a team to elaborate a product collaboratively, respecting other's opinions. In a community like ours, it is important to work in groups, to know how to live with others, to contribute, and to take advantage of others' knowledge.

About the children's production, it was delightful to report that they had a great improvement in their writing, oral and artistic performance. Our pupils, in this moment, do not have a fear of talking or writing in English, neither of showing their artistic talent. Actually, they wrote complete paragraphs describing people, a relief, a house or a planet and presented their production orally as well. Also, they used recycling material in the creation of their manual artifacts. Of course, they made mistakes but they are conscious that they are in a process and maybe later on they are going to do it better.

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Appendix 1: Unit Contents

Unit Two

Topic: Solar System.
Date: From September 5 to September30, 2005.
Objetive: To locate their own created planet
and make a description of the Solar System.

Contents:
- Solar system
- Solar system components
- Planets and Sebna description
- Creation and description of the new planet in the Solar System

Activities:
1. Introduction of the topic through the comic strip, "We live in the Solar System". There are different ways to do it: For example,
   - Teacher's monologue.
   - Reading activity.
   - Students' role-play.
2. Then, the teacher makes an exploration about the students' understanding. After that, students write, in their English notebooks, the word bank and the graphic representations of the Solar System components.
3. Students develop the guide "Awesome Planets". According to the planets' features written on the sheet, students have to decorate the drawings.
4. Evaluation: Students complete a table where they have to organize the whole information about planets in the Solar System.
5. At the end, they have to establish the characteristics of their own planet by writing the special features through the guide "Our planet".
6. Finally, students model or build their own planet taking into account the features they have mentioned before. At the same time they are going to be able to place it in the Solar System.

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