Language learning through projects

Wendy Arnold, Coralyn Bradshaw and Kate Gregson

Introduction

This chapter will analyse the characteristics of projects and how they function within different overall approaches to teaching English as a foreign language to Young Learners (YL). Young learners are children between the ages of six and 16 years learning English, at primary (elementary) and secondary (high school) levels. ‘Learners’ and ‘students’ will be used synonymously unless indicated otherwise.

What is learning through projects?

The use of projects for learning is based on a constructivist, learner-centred approach to inquiry-based learning, and has been part of mainstream education for decades (Beckett 2002; Thomas 2000) if not centuries (Taylor et al. 1998; Knoll 1997).

According to Phillips et al. (1999, p. 6) projects are ‘an integrated unit of work’ with distinct parts, ‘beginning, middle and end’ (ibid.). The essential features are that a project requires independent research into a topic and results in a product. This can be in the form of text alone, but usually involves pictures, diagrams and other visual displays. Projects may be carried out by individuals or by small groups working together. Projects typically take more than a single lesson to complete and require some work to be done outside class; the learner develops holistically without language learning being the only focus – skills including ‘intellectual, physical/motor, social and learner independence’ (1999, p. 6, 2012) are also developed. Projects help to develop learner autonomy by encouraging making choices and taking responsibility, as well as transferable skills such as research. Projects lend themselves well to mixed-ability classes; they can also be used to supplement or complement an existing language programme, or the syllabus can be designed around them (Phillips et al. 1999).

In summary, a project is an extended task; learners work through a number of activities towards an agreed goal; it involves ‘planning, gathering of information, discussion, problem solving, oral or written reporting, and display’ (Hedge 2004, p. 49).
What is language learning through projects?

The term Language Learning Through Projects (LLTP) will be used to distinguish the use of projects in the ELT context from other project-based approaches. Diane Philips describes that although the teacher controls the planning, it is the learners’ ideas and personal interests that drive the project. The challenge for the teacher is to select the specific language and linguistic skills to be used or developed during project work. LLTP also has an outcome or authentic end product for the learners to show to others (2012, pp. 1–2).

In summary, what makes LLTP unique is that whilst learning through projects is a well-known mainstream method for learning, in LLTP language is deliberately integrated into one of the learning objectives alongside subject content. However, within English Language Teaching (ELT), LLTP remains an under-exploited and generally misunderstood type of activity (Alan and Stoller 2005).

Historical perspectives

The first section in this chapter will trace the history of using projects in the mainstream educational classroom and describe the initial transference of the concept of project work to the field of ELT.

With the rise of the philosophical movement Pragmatism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the USA, project work became the focal point of a new progressive educational approach. John Dewey’s seminal educational theories were presented in a series of publications between 1897 and 1938. The most influential of these being, arguably, Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* (1926, p. 11), where, as in other works, he argues that education and learning are social and interactive processes, where students interact with the curriculum and take part in their own learning. Kilpatrick (1918) was the first American reformer to coin the term ‘Project Method’, thereby challenging the traditional view of the student as passive recipient of knowledge and the teacher as the transmitter of a static body of facts. Meanwhile in Europe, themes around project work were emerging with the work of, among others, Gaudig (in Fragoulis 2009), responsible principally for the idea of group work in pursuit of problem solving. The important concepts of the constructivist educational psychologists Piaget (1952), Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1978) are interwoven into this view of learning as investigative, problem solving, co-operative and reflective, and diametrically opposed to the traditional notions of passive rote learning.

Within the field of educational linguistics the movement towards more proactive learning did not go unnoticed. From the middle of the twentieth century the straitjacket of behaviourist and structural linguistics was discarded. Jacobs and Farrell (2003, p. 16) suggest that a ‘Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) paradigm shift’ occurred, wherein project work first featured in the field of ESL (English as a Second Language) under ‘Project Based Learning’ (PBL) in the USA (which is discussed below) and subsequently in what are traditionally called EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. This shift was towards a more sociocognitive, contextualised and meaning-based view of language learning. Project work in ESL and ELT evolves within this CLT framework.

There are several mainstream education initiatives using projects that we will explore below in chronological order. These all share common goals of engaging students in exploring real-world issues and solving practical problems.
The project approach

The Project Approach, evolving from Kilpatrick’s Project Method, was coined by Katz and Chard (1993) who underlined that ‘including project work in the curriculum promotes children’s intellectual development by engaging their minds in observation and investigation of selected aspects of their experience and environment’ (Katz and Chard 2000, p. 2). Katz (1994) outlines the approach as involving three phases: Phase 1: students and their teacher select and discuss a topic to be explored; Phase 2: students conduct investigations and then create representations of their findings; Phase 3: students present their project and receive feedback. The underpinning structure of a project is therefore envisaged as (1) content, (2) processes and (3) products.

Project-based learning or project-based instruction

Project-Based Learning (PBL) described by Thomas (2000), sometimes referred to as Project-Based Instruction (PBI) (Hedge 2004; Stoller 1997; Becket 1999), takes the principles of the Project Method and crafts them into a more rigorous form. Thomas (2000) provides a detailed definition of PBL, underscoring the students’ need for more in-depth autonomous enquiry, as well as collaborative skills, supported by research using twenty-first century technological tools.

The Buck Institute for Education carefully reviews the work of Larmer, Mergendoller and Boss (2015, pp. 2–4) in order to put together a framework for what is referred to as the Golden Standards for project work. They list seven ‘Gold Standard’ essential project design elements, which suggest a fundamental requirement of PBL as including higher order thinking skills such as reflection and critical analysis:

• Challenging problem or Question
• Sustained Inquiry
• Authenticity
• Student Voice and Choice
• Reflection
• Critique and Revision
• Public Product.

Furthermore, Bradley-Levine and Mosier (2014, p. 1) identify a major development of PBL/PBI from the Project Method:

In PBL, projects requiring students to apply the knowledge and the skills they learn are the focus of the curriculum rather than being added as a supplement at the end of traditional instruction.

LLTP in TEYL

Turning to TEYL, literature on and research into the use of projects with young learners of English is scant. Indeed, the most prominent evidence of projects appears in published materials, including coursebooks written for an international market, usually in the private sector (Oxford Discover 2013–2014; Cambridge Global English 2014a, b; Projects Fourth Edition 2014). A number of glocal coursebooks (Arnold and Rixon 2008, p. 40) written for
a specific context but with a global perspective, usually used in the public or state education sector, also use an LLTP approach (English for Palestine 2011; New Magic 2008).

A number of education reforms in TEYL have included cross-curricular, thematic-based language learning through projects, for example in Hong Kong (EdB 2004, p. 104), giving the rationale that the inclusion of projects for learning is intended to involve learners in integrating language within a thematic-based investigation in order to ‘develop independence and a sense of responsibility’, as well as making choices, linking school and the outside world, real-life investigations, planning and organizing.

There is also anecdotal evidence that teachers use an LLTP approach as discussed in Part 4 below from the online survey.

**Summary**

There is no clear pathway that has led to the evolution of the use of projects into LLTP; indeed it seems to have come from an eclectic combination of mainstream project-based approaches, topic/thematic-based learning, activities, features of learning how to learn and sometimes uses PBL with a learner-centred and CLT approach.

**Critical Issues**

A general critical issue that has an impact on TEYL is the fast-growing number of countries introducing English at ever-younger ages. References supporting an early start to learn English are prolific, widely offering the advantage that learners have longer to learn the language. However, caveats exist, such as the need for teacher education that acknowledges different areas of child development including second/foreign language, culturally appropriate curriculum, assessment and provision of learning materials, and support from parents and school management. Without this, the success of implementation will be limited and unsustainable (Rixon 2013 and 2015; Rich 2014; Enever and Moon 2009; Enever 2015; Johnston 2009; Murphy 2014; Murphy and Evangelou 2016).

With these cautions in mind we will explore the following topics, considering what is needed in order to adopt LLTP effectively:

1. Teachers: teacher English language levels; teacher education.

**Teachers and LLTP**

Although there lacks a consistent definition of teacher language skills in the literature, the Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE) summary concludes that CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) C2 is needed, along with training in an age-appropriate methodology (Enever 2011, p. 5). Hayes (2014, p. 2) recommends at least CEFR B2, ideally C1. However, research shows that there are problematic gaps in the supply of adequately prepared teachers (Enever and Moon 2009; Emery 2012; Rixon 2013; Rixon 2015). Moreover, Alvarez et al. (2015, p. 259) report on a pilot of an English language and methodology project which showed that of the 97 generalist teachers in primary schools who took part, 41 (42%) scored A0-A1 in the British Council’s Apsis test (CEFR equivalent).

In short, there seems to be a shortfall of teachers with either the training in appropriate TEYL methodology or adequate English language levels. This has implications for the
delivery of LLTP, as it needs teachers who have both the linguistic skills and training in age-appropriate methodology in order to plan, prepare and deliver LLTP effectively.

**Approach and methods**

LLTP is based on LCE (Learner-Centred Education), which Schweisfurth (2011, p. 425) says is a ‘culturally nuanced perspective (which) raises questions about how teaching and learning are understood in different contexts’ and which, as a ‘western approach’ may be inappropriate for application in all societies and classrooms. Holliday (1994, pp. 175–177) also concurs, and goes on to say that LCE has been ‘responsible for the failures in making the communicative approach work outside the BANA (British Australian North American) classroom’ because ‘it presupposes that we know a great deal about the learner’ (ibid.), when the contrary is often true. Furthermore, Garton et al. (2011, pp. 5–6) reference multiple cases where there is evidence that CLT and at least one of its offshoot/derived methods, TBLT, have been adapted in certain contexts to align to the context-specific value and belief systems. In addition, there are multiple references to querying the application of CLT for TEYL because of issues such as ‘over-crowded classrooms with few resources’ and ‘different educational traditions’, as well as imperfect understanding of the method by teachers and the perceived inappropriate nature of the method (Garton et al 2011, p. 9). However, Holliday (1994, pp. 175–177) argues that by focusing on a ‘learning-centred’ approach together with ‘culture-sensitive features’, this could become appropriate classroom methodology.

Furthermore, Arnold and Rixon note that the speed with which TEYL has been introduced has ‘outpaced the teacher education and creation of suitable materials’. Materials need to be both ‘child-friendly’ and ‘teacher-friendly’ so that they can support teachers who may be inexperienced in TEYL (2008, pp. 39–40). Arnold and Bradshaw (2012, p. 5) caution that a ‘top down, aspirational, prescriptive’ curriculum has a direct impact on the materials designed for young learners, which could result in materials that are too complex to either be delivered by the teacher or understood by the YL. They argue for a ‘bottom up, pragmatic and experiential’ (ibid.) curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the YL and the abilities of the teachers.

In short, due to the possible resistance to an LCE approach it is critical that teachers and learners are exposed to LLTP and are given time to understand the benefits. Teachers would need training as there is a role change for both learners and teachers in this approach.

**Summary**

Two critical concerns are therefore (a) the lack of readily available teachers with the appropriate linguistic competency and methodological training in order to deliver LLTP; and (b) appropriate materials to guide the teacher and their learners on using an approach which focuses on both content and language learning in parallel.

The teacher’s role is critical, and without adequate levels of English language and knowledge of an age-appropriate methodology, no methodology will be successful. Murphy and Evangelou (2016, p. 300) agree, suggesting that the areas that need developing are: ‘i) developing a skilled workforce through professional training, ii) developing quality environments in early years settings, and iii) the need for more research into children’s development both within and across settings.’
Current contributions and research

In this section, we will present a review of recent and current research into the use of projects in different educational contexts, identifying relevant contributions to the TYL field. Unsurprisingly, given the wide-spread use reported in mainstream contexts, extensive reports on research into Project-Based Learning in schools and universities exist (Thomas 2000). There seem, however, to be fewer reports on the use of projects in ELT or, specifically, in TEYL, as Mukhurjee (2015) notes. Furthermore, as discussed previously, there is a wide variety in the interpretation, design and implementation of projects in classroom practice, and commonality of defining features of ‘projects’ among the reports on research is largely lacking.

Nonetheless, as we have noted, the aim in language education to young learners is not limited to the development of language skills, but is to address the development of the whole child, so as to include other skills, such as cognitive, social-emotional or twenty-first-century skills. As such, it is useful to draw on the findings of research within this broad area, in order to contribute to a definition of good practice in LLTP and to further explore research findings related to some of the critical issues noted in the previous section. To this end, a review of around 30 reports on recent research and a number of reviews of current research in the field was undertaken. In addition, an online global survey of young learner English language teachers was conducted by the authors to find out what teachers of English knew about the use of projects in language learning.

Overall, findings of much of the research into the use of projects across contexts and ages are positive in terms of academic gains, cognitive, metacognitive and co-operative skills development and in student engagement, especially in Western mainstream educational contexts (Beckett and Slater 2005). Margaret Holm (2011, pp. 5–8) reviewed research conducted in mainstream state and private pre-school, primary and secondary education in Turkey, the USA, Hong Kong, Qatar and Israel, concurring with Beckett and Slater (2005). Some report overall benefits, at the primary level in ESL in Asia, such as Wong (2001) and Chua (2004; both cited in Liu et al. 2006), although this positivity is not entirely mirrored on a global level or in EFL contexts, where students do not always see the value in project work for language development (Beckett and Slater 2005).

Results from our online global survey indicated that 34% (of the 90 respondents) used ‘learning through projects’ at the end of a unit or topic, and 25% at the end of each term. Respondents felt that success in LLTP was mostly due to the learners: their critical thinking and application of knowledge (both 67%); choice in what they learn and how they present it (58%); and working independently, in pairs or groups (47%). No question was asked about challenges incurred.

Loosely based around Holm’s (2011) review categories, the following thematic areas have been identified in the literature. These areas are intended to link into and build on the critical issues identified in the previous section.

1 Student factors: attitude, self-perception and autonomy; development, learning and skills.
2 Teacher factors: teacher beliefs; teacher role; professional development and training.
3 Project and contextual factors: design and authenticity; curriculum fit; learning context.

Student factors

Within this broad area, a number of points arose from the review. Firstly, studies in non-ELT mainstream education (e.g., Thomas 2011; Holm 2011) and tertiary ELT contexts
Kaldi et al. (2011) found the impact of project work on student attitude, motivation and self-perception generally positive. Indeed several studies in TEYL contexts reported similarly positive findings in relation to student engagement, often attributed to the opportunity for student choice, such as in the decision-making processes (Pinter et al. 2016) or tasks (Riga 2011). Kogan (2003) also reported raised self-motivation, excitement, interest and willingness to work hard in her bilingual context.

The provision of choice seems to be supported by several studies, which undertook to investigate impact on learner autonomy and self-direction. Arnold (2006, p. 17), for example, notes that projects undertaken with young learners of English in Hong Kong where choice was permitted, ‘encourage[d] learner autonomy by promoting responsibility in making choices’. In a study related to the hole-in-the-wall experiments in rural India (Mitra 2000), Mitra and Dangwal (2010) found that different children self-organised and assumed different roles. Other mainstream studies, however, suggest students need support in developing learning to learn skills or may be less willing to have such a shift of role. Fragoulis (2009), for example, reports that several Greek EFL primary-aged students would have preferred more teacher direction and less choice. As such, it seems that in order for learner autonomy to develop, learning to learn skills may also need specific attention in preparation for projects.

The need to prepare students for LLTP, by raising student awareness of the benefits and values of project work, was clear in several studies especially in language teaching. For example, Gibbes and Carson (2004), looking at the tertiary level, mention that a lack of preparedness may negatively impact students’ acceptance. In TEYL, the children in Pinter et al.’s (2016) study were positive about the change from rote and book-based learning. Nonetheless, this would seem to be a potential issue, especially as children may have relatively fixed views due to their limited experience, even at a younger age. To this end, Beckett and Slater (2005) developed and tested their ‘Project Framework’, a tool which aims to raise such awareness in older learners before and during project work, finding that students’ perceptions became more positive over time, as is echoed in other studies, including those in bilingual/ESL contexts, such as Kogan (2003) and Liu, et al (2006).

Several studies reviewed by Holm (2011) support the claim that project work can address diverse learning needs. This is also reflected in TEYL, such as Fragoulis’s (2009) study, which reported raised intrinsic motivation among Greek primary-aged learners, even those with lower self-esteem or confidence in their language skills. Similarly, an improvement in levels of engagement, participation, motivation and children’s sense of pride in their work was reported as being common among students at different stages of ESL development in India (Mukhurjee 2015). Cusen (2013) further found increased desire to develop perceived weaknesses in language skills in an ESL setting.

Many studies indicate the value of learning through projects in terms of skills development:

- Twenty-first century skills (Bell 2010, in mainstream primary).
- Transferable skills (Gibbes and Carson 2004, at the tertiary level).
- IT skills (such as Arnold 2003, as a particular benefit to boys in TEYL).
- Cognitive skills such as creativity, planning, decision making, problem solving and critical thinking in young learner contexts, such as Kogan (2003) and Chang and Chang (2003, cited in Liu et al. 2006).
- Collaborative and co-operative skills (especially in TEYL: Fragoulis 2009; Mukhurjee 2015; Pinter et al. 2016).
Language learning through projects

• Greater depth and richness of content knowledge was found in many studies, particularly in mainstream contexts (such as Holm 2002; Kaldi et al. 2014).
• Greater long-term retention and flexibility of learning were noted (cited in Thomas 2000), also in mainstream contexts.

Further investigations into learning through projects within content-based approaches in TEYL would be welcome.

Moving on to linguistic skills development, a number of issues were identified. Bicaki and Gursoy’s (2010, cited in Holm 2011) study in a Turkish mainstream pre-school found improved mother tongue skills. In EFL and ESL environments, results were more mixed, however. Some reported language development as a result of real language use and an inter-relatedness with content (Beckett 1999, cited in Beckett and Slater 2005), or an increase in children’s L2 risk-taking and experimentation (Fragoulis 2009). Others, meanwhile, voiced more negativity, for example in the development of lexis, syntax and grammar (Gibbes and Carson 2014).

Interestingly, a number of EFL and ESL studies noted students’ high use of mother tongue during group interaction in project work, and a number of comments and recommendations for project work with young English language learners came through, such as the need for guidance and encouragement (Fragoulis 2009), language input (Gibbes and Carson 2014) and constant monitoring (Mukhurjee 2015). Nonetheless, others argued that the language input and output at other stages of the project more than suffice for acquisition, and that project work encouraged quieter or less confident students to begin to participate in English (Fragoulis 2009), or that the desire to ask questions pushed children to mix languages in order to convey meaning and form questions (Kogan 2003).

Teacher factors

Teacher beliefs are highly influential in the success of project approaches, making projects easier for some teachers to implement than others, depending on a range of factors such as teaching philosophy, current and previous teaching and learning experiences (Clark 2006). In several contexts around the world, both in language and mainstream education, such as in Hong Kong (Arnold 2003) and West Bengal (Mukhurjee 2015), project work has been introduced through educational reforms, but this does not always seem to imply a change in sometimes deep-seated beliefs held by teachers, who may be resistant to change (Clark 2006). Indeed, Cusen (2013) noted resistance and difficulty in implementation across Asia due to the prevalence of traditional and exam-oriented teaching practices. Nonetheless, it seems that even reluctant teachers who try using projects in their teaching develop an awareness of their value over time and continue to use – or at least want to use – projects after the research period (Mukhurjee 2015, in an Indian ESL context). Interestingly, Kogan (2003, n.p.), in a bilingual setting, reports change in attitude among colleagues of research participants, who were ‘amazed’ by the effects of project work on learners, reaffirming the need for awareness raising and reflective practice as teachers adopt LLTP.

Teachers’ response to the shift in role away from controller and giver of knowledge was also an initial stumbling block in some studies (Clark 2006; Thomas 2001), as new teaching skills are needed in, for example, classroom management, planning, interaction with students and open-ended and student centred questioning (Tal, Krajcik, and Blumenfeld 2006, cited in Holm 2011, p. 7). Chard’s (1999) pre-school study confirms teachers are initially challenged by ongoing responsive planning and negotiation with students, and at higher
levels, skills in scaffolding learning can be lacking (Thomas 2001). While some teachers report negativity about this need for change, given time, most resolved this (Thomas 2001), and some come to view a project approach as an opportunity for professional development (Pinter et al. 2016), or as improving professionalism (Thomas 2001).

Project and contextual factors

A number of factors in project design come through in the review. Firstly, Fragoulis (2009) and Grant (2009) concluded with warnings against over-extending projects as students lose interest and motivation, while Cusen (2013) suggests that topics which induce an emotional response and inspire varied tasks can lengthen engagement. Difficulties related to curriculum fit, that is aligning project content or scenarios with curriculum guidelines, can also be identified (Thomas 2000), especially ‘with increased competition among curricular objectives, the quantities of time dedicated to in-depth inquiries are difficult for teachers to reconcile’ (Veermans et al. 2005, cited in Grant 2009, n.p.). This may equally be of concern in many TEYL contexts, depending perhaps on the type of institution, curriculum or syllabus. It was, indeed, cited as an issue by Mukhurjee (2015) in an Indian ESL environment.

Contextual or school factors have also been shown to be problematic in the implementation of projects, namely colleagues, head teachers, time and curriculum (Fragoulis 2009). Further obstacles include timetable, lack of support, school culture, time and space for learning in a different way (Leat et al. 2014); also resources, finance and facilities limited several studies (Leat et al. 2014; Mikulec and Chamnus-Miller 2011; Mukhurjee 2015). Nonetheless, Mitra and Dangwal’s (2010) fascinating study in India, investigating self-directed learning in three different settings, a hole-in-the-wall (public computer facility) setting, a local state school setting and a high performing private city school, found that progress made by students in the hole-in-the-wall setting was considerable, and that they caught up with their peers in the local school when a mediator, a non-specialist adult who was known to the children and who supervised but did not teach them (Mitra and Dangwal 2010, p. 678), was present. This suggests that lack of, or inadequate, resources and facilities may be perceived as limiting, but are issues which can be overcome, even in situations where teachers may lack specific training.

Summary

Benefits to the development of a wealth of skills, including linguistic skills, are clearly evident in many reports, and with support and pre-project preparation in terms of learning-to-learn skills development as well as awareness-raising regarding these benefits, students largely seem to be brought on board with LLTP.

The teacher’s change of role may be the biggest challenge to LLTP, especially in contexts such as Asia where there is a more traditional approach to learning. However, teachers who used LLTP found that over time the advantages outweighed the initial disadvantages such as longer time for planning and learning new skills.

Finally, the length of time of a project seems to be a challenge, and if it continues for too long, this can impact the motivation of the YL. Some TEYL contexts also had challenges with the school environment and fitting LLTP into the already crowded timetable, if it was supplementary to published materials.
**Recommendations for Practice**

This section will identify some recommendations for implementing LLTP in TEYL contexts derived from the discussions above. There are two main areas: (1) trainer training: training the teacher on their role, and (2) learner training: the need to prepare the students, allowing them to take a more active role in learning-to-learn and collaborating with others.

**Teacher training**

It is recommended that the design of LLTP should clearly define the role of the teacher, and that for successful adoption of these roles, training will generally be necessary. Two possible role scenarios are given, adoption of which depends on whether it is the teacher or the published materials that take the more active role in guiding the learners. The roles are outlined in Table 18.1.

Within Teacher Role 1 there may also be sub-scenarios, which include:

- a Teachers with adequate English language levels, e.g., CEFR C2+ but unused to developing LLTP materials.
- b Generalist primary teachers with inadequate English language levels, e.g., CEFR A0-A1 who are unconfident with language and methodology to teach language.

In order for these roles to be embraced, teacher training is needed. The nature and extent of this training may vary between different contexts, but some general recommendations include:

- i In-service, age-appropriate and extensive English language and LLTP methodology courses for generalist primary teachers who have been asked to teach English. Alvarez et al (2015) provide a model that could be modified to focus on LLTP concepts.
- ii Pre-service age-appropriate English language and LLTP methodology courses for generalist primary, subject primary and secondary teachers. There should be multiple opportunities for teaching practice to develop skills and understanding.
- iii If published materials are used, they need to be carefully checked to ensure that they are realistic in terms of the teacher’s language and methodology abilities, and age appropriate for learners.

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<th>Table 18.1 Teacher roles</th>
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<td><strong>Teacher role 1</strong> (design project to i) supplement, or (ii) complement published material or (iii) deliver the English syllabus and guiding the learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Planning the project</td>
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<td>- Provider of the language arising from the communicative needs of the learners</td>
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<td>- Making the connections to cross-curricular subjects</td>
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<td>- Sequencing the tasks/activities</td>
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<td>- Designing the structure of the authentic enquiry</td>
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<td>- Guiding the authentic enquiry, possibly using a problem, cause, effect and solution.</td>
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| **Teacher role 2** (using published materials which lead learning) |
| - Leading the learners through the tasks/activities in the published materials using an enquiry (questions) |
| - Providing additional resources and opportunities for the enquiry, e.g., reference books, a visit to the community, inviting a speaker |
| - Implementing the assessment according to the design of the published materials. |
iv Such short, intensive teacher training courses require monitoring and evaluation in order to gauge short and long-term impact and sustainability (Ellis and Read 2015, p. 129).

v Teachers themselves need to be pro-active and willing to develop both the linguistic and methodological skills needed.

**Learner training**

The second recommended area is the preparation of the students to understand the importance of their role in taking responsibility in learning-to-learn, as well as the benefits of collaboration and co-operation with peers. Beckett and Slater’s (2005) Project Framework was developed to make LLTP more successful by supporting teachers in managing students’ beliefs, goals and expectations, as we noted above. This framework is a tool composed of two elements, the ‘planning graphic’ and the ‘project diary’ (Beckett and Slater 2005, p. 110). These serve to show students the development of language content and skills from the project work, and hence, not only raise their awareness of their value but also raise metacognitive awareness of the learning process and strategies.

Wilhelm (1999, p. 16) also addresses the concern that ‘students accustomed to more traditional, teacher-directed classrooms will generally respond with anxiety and confusion if expected to take responsibility for decision making too soon’. Arising from her studies into English language learners at the tertiary level, she identified five areas of student need to be analysed for planning collaborative project-based work:

1. Developing trust and interpersonal relationships.
2. Explaining and demonstrating student and teacher roles and responsibilities.
3. Modelling the collaborative learning approach.
5. Utilizing well-balanced, appropriate grading systems.

These areas would clearly be relevant to YLs, developing various skills, and would help raise awareness and understanding of the value of LLTP. As such, it is strongly recommended that teachers take the time to prepare their students for LLTP, having identified the needs of their class, and continue by formalizing the process by using a tool similar to or derived from Beckett and Slater’s (2005) Project Framework, designed with their specific learners, their context and their needs in mind.

**Future directions**

This chapter has discussed the emergence of LLTP as an approach at a time when education reforms have moved away from rote learning towards integrated learner-centred approaches. There is a need for more Ministries of Education to take the long-term view to education reform, such as Hong Kong, who started their reform in 2000. In the short-term development, one of the strategies to develop learning how to learn was project-based learning (Cheng 2009, p. 69).

In the future, research is needed into the impact of LLTP in various areas. Firstly, research is needed related to the transition to LLTP from more traditional approaches, which may be part of education reform at the policy level. Research into age-appropriate LLTP materials that are also at a suitable level for teachers would also be welcome. A number of issues
relating to teacher and school management training have been highlighted in this chapter and would also warrant investigation. Lastly, the potential and actual impact that LLTP has on students and their language development would certainly be a valuable area to scrutinise through, for example, action research. Studies in any one of these areas would greatly contribute to the limited body of literature on LLTP.

Further reading


A chapter in this publication outlines how a pilot project in a developing country, Venezuela, was implemented across 11 cities over a period of 10 months to generalist primary teachers. It consisted of 100-hour language development/basic primary methodology based on the British Council’s English for Teachers (EfT) A0/A1 syllabus, with workshop materials written by British Council-trained local university lecturers. This could be modified to include LLTP and used as a model to train generalist primary teachers with low English language levels in age-appropriate language and methodology.


This publication gives both experienced and less experienced teachers a simple, easily accessible, step-by-step format to setting up and delivering projects. There are visuals to make the meaning clear, as well as variations to extend the project. Level of learner, age group, timing, description, language, skills, materials, preparation and steps are all defined.

Related topics

CLIL, assessment, mobile learning, materials

References


