

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN ESP COURSE: ENHANCING SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM

Olga Bershadska

National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, Ukraine

The aim of this research was to design the project-based task for social work students which could enhance their foreign language skills, help them learn new job-related knowledge and practice their soft skills.

The focus of the 21st century higher education has shifted from sharing information to critical thinking and soft skills development. It means that the priority learning outcomes are on the one hand related to the ability to find and filter useful information, analyze it and create something new. In other words, the learning activity should move to the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy [1]. And on the other hand, the learning process should provide the opportunity to develop such soft skills as interpersonal communication, time management, problem-solving, decision making, teamwork, presentation and project management skills because they are generally mentioned by potential employers when describing an ideal job candidate in various surveys.

All of these skills can be addressed in a foreign language course for a profession with project-based learning (PBL) implementation since according to the research PBL approach enhances not only language skills and also soft skills. [2]

Project-based learning is teaching method that suggests students finding a solution to a motivating and engaging question that involves working with authentic field-related resources and lasts an extended period of time. [3] According to a "Gold Standard PBL", this method will develop the students' knowledge and understanding as well as their key success skills if the task meets the following requirements: challenging problem or question, sustained inquiry, authenticity, opportunity for students to make their own decisions, opportunity for reflection and revision, and the opportunity to publish the final product. [4]

There numerous examples of the PBL tasks for different ESP classes include, for example designing a gadget for people with disability [5] or to design an ESP coursebook for the particular field [6]. There also examples of PBL-tasks that cannot be defined as a project because there were supposed to be performed either by one student or during one class.

The students participating in this research had to find the solution to the problem of the university applicants' low awareness of social work profession nature. This problem should be tackled as it is the reason why there are low motivated students unwilling to pursue their career in the field. As a solution, the students suggested making a short documentary that would include the interviews with the teacher's, present students and alumni. In the end, they were supposed to upload the video to the university's YouTube channel.

During the work on the project, the students got acquainted with the project managing strategies developed by Project Management Institute. [7] So, they

developed a plan which included all the tasks, resources and roles necessary and the stages of the project, they made the schedule with milestones and final date, they tried to predict the risks. The next task was to define success criteria at each stage and share responsibilities.

It is obvious that this work made the students practice all the soft skills mentioned above including teamwork, time management, decision making. The overall motivation increased and the task had also a team-building effect.

However, there were also some teaching challenges worth mentioning. First, the method requires revision of the course structure and assessment scheme. Second, not all students were ready for the autonomy. And finally, such tasks are quite time-consuming both for teachers and for students.

Overall, this research has demonstrated huge potential PBL has for ESP classes.

References

1. Armstrong P. Bloom's Taxonomy [Электронный ресурс] / Patricia Armstrong – Режим доступа до ресурсу: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>
2. Fried-Booth D. Project Work / Diana L. Fried-Booth. – Oxford: OUP, 2002. – 127 с. – (2). – (Resource books for teachers).
3. What is Project Based Learning (PBL)? [Электронный ресурс] – Режим доступа до ресурсу: https://www.bie.org/about/what_pbl.
4. Gold Standard PBL: Essential Project Design Elements [Электронный ресурс] // Buck Institute for Education. – 2015. – Режим доступа до ресурсу: http://www.bie.org/object/document/gold_standard_pbl_essential_project_design_elements.
5. Noom-ura S. Project-Based Learning And ESP: A Perfect Match / Sripathum Noom-ura. // English Language Teaching. – 2013. – №31. – С. 1–7.
6. Indrasari N. Project Based Learning in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Course for Pre-Service Teacher / Nunun Indrasari. // English Education:: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris. – 2016. – №9. – С. 366–379.
7. Project Management Institute. A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide) / Project Management Institute., 2013. – 589 с.