BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE CLASSROOM AND REALITY (ESP) TASK BASED/TOPIC CENTRED LEARNING

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Summary: *One of the main goals of teaching a foreign language is its application and usage in real, everyday life. Task based learning is an approach in teaching English which gives students the opportunity to learn by doing while a teacher has a complex task to help them master variety of language and professional skills. Obviously, this can only be done with a help of 'content teachers', because the list of skills and activities includes: creating and writing as well as conducting a survey, designing a product, planning a marketing and advertising campaign, giving presentations and many others. Here is one example of cooperation among teacher of Psychology, teacher of Marketing, Teacher and a language teacher, and some of their results.*
As students experience different roles in accomplishing their task, the opinion is that task based learning gives the opportunity to bridge the gap between the classroom and reality because it is authentic and true to life, and the results of students' work can be used in real life..

Key words: *teaching, project, collaboration, results.*

PREMOŠĆAVANJE JAZA IZMEDJU UČIONICE I STVARNOSTI – UČENJE ZASNOVANO NA IZRADI PROJEKTA

Rezime: *Jedan od osnovnih ciljeva nastave stranih jezika je njihova primena i upotreba u svakodnevnom životu. Učenje zasnovano na izvršavanju zadatka-projekta je pristup koji u nastavi stranog jezika studentima daje mogućnost da uče dok rade na projektu, dok nastavnik ima složen zadatak da im pomogne da savladaju različite jezičke veštine kao i druge stručne veštine uz saradnju sa kolegama koji se bave tim oblastima. Lista veština i aktivnosti (u ovde datom primeru) uključuje – kreiranje i pisanje ankete, kao i njeno sprovodjenje, dizajniranje proizvoda, planiranje marketinške i reklamne kampanje, držanje prezentacije i još mnogo drugih veština. Ovde je predstvljen primer saradnje nastvnika psihologije, marketinga, informatike kao i nastavnika stranog jezika, i neki od vec do sada dobijenih rezultata.*
Studenti sticu iskustva kroz razlicite uloge koje imaju dok izvršavaju brojne zadatke povezujući i osvajajući znanja iz već pomenutih oblasti. Mišljenja smo da učenje putem

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izrade projekata daje izuzetnu mogućnost da se premosti jaz izmedju rada u učionici i zahteva savremenog života. Sve te projekte karateriše autentičnost i veoma uspešno simuliraju zahteve sa kojima će se studenti susretati po završetku studija u okviru svoje radne sredine i radnih zadataka. Kroz primere nekih od studentskih projekata koji su do sada uradjeni videćete da se neki od njih već i sada mogu primeniti u odredjenim oblastima rada.

Ključne reči: *nastava, projekat, saradnja, rezultati.*

'To learn something effectively, learners need to know what to do. They need to know how to do it. They need to know why it is important. They need to know how it relates to who they are – their role…. '

Robert Dilts

1. INTRODUCTION

I have been teaching as an ESP lecturer at Technical Faculty in Cacak, Serbia for 10 years now. The question which has always bothered my mind was how to help my students bridge the gap between the classroom and reality, how to help them be ready for everyday life usage and application of the foreign language knowledge and skills as future managers, engineers, teachers.

In order to learn and acquire different skills and knowledge you have to learn about yourself and the world around you.

2. EFFECTIVE LEARNING IS A MULTI-LEVEL PROCESS

Effective learning is a multi-level process. As a teacher, you need to ensure that all the levels are working to support the learning of your students. Make sure:

1. **ENVIRONMENT** – Where? (When)

- That the **environment** is as conductive as possible to learning and that adequate time is allocated for key activities.

Most of us live our lives in many different environments: at home, in the classroom or training- room, in the staffroom, at the gym, at social events. …

2. **BEHAVIOUR** – What?

- That classroom behavior and activities are relevant, interesting and useful

In different environment, we do different things;

3. **ABILITY** – How?

- That learners develop abilities and skills, and that they learn how to learn

How do we do things we do? What skills do we have to enable us to do the many and varied activities that we do in our life?

4. **BELIEF** – Why?

- That learners believe that they can learn, and that they develop confidence

Why are we able to do the things we do? What beliefs do we have that enable us to have those particular things and that support us in what we do?

5. **IDENTITY** – Who am I?

- That learners have a sense of themselves as proficient learners and users of language at the level of identity;

What is my sense of myself? Who is the core self at the root of all the many selves or roles that I play in my life? What is my essence?

6. **SPIRIT** – What else?

- That learners have a sense of spirit, of their learning being worthwhile in a much wider sense;

What is my life about? What does it mean? Why am I here? Where am I going? What do I want ultimately?

Fulfillment comes from having all the levels in alignment**.**

So, if I am in a place I like, doing things I enjoy,

using skills I am good at,

sustained by positive and empowering beliefs,

having a strong sense of all this being a part of who I am

and connected to a higher sense of purpose –

then that is wonderful.

I am centred, connected, congruent and content.

"Help students take responsibility for their own learning. Incorporate -learning to learn-strategies and self-evaluation into your lessons. Encourage your students to take initiatives.' Teachers should direct students' attention and hope they will learn from exploring and noticing.
In order to achieve all this my choice is – TASK BASED LEARNING

3. WHY TASK BASED LEARNING?

Task based learning and teaching in ESP is an approach which gives students the opportunity to learn by doing, and us to teach in an engaging, dynamic and interactive way. It has also enabled me to divide groups of students into smaller, manageable size, and the number of lessons which is insufficient is extended in the way that students meet not only in the language classrooms, but in the Library, computer rooms, discuss the assignment with 'content teachers' in order to accomplish it. As students experience different roles in completing their tasks – the teacher has the opportunity to bridge the gap between the classroom and reality because task based learning is authentic in a sense that it allows time for variety of activities and it also gives students opportunity to show how skillful they are in searching, compiling and presenting data dealing with a certain task/project they have been given. Task based learning has also helped me to assess their reading, writing,

speaking, listening – all four language skills in a new, more realistic – true to life way and thus more objective way.

This model is especially appropriate for combining professional knowledge with knowledge of a foreign language. A small, self-directed group of students is faced with a real –life assignment to be accomplished in the professional context. Students explore the possibilities; identify what they already know and what they need to learn, do self-study and search for knowledge in a systematic way using modern technology. In the last step, they integrate their ideas and present their achievements. The model combines social and individual learning processes, putting emphasis on active participation of individual members – just like in real life situations.

That is why students need more content-based teaching, more topic-centred lessons which are components of a task based learning.

In order to tackle and deal with all these demands I try to help my students learn out of the classroom as well, I try to find and use activities which are focused and task based so they include content/subject teachers as well as media sources as much as possible. In that way students use the foreign language in discussions and preparations of material with content teachers and needless to say, when they search the Internet or watch satellite/cable TV channels looking for specific pieces of information. (All these activities are IN and OUT of the classroom.)

TBL is organized in series of group project meetings during which the following seven steps need to be taken:

STEP 1 – Making the case clear

The group is given the task. The teacher clarifies anything the students do not understand. Each group chooses a chairperson and a secretary, to co-ordinate the work and to take the notes. Students take these roles in turns. In that way teacher is in a better position to monitor the group work and give guidelines or whatever the group needs.

STEP 2 – Formulating questions and queries

The teacher asks each group to discuss the task in more depth. Students start a brainstorming session about the topic. The students write down the questions addressing the task.

STEP 3 – Identifying the current knowledge

Each group has to find out how much its individual members already know about the questions from STEP 2. At this step students are allowed to use their mother tongue in order to show their existing professional knowledge. If this occurred in English, some knowledgeable students would tend to remain silent because they would not know the right words in English.

STEP 4 – Structuring the ideas. Identifying learning needs

Students decide which ideas belong together and group ideas around the questions from STEP 2. Students also identify what has to be learnt or would require further research.

STEP 5 – Formulating learning aims

Distribute assignments among group members

Each student is assigned to the task he/she is most knowledgeable about. The secretary writes the names of students and their tasks.

STEP 6 – Individual activity/research

Students use various sources for their research. This can either be the library, Internet, the lecture notes or textbooks on professional subjects or content teachers. At this point there is a lot of exchange of information among the students and content teachers.

STEP 7 – Discussion and evaluation of information. Presentation.

In this step the students have to use the target language only. After they have discussed and evaluated gathered pieces of information and completed assignments by all members of the group, they start preparing the presentation. The final step of this project is delivering a presentation when assessment/evaluation of the whole task is carried out by teachers and students as well.

The selection criteria used is:

- The activity is interesting
- There is a task
- The task is authentic
- There is an element of risk
- They have to meet deadlines
- There is emotional involvement
- There is a multi-media input/output
- The outcome is true to life
- The students practice all four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking

As I teach students of Management, Informatics, Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering, the content teachers included are – teacher of Psychology, Marketing, major subject teacher, teacher of Informatics and language teacher.

Roles of Subject Teachers

As adviser and tutor, the subject teacher should make sure that students can contact him/her when needed (by e-mail, or during consultation hours). As mentor, he/she should direct students in their information search and guide them through their research. The roles of the subject teacher could be summarized as the following**:** facilitator, adviser, case designer, provider of literature and assessor.

The language teacher and the subject specialists can act as assessors; the language teacher will assess the linguistic aspect of the written report and/or oral presentation while the subject specialists will assess the contents of the written report and/or oral presentation.

All the teachers cover different areas –

Teacher of Psychology helps students make appropriate questions for the survey in order to find out whether the product is needed, to what extent, to whom, who their target group is – and not only who, but why, where, when and how are also essential questions for a

survey. Asking and formulating right questions is not an easy task. Conducting a survey is another point they have to discuss with their teacher of Psychology. Other areas which have to be covered with a help of a teacher of Psychology are – making decisions, negotiating, solving problems and giving presentations which include so many different skills. Presentations cannot be successfully prepared without help and guidelines of a Psychology teacher.

Teacher of Marketing has a very important role as well. As we talk about placing a product on the market, selling or buying it, students have to know how to design a product, how to design a label, create a catchy slogan, run a market research, advertising campaign, how to run meetings and negotiate, and here teacher of Marketing has more than an informative role in giving presentations.

Teacher of Informatics should help students be able to deal with information coming from all directions and they have to deal with them somehow and these risk play activities should be multi-media – using phones, PCs, video, DVD, etc. Digital literacy is very often an unexpected problem which is best solved with the teachers of Informatics. Students are quite good at finding information about sports and news; however locating information for academic purposes represents a problem. From millions of web pages on the Internet they do not know how to draw useful information, how to set search profiles, narrow them down, select information, and look at them critically. We can say that this is also a part of active learning.

Language teacher has the most important role here as he or better to say she has to tangle everything smoothly, wrap it up in a foreign language and help students while giving presentations to really give a present – a gift and gifts are selected with care and they are appropriate to the receiver. Language teachers have to give an enormous language input, both in oral and written language. They have to teach students how to use professional literature written in English, what phrases to use when they are having a meeting, negotiating, that some words are powerful, some others are not, what the language of ads is, the language used on the Internet, the language of presentations. Language teachers have to teach the students to use appropriate language for each of these situations. Language teachers also have to help their students master the skills of professional writing – writing summaries, abstracts, presentations, visual aids, minutes of meetings, etc.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS – It may appear that research is not the domain of language teaching but if we want our learners to become autonomous, we need to become a 'guide on the side', giving them support also in development of the so-called transferable skills which include internet research skills, etc.

As it can be seen, many different kinds of requirements have to be met. Obviously, this can not be achieved without a team work of both teachers and students, (there is no Mr. Know All) which is another good example for the real world our students will enter tomorrow.

The final step is evaluation where all the teachers are present and take part in estimating students' work, as well as other students who also take part in giving their opinion thus creating a good atmosphere to be more objective and help them see their strong and weak points compared with other students' work.

4. CONCLUSION

One of the main goals of teaching a foreign language is its application and usage in everyday life situations (bridging the gap between the classroom and reality). Task based learning is an approach in teaching English which gives students the opportunity to learn by doing while teachers have a complex task to help them master variety of both language and professional skills in order to be ready to meet the demands of the real world.

5. LITERATURA

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