

COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

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Samarqand viloyat xalq ta'limi xodimlarini qayta tayyorlash va ularning malakasini oshirish
hududiy markazi o'qituvchisi

Abstract

A cognitive theory of learning sees second language acquisition as a conscious and reasoned thinking process, involving the deliberate use of learning strategies. However, a second/foreign language and content are best acquired when students use them in real-life situations. Project-based learning offers a chance to develop various cognitive skills regarded as professional qualities facilitating their re-integration in society. It also shows that socio-affective skills are developed during project-based learning. The successful acquisition of skills such as persistence, willingness, cooperativeness, creativity and initiative, according to the present work, depends on and is linked to each learner's personal experiences, traits, needs, interests and objectives which during project-based learning are engaged but subordinated to social, cooperative objectives and expectations.

Keywords: cognitive theory, language acquisition, project-based learning (PBL), cognitive skills
Undoubtedly, our learners as 21st century students should be well equipped not only with good English language skills, but also with other necessary skills which current technological and competitive century requires.

According to Edutopia online article Why is Project-Based Learning Important? (2007), the old school model of passively learning facts and reciting them out of context is no longer sufficient to prepare students to survive in today's world. Solving highly complex problems requires that students have both fundamental skills (reading, writing, and math) and 21st century skills (teamwork, problem solving, research gathering, time management, information synthesizing, and utilizing high tech tools). With this combination of skills, students become directors and managers of their learning process, guided and mentored by a skilled teacher.

The required skills include personal and social responsibility, planning, critical thinking, reasoning, and creativity; strong communication skills, both for interpersonal and presentation needs; cross-cultural understanding, visualizing and decision-making, knowing how and when to use technology and choosing

the most appropriate tool for the task. However, we as teachers observe every day, that TV, the Internet and social media have negative effects on learners' attention and lesson concentration. Nowadays' students have deficit of full attention and concentration. They understand and remember less and they have difficulties applying their learning to new contexts. Students cannot resist multitasking, and it is impairing their memory. Luckily, PBL approach is one of the ways and solutions that can help teachers and students to achieve a high level of concentration and focus on tasks. Furthermore, it is difficult for EFL instructors to make their classes a place where effective learning takes place in an enjoyable way. Students, who sit for hours without movement often complain about classes being „boring“, especially for younger learners, who have a short attention span.

Project-based learning is an instructional method centered on the learner. Instead of using a rigid lesson plan that directs a learner down a specific path of learning outcomes or objectives, project-based learning allows in-depth investigation of a topic worth learning more about. Project-based learning places demands on learners and instructors that challenge the traditional practices and support structures of schools. Learning from doing complex, challenging, and authentic projects requires resourcefulness and planning by the student, new forms of knowledge representation in



school, expanded mechanisms for collaboration and communication, and support for reflection and authentic assessment. This method of learning functions as a bridge between using English in class and using English in real life situations outside of class. According to Stein (1995), it does this by placing learners in situations that require authentic use of language in order to communicate (e.g., being part of a team or interviewing others). When learners work in pairs or in teams, they find they need skills to plan, organise, negotiate, make their points, and arrive at a consensus about issues such as what tasks to perform, who will be responsible for each task, and how information will be researched and presented. These skills have been identified by learners as important for living successful lives. Because of the collaborative nature of project work, development of these skills occurs even among learners at low levels of language proficiency. Within the group work integral to projects, individuals' strengths and preferred ways of learning (e.g., by reading, writing, listening, or speaking) strengthen the work of the team as a whole (Lawrence, 1997).

With Project Based Learning, children learn to plan and research, ask questions, make choices within alternatives, and apply knowledge gained within their regular classes. A project is an in-depth investigation of a real-world topic worthy of children's attention and effort. Projects can be undertaken with children of any age and they do not constitute the whole educational program. Younger children will play and explore as well as engage in projects. Older children's project work will complement the systematic instruction in their program. Projects enrich young children's dramatic play, construction, painting and drawing by relating these

activities to life outside school. Project work offers older children opportunities to do first hand research in science and social studies and to represent their findings in a variety of ways. Children also have many occasions in the course of their project work to apply basic language skills and knowledge. There is more opportunity to relate home and school learning. There is concern for memorable

learning as well as memorised learning. Children are expected to work cooperatively on complex and open-ended tasks as well as follow instructions in step by step learning.

The project approach provides a way to introduce a such wide range of learning opportunities into the classroom. Once teachers feel comfortable with PBL, they usually find teaching with projects to be more fulfilling and enjoyable. PBL is a way of working with students as they discover more about themselves and the world, and that brings job satisfaction. However, in addition to strong instructional and organisational skills, PBL requires that teachers facilitate and manage the process of learning. Rather than rely on the model of the child as an empty vessel to be filled, PBL teachers must create tasks and conditions under which student thinking can be revealed– a co-creative process that involves inquiry, dialogue, and skill building as the project proceeds. Students help choose their own projects and create learning opportunities based upon their individual interests and strengths. Projects assist students in succeeding within the classroom and beyond, because they allow learners to apply multiple intelligences in completing a project they can be proud of. Our society values individuals who can solve problems creatively, using multiple strengths, so why shouldn't we encourage students to do the same? However, traditional teaching strategies tend to focus on verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligences alone. This can create frustration for people who are comfortable with less traditional learning modalities, such as kinesthetic, visual, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, or naturalist. Project based learning allows the teacher to incorporate numerous teaching and learning strategies into project planning and implementation. Assisting learners in developing all of their intelligences will make learning a part of living, not just a preparation for it. The basic phases found in most projects include selecting a topic, making plans, researching, developing products, and sharing results with others. Information gap activities,

learner-to-learner interviews, role plays, simulations, field trips, contact assignments outside of class and process writing with peers prepare learners for project work. Project work allows "life itself" to form part of the classroom and provide hundreds of opportunities for learning. Apart from the fun element, project work involves real life communicative situations and often involves multi-disciplinary skills, which can be brought from other subjects. All in all, it promotes a higher level of thinking than just learning vocabulary and structures. PBL plays an important role in developing learners' target language for real-life purposes. It helps language students become more competent in the use of the target language and promotes learners' autonomy, centeredness, motivation and integrated skill practice (Sheppard & Stoller, 1995). PBL has been described as an effective way of engaging in simultaneous acquisition of language, content and skills. It permits to use authentic language materials and improves communication skills.

Teachers report that during project-based lessons students not only enhance their language skills, but also their social communicative skills. Furthermore, PBL implementation proves its effectiveness by shifting students away

from the standard classroom monolog and dominant rote-memorization system towards modern real-life context and analytical, critical, synthesis thinking. In addition to this application. Learners not only improve English Language skills, but also more important abilities, such as: the ability to plan, start, systematically do, fulfill the task and be able to present it in a proper way. These skills will help them not only to survive, but also to go ahead confidently in this competitive and relentless 21st century.

In conclusion, the project can help students recognize their own English ability and improve English language skills in real life contexts. Moreover, with PBL implementation, students' monotone and dull school life becomes more colorful and attractive and PBL incentivizes and motivates students.

PBL provides a cross-disciplinary approach, due to which the subjects studied at school are not simply separate subjects, but the bases for dealing with problems that arise in various spheres of life. Though PBL is a part of a curriculum in Uzbekistan, its application encounters some hindrances because high school students perceive their last grade as a year of memorizing exam questions. So, the students are not motivated to be involved in time-consuming projects. It is essential that school not simply prepares students to pass exams and get a school certificate and probably become a university student, but gives an opportunity to students to have peer-work, team-work by doing projects which would assist to reduce students stress and anxiety and prepare them for solving life problems.

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