IMPROVING LEARNER AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH DRAMA-BASED PROJECT

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WHAT FUELS THE PROJECT?

+ English is vital to students’ future professional development

+ Face-to-face lessons: not enough, i.e. 60-75 sessions to upgrade 1 level (A1-A2, A2-B1)

+ Most students are not fully aware of the importance of learner autonomy
PRE-PROJECT SURVEY

- 123 students from three GE3 classes
- Semester 1, 2015-2016
- Non-English major students, ULIS, VNU Hanoi
PRE-PROJECT SURVEY

• 5% Students often take opportunities to speak English in class

• 12% admitted they never took a chance to speak English in class

• 49% rarely put forward their inquiries to the teacher

• 39% did not even bother to note down new information during the lessons
PRE-PROJECT SURVEY

• 33% think teachers are responsible for identifying students’ weaknesses in English

• 3% think they have the responsibility to ensure their progress in English lessons.

• 63% think the teacher has the responsibility to stimulate their interest in learning English

• 29% actually took part in self study activities
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• Will a drama-based project engage more active interaction and involvement of students in the English learning process?

• Will a drama-based project enhance students’ learner autonomy?
1. Learner autonomy

• Nature of learner autonomy

✓ “ability to take charge of their own learning” (Holec, 1981)
✓ Learners deal with all aspects of their learning in-class environments and expanded to out-of-class settings.
✓ Learners not only work independently but in cooperation with one another → individualistic and interpersonal nature (Little, 2007; Stracke, 2012)
1. Learner autonomy

• Methods of promoting learner autonomy

✓ Language portfolio (Roman & Soriano, 2015)
✓ learner diaries, vocabulary notebooks (Razeq, 2015)
✓ students-activating assessment methods such as self-assessment or peer feedback (Edwards, 2013)
✓ technological advancements (Hafner & Miller, 2011)

→ make facilitative conditions in place:
  o equip learners with learning skills
  o supply them with learning resources
  o give chances to reflect on their own learning
LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Project-based learning

- Are conducive to learner autonomy

  ✓ exposes learners to real life problems and requires them to act independently and in cooperation with others over a period of time to solve problems

  ✓ proud of what they have done $\rightarrow$ feel more ownership for their learning. This remarkably contributes to enhance their intrinsic motivation toward learning
3. Drama in ELT

a story-based activity involving people in a social context where they have to use language to interact with each other, of which focus is not the performance but the use of the English language.
Benefits of using drama in ELT
Benefits of using drama in ELT

- involve more communication
- suitable social contexts to use new words or structures effectively (Wilga Rivers (1983))
- fun and memorable learning experience that enhances learners’ imagination and independent thinking (McCaslin 1996)
METHODOLOGY

1. Participants
   ✓ three classes General English 3 (GE3)
   ✓ N=123
   ✓ Level A2-B1

2. Procedures
   • Data collection tools
     • pre-project survey questionnaires, project conduction and post-project survey questionnaires
       • first survey: students’ awareness of responsibility and autonomy, habits and confidence in self-study activities
       • second survey: the effectiveness of the drama project in improving students’ autonomy.
     • unofficial observation and interviews.
   • Project: group of 4 or 5 students, 15 weeks: read a short story, write a drama script for it, and perform it.
3. Two cycles

• **Plan – action 1**
  
  • *Plan*: the teacher prepared drama scripts and students worked in group and acted out the script
  
  • *Reflection*: students were not confident with their acting, reluctant to the drama-project, only speaking could be evaluated
METHODOLOGY

• Plan – action 2

  a. Stories
  • ten stories (suitability of the language (pre-intermediate), length (300-400 words) and their subject matters).

  b. Reading
  • kept a reading journal
  • transcribed from the narrative text into dialogues

  c. Writing
  • worked together to write the script for their plays, transcribed from the narrative text into dialogues

  d. Performing
  • group performed their mini-drama to the rest of the class. Main assessments: peer- and teacher-assessment.
# METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Group</td>
<td>- Get students grouped</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Be introduced the story list</td>
<td>- Introduce the story list</td>
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<td>- Get familiar with drama-based activities</td>
<td>- Get the students familiar with</td>
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<tr>
<td>and assessment criteria</td>
<td>drama-based activities and assessment</td>
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<td>criteria</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Read all the stories</td>
<td>Instruct the students to write scripts</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Practise writing scripts</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Read all the stories</td>
<td>Instruct the students to practice drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Practice drama rehearsal</td>
<td>rehearsal</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Practise writing scripts</td>
<td>Instruct the students to write scripts and</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Practice drama rehearsal</td>
<td>rehearse the scripts</td>
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<td><strong>Weeks 6 – 11</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Groups decided on the story, reread the</td>
<td>Instruct the groups to choose the story,</td>
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<td>story and wrote the script for the story</td>
<td>make up scenes and write the script</td>
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# METHODOLOGY

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<th>Week 12</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Submit the script for comment</td>
<td>Comment on groups’ scripts.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Submit the script for evaluation – Rehearse the drama</td>
<td>- Evaluate the groups’ scripts. - Comment on students’ rehearsal</td>
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<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
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<td></td>
<td>- Perform in class - Comment and assess other performances.</td>
<td>Comment and evaluate other performances.</td>
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FINDINGS

• PRE-PROJECT SURVEY
  + 5% often take opportunities to speak English
  + 2% collect texts in English
  + 2% meet the teacher about their work

• POST-PROJECT SURVEY
  + 55% often take opportunities to speak English
  + 15% collect texts in English
  + 20% meet the teacher about their work
FINDINGS

• Students’ interaction and involvement in the language learning process has been remarkably improved.
FINDINGS

• students’ self-study willingness and intrinsic motivation are enhanced:
  + no longer reluctant to speak English when working in pairs or in groups
  + fully aware of the importance of the learner autonomy in language learning
  + worked out some ways to self study outside the classroom
FINDINGS

• Drama activity helped improve students’ four language skills while still having fun. The collaborative skills and stage skills were also strengthened.
**Conclusion**

- The project tightened the relationship between the students and the teachers; increased the instructiveness rate as well as raised their involvement in the class activities.
- The drama project has enhanced students’ self-study willingness and their intrinsic motivation in learning English.
- It has improved the participants’ autonomy.
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REFERENCES

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- Gedfrey, Tom (2010). Drama in English Language Teaching: A whole person learning approach. online
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION