

# 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?



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 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:**
  - equip learners with learning skills
  - supply them with learning resources
  - 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 → feel more ownership for their learning. This remarkably contributes to enhance their intrinsic motivation toward learning

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 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*

- ✓ 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.



# METHODOLOGY

## 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



	Students	Teacher
<b>Week 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Group</li><li>- Be introduced the story list</li><li>- Get familiar with drama-based activities and assessment criteria</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Get students grouped</li><li>- Introduce the story list</li><li>- Get the students familiar with drama-based activities and assessment criteria</li></ul>
<b>Week 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Read all the stories</li><li>- Practise writing scripts</li></ul>	Instruct the students to write scripts
<b>Week 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Read all the stories</li><li>- Practice drama rehearsal</li></ul>	Instruct the students to practice drama rehearsal
<b>Week 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Practise writing scripts</li><li>- Practice drama rehearsal</li></ul>	Instruct the students to write scripts and rehearse the scripts
<b>Weeks 6 – 11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Groups decided on the story, reread the story and wrote the script for the story</li></ul>	Instruct the groups to choose the story, make up scenes and write the script

# METHODOLOGY



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

# 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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# Q&A

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SESSION

A purple rectangular tag with a hole on the left side is the central focus. It is surrounded by three white daisies with yellow centers. The tag and flowers are placed on a light-colored wooden surface. A piece of light-colored twine is looped around the tag and one of the flowers.

Thank  
you!