

An approach to foster language learner autonomy in a Vietnamese EFL classroom

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Background

Challenges

- Internationalisation for Vietnamese higher education
- Students' **limited ability** to communicate or use English in their study or at work after years of study at tertiary level (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2008).
- English teachers:
 - + society's need for improving learner autonomy and practical communicative skills
 - + pressure to prepare students for final examinations at the university

Causes of challenges

- Out-dated curriculum and teaching methods
(Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2012)

Responses to challenges

- Employing **credit-based curriculum**: putting learners at the centre of the teaching and learning process
- Revising **teaching methods**: developing the positiveness, self-awareness, activeness, creativity and self-study ability of learners
- Implementing new compulsory English programs to meet the **outcomes of level 3** (6 level CEFR) for non-English major undergraduates.

Aims of the Study

- to stimulate autonomous practices among EFL learners in Vietnam.

Research Questions

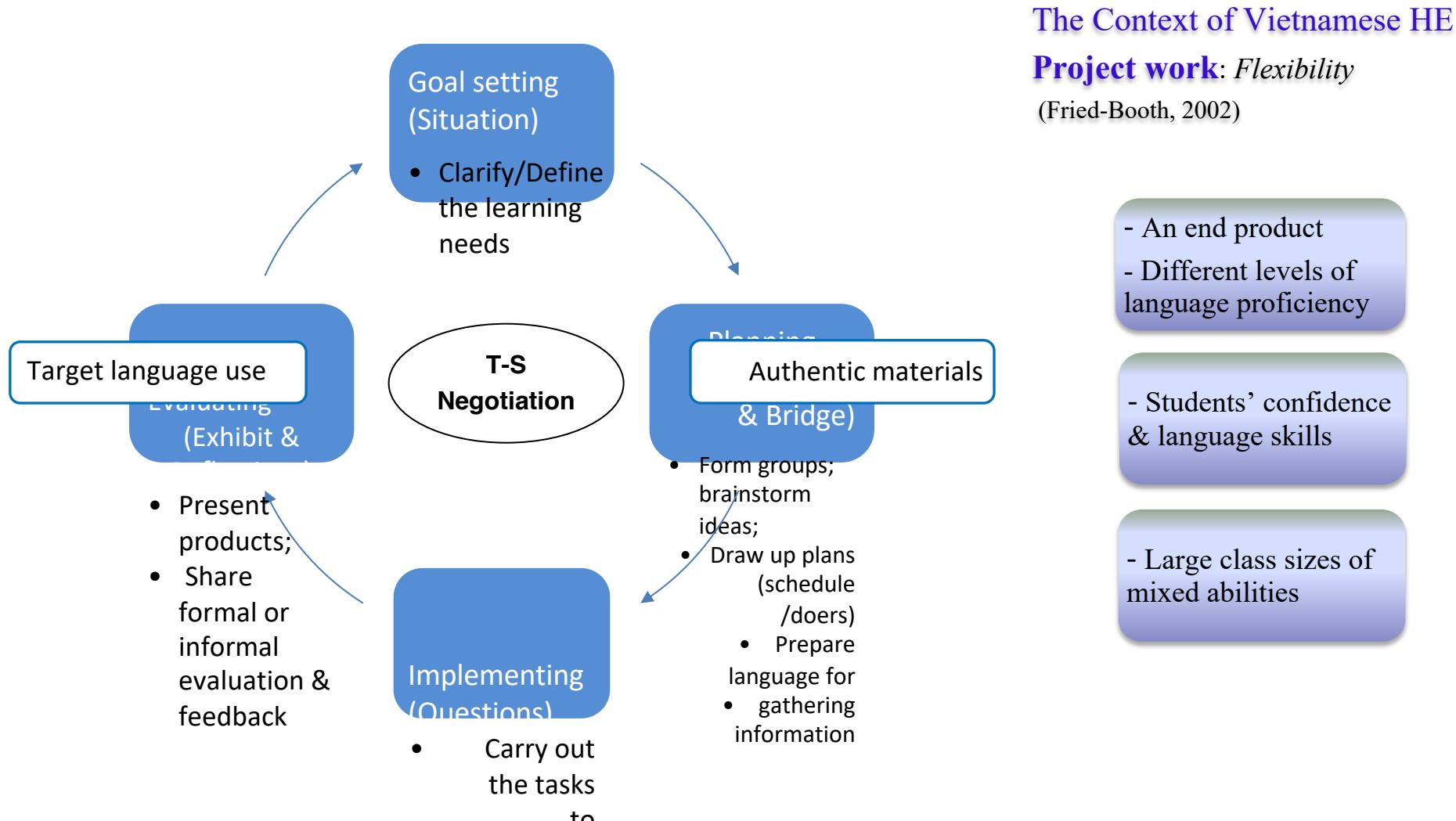
1. What are participants' reflections on their current English learning and how does it impact on LA?
2. What could be suggestions for the utilisation of project work to enhance LA?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Language learner autonomy: *the learner's attitude and ability to take responsibility for his or her own learning in the target language.*

Project work: A Pedagogic Model for Language Learner Autonomy

from The Constructivist Theory adapted from Gagnon and Collay (2001)



Research Process

The Project work adapted from Fried-Booth (2002)

Topic: Going out (*Describing places in the existing syllabus – researching a particular place of tourism interest – oral presentation/ guidebook*)

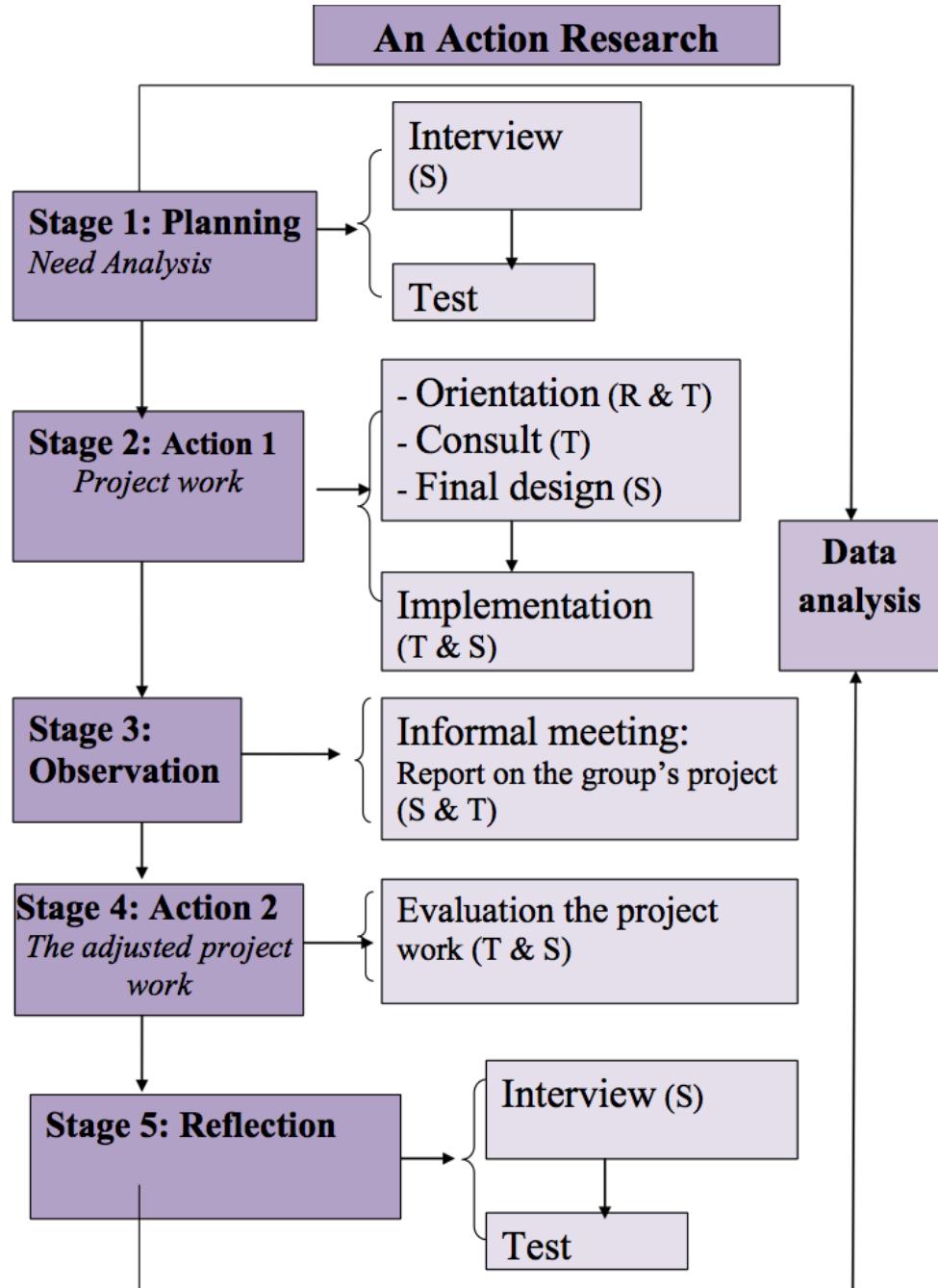
Attitude: Responsibility

Ability: Goal setting, Planning, Implementing, & Evaluating

Language: English

Materials: Real objects, photos, or videos

Teacher: Facilitator



The research site

A Vietnamese University

Ss characteristics:

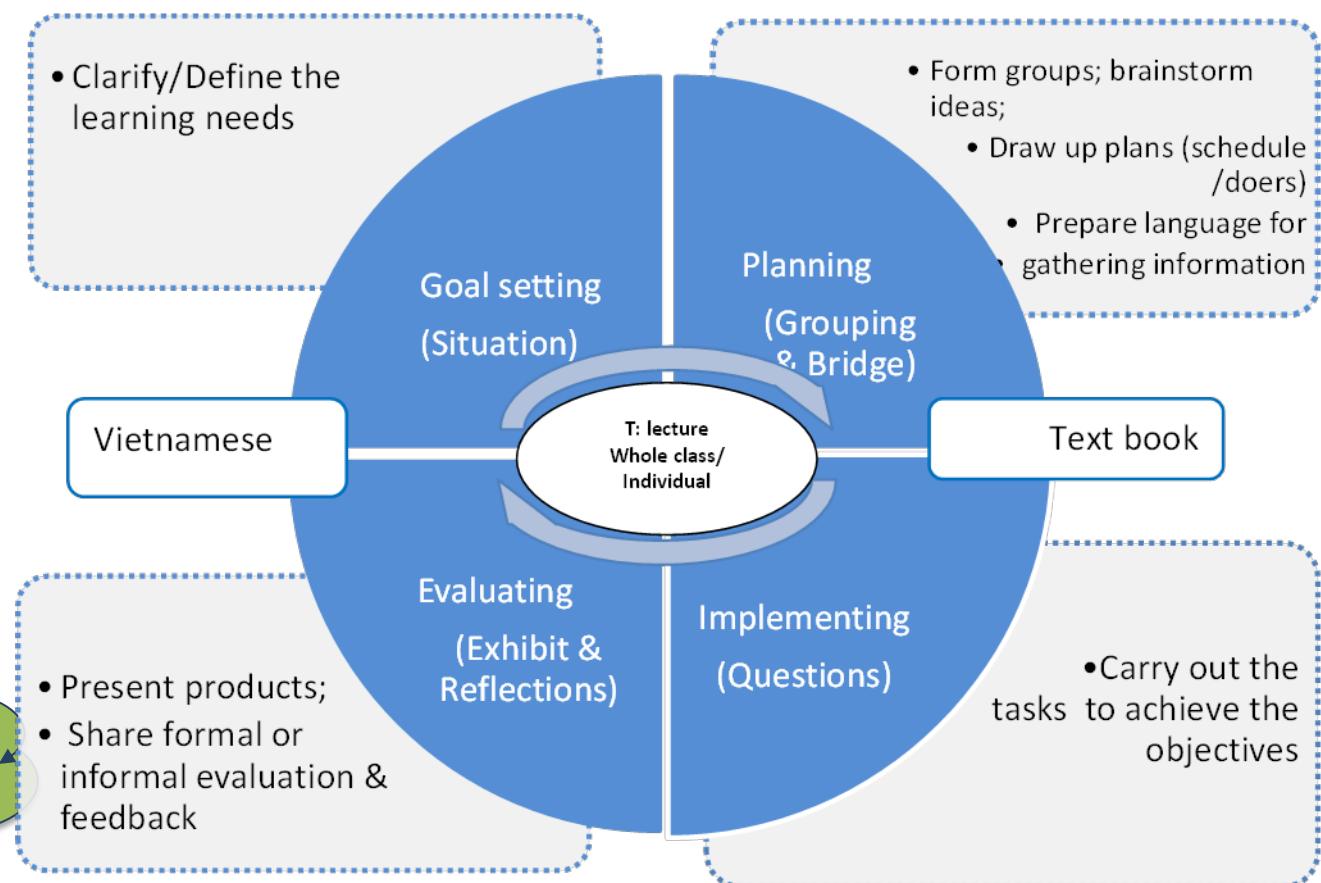
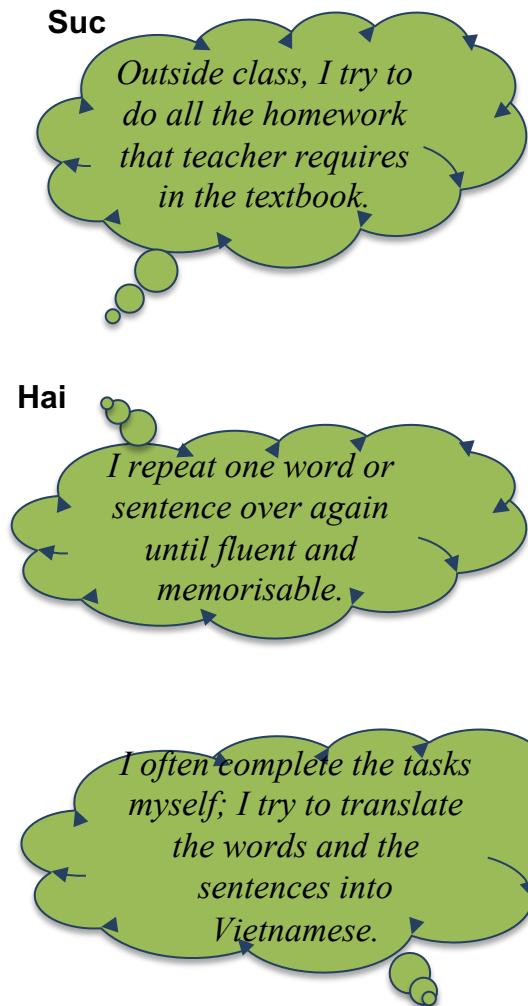
- **Attitude**: Awareness + WTC: high level
(Commanded/ obedient)
- **Ability**: sound level

The second year EFL class

Teacher's teaching experience	9 years
Number of students	26
Number of student volunteers	5
English courses	General English (Pre-intermediate)

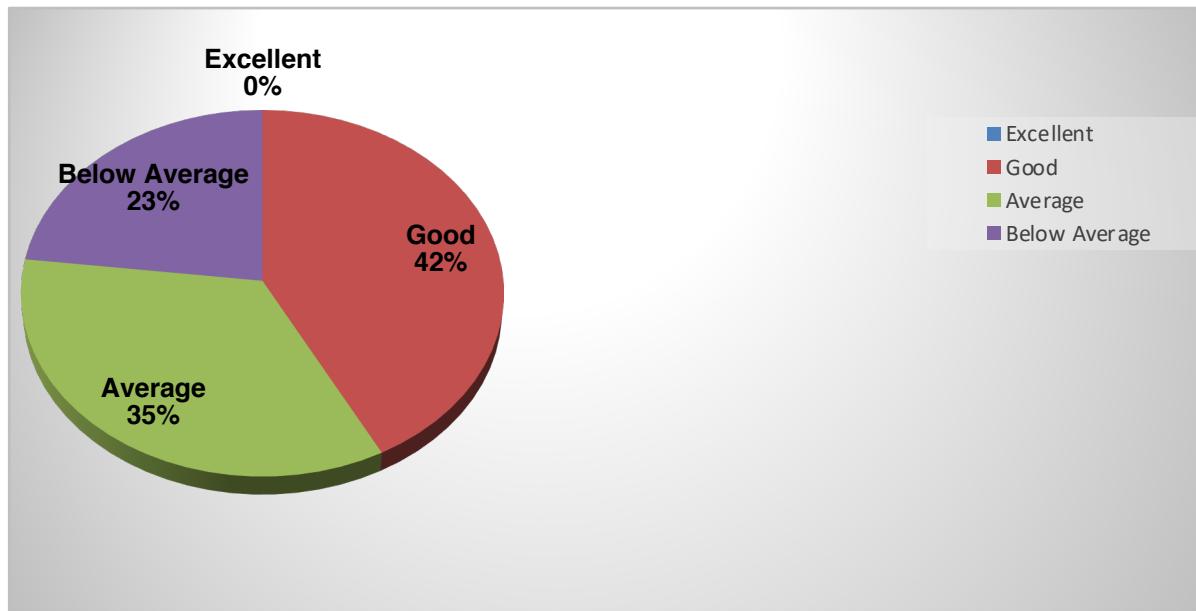
Main findings & discussion points

The Ss experience of English learning (Interview)



In class: whole class/ individual work - T's lecture, textbook
Outside: alone - homework, vocabulary, grammar, translation >>> How to be more communicative

The Ss current English learning (Test)



Discussion points

- Traditional pedagogy impacted on English learning in the class under study: teacher dominance, textbook based learning, student shortage of ability to take charge of their own learning, high frequency use of mother tongue
- Participants' expectations of more interactive, communicative and independent learning
- Expectations align with project work development.
- An attempt to support teachers as learners

The Project work

Attitude:

- ✓ Be motivated to join the project
- ✓ Display attitudes of responsibility

Elements	Defining Activities/ Tasks	Action 1		Action 2	
		T	Ss	T	Ss
Goal setting	Agree on the themes	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Determine final outcomes				✓
Planning	Structure the project/ Brainstorm ideas			✓	✓
	Prepare language for gathering information			✓	✓
Implementing	Draw up plans for group members			✓	✓
	Gather information			✓	✓
	Prepare language for compiling & analysing data				
	Compile & Analyse data			✓	✓
Evaluating	Prepare language for presentation			✓	✓
	Present products				✓
	Share evaluation			✓	✓
Target Language Use	Interact in the TL (organising language activities, giving explanation or asking for clarification)	Vie	Vie	Eng& Vie	Eng& Vie
	Access & explore information through the TL			✓	✓
Authentic materials	Use raw or primary sources (real objects, photos, maps or videos)	✓		✓	✓
Groupings	Form groups			✓	✓

Main findings & Discussion points

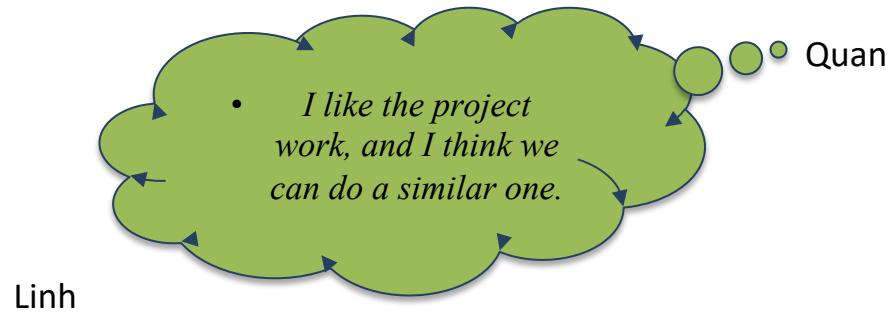
Students' learning achievements following the project work (Interview)

- **Learning attitude:** like the project and want more opportunities
- **Ability:** setting goals, planning & implementing tasks, reflecting on task completion

Khoa

- *Doing the project work, I find that I use English more often.*

>>> The alignment between learning preferences and project work development.

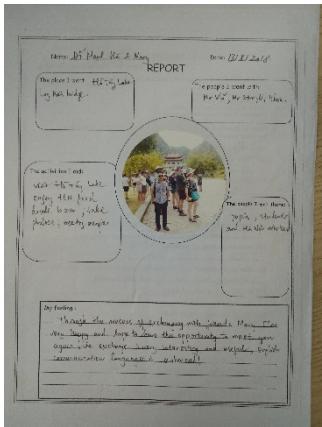
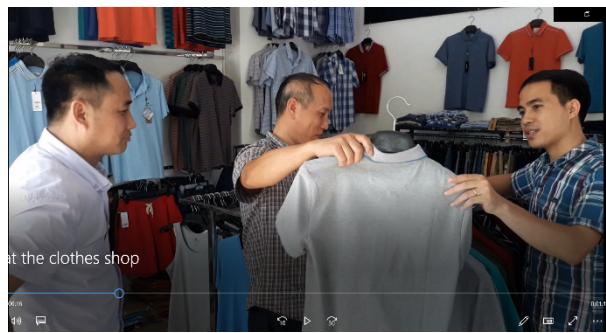


- *I want to work in groups like this; I believe that my English will improve better if we learn in this way.*

Quan

- *I like searching for the information to fulfill the work with my friends.*

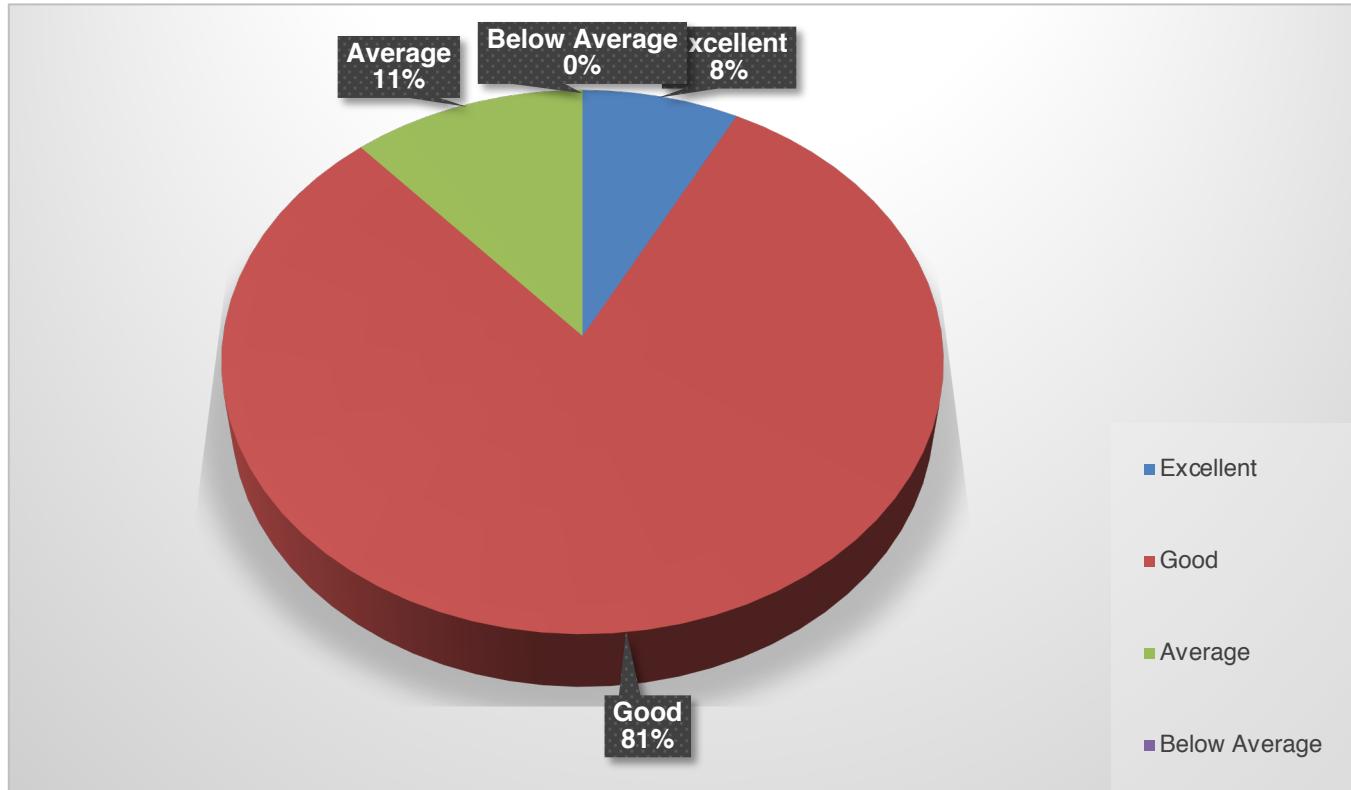
Hao



Some images of students' end products

Main findings & Discussion points

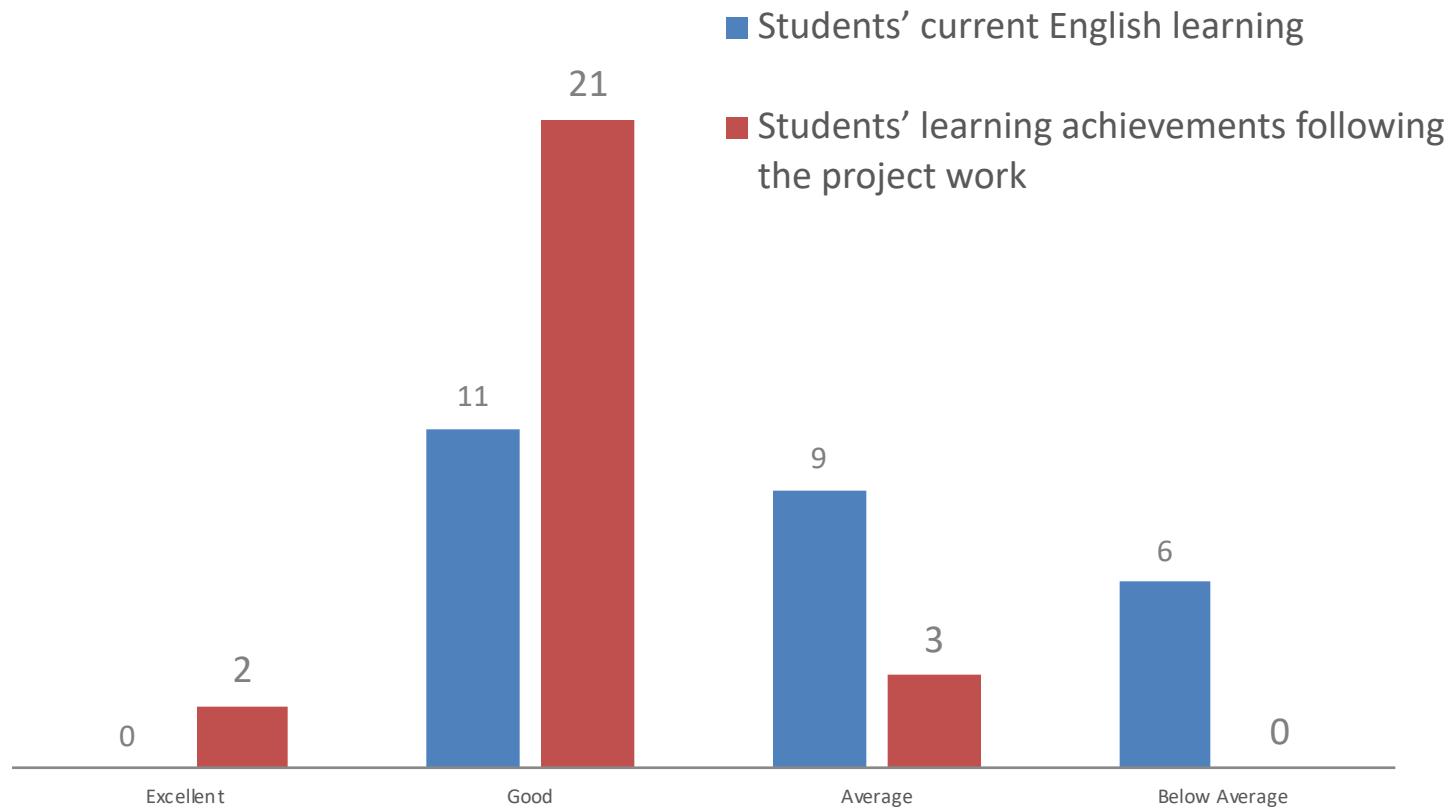
Students' learning achievements following the project work (Test)



Ss English proficiency improvement

Main findings & Discussion points

Students' current English learning vs Students' learning achievements following the project work



>>> LA and language proficiency relation

Implications for further research

- ✓ Further similar studies in LA in other disciplines.
- ✓ Investigating (1) how to make use of authentic materials, and (2) how to make appropriate use of the mother tongue to support the use of TL in EFL education.
- ✓ Exploring how to use peer assessment exercises effectively in order to reduce the worries about less competent students.
- ✓ Evaluating the effectiveness of longer periods of project work in both the acquisition of language and the skills of LA.
- ✓ Exploring the application of project work in other disciplines.

Thank you!
Q & A