

ELT NOTES

Project-Based Learning (PBL): Learning by doing, learning for life.

For many years now, we have adopted Project-based Learning (PBL) in the adult programs, as an approach to make teaching and learning more meaningful, purposeful and memorable. More recently, in the Kids and Teens Program, we have started to transition from Task-based Learning (TBL) to PBL to favor timing and better integration of all the aspects we consider necessary in our classes, apart from the academic content.

This initiative started a few years ago in the B2 block of KTP courses and yielded extremely positive results, especially regarding student motivation and engagement, oral skills development, and collaborative skills. PBL has now been included in the curriculum of all the blocks of T courses and will be introduced gradually in PT and K courses.

At the CCA, we view PBL as the frame in which purposeful communication takes place. It gives learners the context and motivation to use the language and skills learned to reach a goal cooperatively.

The implementation of PBL in the curriculum does not only respond to our interest in innovating or giving our classes a differential value. We have also proven it to have multiple advantages for the students' learning process.

What really is PBL?



PBL is believed to have originated in the early 1980s from John Dewey's idea that education is life itself and, therefore, we learn most effectively by doing (1987).

So, PBL is essentially based on the concept of practical learning, which makes it a highly meaningful approach since it involves first-hand experience of creation, collaborative action and practice of social skills and moral concepts.

PBL Defined

PBL can be considered a constructivist teaching strategy that involves exploration of knowledge as students work on a project over an extended period of time (Buck Institute for Education, 2017). It can also be viewed purely as teaching based on improving an idea, imagination, planning and editing (Duman & Kuuk, 2018). Miller (2016) goes as far as to suggest that PBL is a teaching strategy that offers English language learners the same opportunity as the native speakers to interact in authentic communicative situations.

The Buck Institute for education also proposes the seven essential project design element model, which can be considered a set of criteria for maximized use of PBL in the English classroom:





The Benefits of PBL in a nutshell

Just to summarize some of the benefits of PBL in EFL classes, we can say it is student-centered; involves collaboration amongst the class members; facilitates the development of all the skills involved in language proficiency through practical communication; fosters meaningful learning through independent exploration and reflection; capitalizes on both the process and the product; and promotes the development of life skills and 21st Century skills learners will find useful in authentic contexts. Examples of those skills are creativity; critical thinking; media, information and technological literacy; problem-solving; decision making; argumentation; relationship skills; self-awareness; social awareness; among others.

Steps of the PBL Process

For the practical application of PBL in the particular context of our programs at the CCA, we propose the following process:

1. **Preparation:** The teacher introduces the project and topic to the students and asks them to discuss and ask questions. There is also a space for reflection about expectations and potential benefits of project work.
2. **Planning:** The teacher and the students determine the timeline, objectives, expected outcomes, roles, type of information to collect, format of the outcome and the final presentation, criteria, and types of assessment to be implemented, among other aspects teachers may consider necessary.
3. **Research:** In this part, the students work individually or in groups to gather information from different sources.

4. **Development:** Students compile and analyze the information and develop the project whether it is about solving a problem, creating a digital outcome, creating a new product, writing a paper, launching a campaign, etc. This may take more than one class.

5. **Planning of the presentation:** Teams plan and rehearse for the presentation.

6. **Presentation:** Students are supposed to present their final product to the whole class.

7. **Assessment:** Although assessment, feedback and guidance should take place at various moments during the development of the project, it is necessary to have a final moment to assess the process, the product, learning of academic contents, learning of the subject matter, development of other skills, collaboration, attitudes, among others.

Additional Tips and Recommendations

- Formally present the project: timeline, objectives, context, steps, expectations in terms of collaboration, attitude, roles, use of L1 and outcomes. Most importantly, motivate students and promote reflection about the benefits of actively participating in project work.
- Clearly establish the assessment process, criteria, and modalities.
- Bear in mind that, as mentioned above, the project requires students to work on it over an extended period and developed in steps, at various stages.
- Encourage and guide students to explore technological tools, develop and reinforce digital literacy, do research and be as creative as possible.

Pilar Bravo

What else is news?

-Have you visited our official curricular website? You can find direct access to the syllabi of all of the programs, additional teachers' resources, institutional statements for PBL, motivation, assessment and a lot more: <https://www.colomboenglishonline.com/>
Password: curriculum2022

-Learn more about upcoming curricular design projects [here](#).

-Did you know we have a very complete bank of ideas for effective feedback and feedforward? Check [this](#) out.

-This [mapping of the ODF platform activities](#) will facilitate your assigning them.