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Project-based learning

- Creativity ■ Storytelling ■ Teaching refugees ■ Gratitude ■ Questioning
- Small groups ■ Collaboration ■ Instructional discourse ■ Culture ■ Projects
- Edmund Dudley ■ Alison Shepherd ■ Sachiko Nakamura ■ Daniela Prataviera
- Fatima Taha ■ Andrew Boon ■ Alba Gallardo ■ Mark Trevarton ■ Jeffrey Wilang



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Thinking, researching and presenting

Edmund Dudley offers some ideas for integrating projects.



Project lessons with teenagers are a bit like workout sessions – you have to commit. We are all aware of how beneficial it can be to bring something fresh, authentic and student-centred to the classroom, and yet at the same time, preparing such classes can feel like a lot of hard work. It is hardly surprising that overworked teachers are reluctant to ‘lift extra weights’ in order to prepare bespoke classes when everything is set up so nicely in the coursebook. Then again, have you ever noticed that the best workouts turn out to be the ones you were least in the mood for?

The good news is that a successful project lesson does not always require huge amounts of extra legwork. By bearing in mind our students’

preferences, it’s usually possible to come up with project topics that work.

Project lessons provide a natural way of activating language and putting it to use in meaningful ways. A classroom project can extend and personalise topics covered in class, combining both individual work and work done in small groups to help students consolidate their learning, improve their interpersonal skills and express their own ideas and opinions.

Naturally, project work is best suited to teaching situations where there is a certain amount of flexibility regarding the syllabus: project activities usually involve closing the coursebook, so it is important to be sure that you have enough time

at your disposal to fit projects into your schedule without having to cut corners elsewhere as a result.

Ultimately, project work can be extremely motivating for teenage students: it can also help to develop other important learning skills. It allows students to think, research and present their ideas. Furthermore, by promoting independent language activation and collaborative working methods, it can have a positive impact on the learning environment of the classroom.

Here are ten ideas for project-based lessons with teenage students, taken from my recently published resource book, *Speedy Teenagers* (Pavilion Publishing, 2015).

Project-based learning – A Fundraising Experience

Farrah Jin, Vivian Lang and **Jin Yoon** describe a recent project carried out with adult learners.

Background information

The institution: Wintec

As one of the key Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics in New Zealand, Wintec is a government-owned tertiary education provider. In early 2018, AKO, a new approach of teaching and learning was introduced to promote shared leadership between teacher and learner to enhance positive learning experiences. Together with inclusive practices, work-integrated learning, blended learning and flipped classroom, project-based learning has been adopted as one of the five approaches to implement AKO principles.

The programme:

New Zealand Certificate in English Language Level 2 (NZCEL Level 2)

NZCEL Level 2 is a qualification accredited by New Zealand Qualifications Authority and is one of the language programmes that Centre for Languages at Wintec offers. The programme is intended to help learners who do not speak English as their first language to improve their language skills so that they can be effective communicators in everyday situations. Students who successfully complete the programme are expected to be able to manage familiar topics with some independence. Because the level is roughly equivalent to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B1, *Empower B1* has been chosen as the textbook for this course.

The students

There is normally a wide range of students at our centre and in the current semester, among the 63 enrolled in the NZCEL Level 2 programme, there are 37 domestic students (i.e. second language speakers who are NZ permanent residents), while 26 are international. Around one third of the domestic students are from refugee backgrounds, who have minimal previous education. On the other hand, some other domestic students completed degree level study in their home countries. The youngest learner is 16, while the oldest is 64, with the length of residency ranging from just several weeks to over 10 years.

The project

We realised early on that one of the things lacking in the programme was an opportunity to use students' own knowledge and skills in a meaningful, extended communicative activity. Therefore, during the semester break, we decided to include a number of projects in the students' portfolio. Topics were selected to match those in the textbook used at the level, i.e. *Empower B1* and *A Fundraising Experience*, the first project in the semester, was developed to go with Unit 3 Money (*Empower B1*) as it has a focus on charity and generosity.

Purpose of the project

The general purpose of the project is to provide an opportunity for students to:

- research a charity organisation and organise a fundraising event
- collaborate with each other and allow them to use their different talents and skills
- take responsibility of their own learning, for example deciding which charity organisation to choose and what they need to prepare to gain more support and thus raise more funds, etc.

Language learning that happens in the project includes:

- listening and reading for gist and specific information
- learning charity and fundraising vocabulary
- numeracy: discussing budget; recording expenses; counting money collected and calculating net amount of funds raised
- giving an oral presentation on the fundraising experience
- writing a narrative about the fundraising experience

By accomplishing the assessed tasks in the project, students are also seen as demonstrating evidence to achieve the following NZCEL Level 2 learning outcomes (LOs):

Speaking

LO3: Give short presentations about events, daily routines step-by-step