

TEACHER'S ROLE IN ORGANIZING PROJECT-BASED CLASSES

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Abstract. The article deals with the role of a teacher in organizing project-based classes. Different roles of a teacher is analyzed by the author, taking into account the scholars' opinions and ideas.

Key words: project-based classes, initiator, organizer, evaluator, facilitate, encouragement, learning environment

I have been working as an English teacher at the secondary school for several years and I often use projects to enrich my teaching English. At the lessons my pupils usually make projects which I consider useful for practicing the language knowledge in a real context, especially those projects, in which the pupils can cooperate with other people outside the classroom. I try to create conditions for my pupils to be able to use what they have learnt in English lessons in their lives.

Having experienced an amount of project-based classes I have found out several points which should be taken into account in organizing this kind of lessons. First of all, I think projects should be driven by their content, so the learners can relate abstract conceptions to real-life situations. Second, the tasks should be complicated but manageable to our learners, otherwise they make our learners feel frustrated than motivated which impedes the learning success. Real choices should be given to learners so that they can learn to take on some responsibility and also they are involved in the decision making process, which is often helpful for a positive learning atmosphere. Furthermore, learners' interests in and curiosity for the projects can help to create a positive learning environment and it supports their learning success.

The fifth point we are paying a great attention to is the teacher. Although the responsibility for project work is given to the learners, a teacher's role is not insignificant. The teacher's role in education is always complex, regardless of the subject matter or the age of the students. In general, the main focus is to help

learners understand what they already know more deeply and accurately while strengthening their dispositions to continue learning throughout life. Project work provides a context in which the teacher can encourage learners to apply their growing academic skills in purposeful ways. The teacher has an important part to play in the initiation, implementation, and culmination of projects. It is the teacher, who is most likely to be responsible for the constellation of groups, should keep the pupils' strengths and weaknesses in mind when forming the groups, in order to ensure a good group and work dynamic. In the project, the teacher is acting as advisor (or consultant) and coordinator. Making a project the teacher plans and organizes it well and he makes the learners to take the responsibility for the end product. Haines gives the teacher the following roles:

1) Initiator of the project: the teacher decides when it is the suitable time for a project and how long it should last. Then he should also introduce a broad discussion topic which may develop naturally into a project. On these occasions the teacher can take on the role of an objective chairperson". [3; 14] Initially, the teacher must determine the appropriateness of the topic to be investigated. Projects are productive and enlightening if the topic under investigation is interesting to most of the learners. To achieve this, the teacher can benefit greatly from listening to learners' spontaneous discussions, observing their activities that often reveal their interests, and probing their thoughts. In addition, the teacher should make sure that many aspects of the topic are directly observable by the learners. Once the teacher has identified a topic of potential interest to the children, he can engage them in creating a topic web or list of related sub-topics. This process helps the learners become aware of a wide range of options that could be included in the investigation of a topic. The teacher facilitates the forming of small groups of learners to investigate particular sub-topics that interest them. Forming small groups requires careful thinking by the teacher; the children must work well together and the group should include a range of abilities.

2) organizer of the project: The success of project work depends on planning and organization that pupils and a teacher deal with together. If a good timetable of the project is established, it helps to avoid the chaos and similar problems. During the project the teacher is an advisor being prepared to advice and help if the learners ask for it; a referee who is assisting to solve out arguments and differences of opinion; a chairperson, who should be objective, when from time to time groups will report their activities to the whole class. As the investigation proceeds, the teacher monitors the progress of each group and the whole class. The teacher can also remind the pupils of their earlier discussions about the progress of the project. He may encourage the small groups to share their findings with the entire class when he judges their progress to be of potential interest to their classmates. In many cases the teacher meets with the small group before their presentation to the whole class to rehearse with them how best to present their work to their classmates.

When the project is coming to its end, the teacher becomes “an organizer being actively involved in the organization of displays, the final production of written reports, etc.” [2;11].

3) evaluator: the teacher encourages the learners „to evaluate the project work process for themselves“ and he should be prepared to comment honestly on what the students have reached”. [4; 81] Projects in English classes need to be marked. Main criteria for marking projects are in accuracy in language and content, the quality and quantity of the performance, i.e. free speech, visual aids, written contributions or even acted contributions to the project presentations. Also it is necessary for the teacher to set up project standards which are supposed to be met, so teacher can measure the learning progress of the students and mark it accordingly. If teacher points these standards out to his students, they also know what to expect and deal with it and it might be easier for them to understand the grades they get.

Larsen defines the role of a teacher in project work as “a good chairman of a public meeting” standing in the background and without imposing his will upon students’ work is able to give the occasional suggestion, the judicious guidance, which kept things going in a certain general direction”. [1; 69]

Fried-Booth [2; 9] argue that the teacher motivates the pupils for the project and supervise their work by giving advice, suggesting and evaluating their ideas but they both emphasize that the project work is the pupil-centred activity and the teacher gives the space for pupils’ work and he does not influence it expressively.

The teacher is also essential to building a classroom culture of mutual assistance among the children. She may suggest to a child who is having some difficulties creating a cardboard construction representation that a particular classmate might be able to help because he or she has done similar things recently.

References:

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