

## Project Method: Learning by Doing

*I hear and I forget.  
I see and I remember.  
I do and I understand.*

*Confucius*

This paper considers the necessity of introducing innovative motivating methods in teaching foreign languages for increasing the activity and interest of students. The main goal is to make learning not only effective but also interesting, to involve students more actively and intensively in the learning process, to make them its main and active participants. The effectiveness of each method is conditioned first of all by explosion of motivation, by increased interest in the subject: this is the most important component of the learning process. This article reveals the importance of practicing the method of projects in teaching grammar and vocabulary of a foreign language.

**Keywords:** project method, person-centered approach, motivation, communicative competence.

Recently, more and more frequently, teachers are complaining about the unwillingness of students to study. A student who “ought to make a conscious choice of his future profession” is often not seeking to acquire knowledge. The main problem is the fact that there is no motivation to study. Otherwise, the higher the motivation of the student, the deeper his desire to study.

Modern psychologists and teachers are unanimous that the quality of the work and its result depend primarily on the motivation and the needs of the person; in fact, it is the motivation that causes a purposeful activity, determines the choice of means and methods to achieve the goal. The motivation is therefore “the launching mechanism” of any human activity: whether it is work, communication, or knowledge.

Within the framework of psychology and the method of teaching foreign languages great attention is devoted to the issue of increasing the motivation, as well as developing and maintaining students’ interest in the subject “Aforeign language”.

According to psychological researches of motivation and interest in studying foreign languages a teacher’s efforts should be directed to the development of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of a student, which is conditioned by the activity itself, and is considered the greatest impelling force. To be motivated means to be moved to do something (Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci). When a student is engaged in studying a language thanks to

the activity itself, when he or she likes speaking, reading and listening to a foreign speech and learning new things, only in this case one can say the student is deeply interested in the subject, and the necessary conditions are provided to achieve certain success.

Currently, teachers pay attention to the principle of the person-centered approach when an individual, i.e. a student, is in the center of attention (I. S. Yakimanskaya). The pedagogical technology of this approach includes the method of projects, as well as cooperative learning, non-traditional forms of lessons and the communicative approach in teaching foreign languages.

The idea of teaching in collaboration arose at the beginning of the century in the works of American educators–researchers: Parkhurst H. (the Dalton Plan), and Kilpatrick W. H. in his essay “The Project Method”, which became known worldwide (Kilpatrick, 1918).

Kilpatrick based his project concept on Dewey’s theory of experience (Knoll M; Pecore John L.), according to which children were to acquire experience and knowledge by solving practical problems in social situations. Kilpatrick was also influenced by Edward L. Thorndike’s psychology of learning. As a result of this Kilpatrick concluded that the “psychology of a child” was the crucial element in the learning process. Children had to be able to decide freely what they wanted to do; the belief was that their motivation and learning success would increase to the extent to which they pursued their own “purposes”.

The innovators say that project learning significantly increases the motivation of the learner. Accordingly, foreign language teachers adopted the project method, as its goals and objectives are closely connected with the goals and objectives of the communicative approach where the concepts of “activeness” and “activity” are the major ones. The person-centered approach, the method of co-operation, the method of projects – all these techniques help to solve the problem of motivation, to inspire students to learn a foreign language, to open their hidden potential abilities for them to acquire a new language with enthusiasm.

The method of project or project-based learning is an integrated teaching method that allows to personalize the learning process; it enables students to display autonomy in planning, organizing and controlling their activities.

From the view point of a student the project is:

- an opportunity to do something interesting *alone, or in a group*, making the most of one’s capabilities,
- an activity that allows *to show oneself, to try one’s hand, to apply knowledge, to benefit and to show in public the result achieved*,
- an activity aimed at solving *an interesting problem*, which, in its turn, is *formulated by students themselves* in the form of goals and objectives. The result of this activity, i.e. the discovered means of solving this problem, is practical, and it is interesting and meaningful for the discoverers.

Thus, the project method is described as:

- person-centered;
- learning by doing;
- cooperative learning;
- problem-based learning;
- means of developing skills of self-expression, self-manifestation, self-presentation;
- means of creating life skills in mental, practical and volitional spheres;
- cultivating purposefulness, tolerance, individualism and collectivism, responsibility, as well as initiative and creative approach to the work.

The main purpose of project-based foreign language teaching is the possibility for students to obtain communicative competence, which is practical mastery of a foreign language. For students to raise their communicative competence without the real language environment, it is not enough to fill the lesson with relatively communicative activities. The main idea of this approach in foreign language teaching is to move the accent from different exercises to the real active process of thinking, which will let students acquire some linguistic skills. The method of projects will perfectly help to solve this didactic problem, to turn the foreign language lessons into a discussion club, where students think over real, interesting, practically valuable and accessible problems, taking into consideration the cultural peculiarities of the country and, if possible, working on the basis of interaction between cultures.

Hence, the concept of communicative competence includes:

- speech competence – creating the possibility of manifestation of high-level communicative skills in all kinds of speech activities: listening, speaking, writing, reading;
- linguistic competence – students' mastering vocabulary as an essential basis for creation of speech abilities;
- socio-cultural competence – acquisition of knowledge about the culture of the countries of the target language.
- methodical competence – is manifested in the ability to work autonomously with different sources of information, to choose autonomously the necessary information in various branches of knowledge.

There are different classifications of projects. One of them was presented by E.S Polat, who offers five basic criteria according to which the main types of projects are distinguished:

1. according to the type of activity dominating in the project: research project, creative project, role-play project, information project, practice-oriented project.

2. according to the subjects involved in the project: mono project (within one subject, one field of knowledge), interdisciplinary project.

3. according to the nature of the contacts: internal or regional, international projects.

4. according to the number of participants in the project: individual, pair, group projects.

5. according to the duration of the project: short-term, average length, long-term projects.

6. according to the results:

- a report, an album, a collection, a catalog, an almanac;
- a layout, a diagram, a plan-map;
- a video;
- an exhibition, etc.

**For what purpose the project method is applied by the author of this paper:**

The method of projects is applied by the author to find various ways and means of active, independent development of students' thinking for not simply giving them ready-made knowledge or just teaching them to memorize and reproduce the knowledge received at the lesson, but also helping them to apply it in practice.

At English language lessons the project method can be used according to the curriculum, and it can be devoted to various topics. With the help of the project method, one can introduce a new material, revise the one learnt before, or deepen the existing skills. For this purpose the teacher should first of all *identify* a suitable topic, *analyze* the importance of this material and the ability of students to learn the given thematic material and, finally, *bring it up* to "projection".

**Project example:**

An example of a project can be a project on the topic "Problems Facing Teenagers and Youth".

This project is classified in the following way:

- *According to the type of the project* it is a research, information project;
- *According to its content* – a mono project; within one subject, one field of knowledge;
- *According to its duration* – a medium-term project;
- *According to the number of participants* – an individual, group project;
- *Expected result* – project presentation.

This project provides realization of the following goals:

**Educational goals:**

- revision and extension of the target vocabulary,
- consolidation of grammar skills: for example, if it is necessary to revise different forms of tenses in the English language, for this purpose each group observes the same problem from different time positions, e.g.: problems of teenagers and youth in the PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE.

- deepening of geographic-cultural knowledge: for this purpose the same problem is observed from different geographical positions, e.g.: problems facing the modern youth in Ukraine, Great Britain and the USA.

- developing skills of writing in the course of research work.

**Developing goals:**

- development of intellectual and creative abilities,
- gaining experience in information activities;
- gaining experience in project-research work;
- development of skills to generate ideas;
- development of skills to participate in a conversation, to express and explain one's point of view on the proposed topic;
- development of general educational skills, including organizational, intellectual, communicative and informational skills.

**Pedagogical goals:**

- raising interest in learning the English language,
- forming participants' cognitive activity,
- cultivating interpersonal ethics.

The work on this research-information project includes three stages:

1. **The initial stage** (definition of the general topic, selection of subtopics, formation of groups, drawing up the project-work plan, statement of purpose, collection of materials).

2. **The main stage** (analysis of the methods and purposes of the work in groups, search of sources of the necessary information and material collection, analysis of possible difficulties).

3. **The final stage** (getting ready to the project presentation, discussion of results).

For a more detailed review of the stages mentioned above, the work algorithm is presented below:

**Step 1 – Definition of the topic.** “Problems Facing Teenagers and Youth” (the topic of the project must obligatorily reflect students' interests; it must reveal problems the solution of which is, in their own opinion, important for them).

**Step 2 – Splitting of the topic into smaller subtopics.** “Different types of problems among teenagers and youth”. This can be achieved by brainstorming.

Among traditional youth problems – problems of drug abuse, problems of alcohol, family problems, unemployment problems, problems of education, money problems, health problems, etc., students highlight new problems – for example, computer – its advantages and disadvantages, gambling addiction, etc.

[According to N. Yu. Pakhomova: the first two steps are called immersion into the project. At this stage, the teacher awakens students' interest in the topic of the project, after which several subproblems are defined. As a result of this, the goal and objectives of the project are set.]

**Step 3 – Formation of initiative groups.** Each group selects a number of problems which are interesting and important for them.

[According to N. Yu. Pakhomova: This stage is called organization of activities. At this stage students' activities are organized, and, if necessary, the role of each member of the group is defined.]

**Step 4 – Collection of information.** This stage can be an individual work. One can use materials from textbooks, magazines, Internet, or obtain information from interviews.

**Step 5 – Processing, as well as the discussion of the information.** This stage is a teamwork.

For example, if the given group is examining problems of education in the past (late XX century) and in the present, at this stage students discuss together the results received and compare them.

**Step 6 – Getting prepared for the presentation,** making general conclusions on the subject.

[According to N. Yu. Pakhomova: steps No. 4, 5, 6 are called implementation of activities. After the work is planned, it is time to act. At this stage the teacher can be “invisible”, play the role of an observer. Students do everything themselves.]

**Step 7 – Presentation.**

Presentation is an obligatory stage. It is necessary to complete the work, to analyze the work done, it is necessary for self-evaluation and being evaluated from aside, for demonstrating the results. Everything prepared by students in the course of the preparation is called the project activity product. This can be pictures, posters, slideshows, videos, web-sites, newspapers, almanacs, models and so on. All these are visual presentations of the problem solution.

In fact, presentation implies a very important educational, pedagogical effect conditioned by the method itself: students learn to convincingly express their thoughts, ideas, to analyze their activities, to present the results of their individual and cooperative work. They demonstrate the visual material and display the result of the practical realization of the acquired knowledge and skills. For a student, an opportunity to gain recognition for the effectiveness of his independent creative work cannot be underestimated. In the course of the presentation, the student's self-esteem increases, and he or she obtains self-evaluation skills.

**Step 8 – Conclusion and review.**

For their work, students get several marks: for the completion and execution of the work, and for its content. Special nominations can also be given: the nomination for “originality”, for its “significance”, “scientific nature”, etc. It increases interest and motivates self-search activity.

Thus, proceeding from all the mentioned above, the following can be summarized: the project method is a person-centered project; in the learning process it reveals the peculiarities of each student. Thanks to this, the student's

interest in learning a foreign language greatly increases, and, this, in its turn, enhances the student's individual activities.

In the course of the project work the teacher:

- awakens students' interest;
- helps students in their search for necessary sources of information;
- is a source of information himself/herself;
- coordinates the entire process;
- encourages students;
- provides feedback about the fruitful work of the students.

Consequently, the project work is a kind of cooperative activity between the teacher and the students, which makes it possible to develop students' creative abilities, research skills, the ability of self-expression. It is hardly possible to solve all the problems in teaching foreign languages merely by project work, but it is an effective means against monotony, and boredom; it contributes to the development of students' awareness of themselves as members of a group, and to the deepening of their linguistic knowledge. A project is also a real opportunity to use the knowledge gained in other subjects as well.

**Advantages of the project method over traditional methods** of teaching a foreign language:

In the traditional system of education, great emphasis is made on acquiring ready-made knowledge, and the teaching process is realized thanks to the operation of memory.

Whereas the project method:

- develops students' intelligence, creates skills to plan and track the sequence of actions, gives competence to acquire knowledge and to apply it in practice;
- develops creativity and independence;
- is focused on students' independent work, which implies possession of certain skills: analysis, synthesis, mental experimentation, forecasting;
- is creative by its very nature because it involves a set of search, research and problem methods;
- when working on a project, *the idea* is in the center of attention, and the language appears in its direct function – the formation and formulation of these ideas;
- more than standard methods of learning, this method involves students in the “area study”, includes them in an active dialogue of cultures;
- creates the ability to acquire knowledge through activities.

With the help of the project method it becomes possible to develop abilities to:

- identify and formulate problems;
- analyze;

- find ways to solve problems;
- work with information;
- find the needed sources, for example, the data in reference books or media;
- use the information obtained in the solution of the problem.

Thus, the use of the project method in modern education is becoming increasingly important. It is no coincidence because with the help of a project it becomes possible to realize numerous educational, pedagogical and developing challenges a teacher has to face.

Project-based learning allows to integrate various activities, making the learning process fun, interesting and, therefore, effective.

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