

## **MAKING STUDENTS' PROJECT-WORK EFFECTIVE**

For effective project there should be a balance between teacher's control and learners' autonomy. If a teacher helps students while they are implementing their project, gives advice about the content and the language but learners have a certain freedom while doing the project, use their imagination and ideas, the implementation of the project will become not only an interesting and exciting process for the learners, it will be effective in terms of pedagogical purposes. By effectiveness of the project we understand the following outcomes: learners enrich their general knowledge as well as they improve their English skills, they learn to work individually as well as in a team, they develop their critical thinking and decision-making skills, learner's motivation to study in general and to study English in particular increases greatly.

School or university projects must be well-structured. F.L. Stoller, K. Sheppard and B. Alan suggest **10 steps to make a project effective**:

Step 1: Students and instructor agree on a theme for the project. The topic must be up-to-date, interesting for both sides (students and a teacher), preferably connected with real life.

Step 2: Students and instructor determine the final outcome of the project. There are lots of different forms to present the result of the project-work: an oral or a written report, an article, a PowerPoint presentation, a letter, a performance, etc.

Step3: Students and instructor structure the project. They together make a plan with timing and deadlines for each step of the project.

Step 4: Instructor prepares students for the demands of information gathering. A teacher explains what resources to use, how to gather information (what methods to use) and in what form to collect it.

Step 5: Students gather information. For example, they conduct online interviews (questionnaires).

Step 6: Instructor prepares students to compile and analyze data.

Step 7: Students compile and analyze information. The results of the interviews can be described and the percentage can be shown.

Step 8: Instructor prepares students for the language demands of the final activity.

Step 9: Students present the final product.

Step 10: Students evaluate the project [1; 2; 3].

B.Alan and F.L.Stoller indicate that the teacher must be aware of grammatical and general language improvement as well as the visual attractiveness of a student project [1, p.13].

### **From my professional experience:**

I've done several projects with my university students but most of them were either individual or pair-work mini-projects.

For example, while studying a topic about mass media, at first, students must learn about Belarusian and British/American mass media resources (TV, radio, printed and electronic newspapers and magazines).

Step 1: Each student had a separate topic to work on and to research: TV stations, radio stations, printed newspapers/magazines and electronic mass media resources. Students could choose whether to prepare a report about Belarusian, British or American mass media.

Step 2: The final outcome of each research had to be a Power Point Presentation or an oral report.

Step 3: Students had two weeks to implement the project.

Step 4: Depending on the chosen topic, students had to include into their final project work either a video (part of a TV program), or an audio (part of a radio program), bring some newspapers or magazines, show electronic mass media pages on the Internet and read/retell an article (or part of it).

Step 5: Students had to search for information about different mass media, had to examine and analyze the resources they found or recommended ones.

Step 6: Some students had to listen to radio programs, others had to watch TV programs, some had to read newspaper articles.

Step 7: Most students worked actively and with enthusiasm.

Step 8: Students asked questions about the English language (pronunciation, vocabulary).

Step 9: Most students made interesting reports/presentations.

Step 10: Students evaluated their projects.

In their final report they had to explain why they had chosen this or that TV show, a radio program or an article to present to the audience. So, they developed decision-making and critical thinking skills.

This project helped to develop mainly such language skills as writing and speaking, but also listening and reading.

Besides, due to the research project students found themselves in the original English-speaking context and developed their general cultural knowledge.

Depending on the number of students and the time available this mini-project can be implemented in groups and developed into a huge one with comparative analysis of Belarusian and British or American mass media.

In general, using a 10-step-approach in the project implementation helps both teachers and students to structure their project work, to control it and to make it productive and effective.

#### References:

1. Alan, B. and Stoller, F.L. (2005). Maximizing the benefits of project work in foreign language classrooms // *English Teaching Forum*, 43 (4). – P.10-21.
2. Sheppard, K., and F. L. Stoller (1995). Guidelines for the integration of student projects in ESP classrooms // *English Teaching Forum*, 33 (2). – P. 10–15.
3. Stoller, F. L. (1997). Project work: A means to promote language and content // *English Teaching Forum*, 35 (4). – P. 2–9.