It is not uncommon in language teaching to hear the cry that students are looking for a change, a little variety. A caring teacher will hear this cry and will try to identify the source of the learners’ discontent. 

There can be two reasons which lead to lack of motivation:
— the course is not relevant and effective;
— the teaching methods, techniques are likely to be different.

To arouse interest and student motivation in the first case one should begin with carrying out a needs analysis to estimate the needs of learners and of «the institution or person paying the piper and calling the tune».

To enhance learning in the second case a teacher will have to find those teaching methods which are suitable for a particular group of students. In this situation project work may come in handy.

Project work approach fits comfortably within teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) since it responds to the learners’ specific purposes, the students operate in the «target» language, it is activity and research based, involves learners in both individual and group work, uses authentic material, multi-skilled. It provides an opportunity for real world and classroom experience to overlap.

Here is described a project carried out by the students of International Relations of the Belarusian State University.

Level: Intermediate to advanced
Time: 4 weeks

Objectives: To define some qualifications desirable in members of the Foreign Service, to compare the work in the Foreign Office and work abroad, to learn about the diplomatic etiquette on public occasions, to encourage an awareness of language problems in diplomatic intercourse; to establish a working rapport with university lecturers or acquire contacts with diplomatists, if applicable; to collect printed and visual materials from the media in various languages in addition to English; to conduct interviews and organise meetings with professionals; to exercise note-taking; to provide an opportunity for audio or video recording; to make oral presentation and reporting or to produce a video display.

Skills: All four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) and a whole range of sub-skills are integrated towards one objective.

*Speaking skills*: discussion, negotiation, information seeking, conversational formulas, conducting interviews or surveys, oral presentation and reporting.
**Listening skills:** listening to video and audio materials for detail, for specific information or gist, transferring and summarising information, outside speakers questions and answers, listening to each group’s presentation.

**Reading skills:** skimming, scanning, sequencing, briefing, inferencing, finding additional reference materials.

**Writing skills:** note-taking, formal letters of invitation, appointments, question forms, recording information from interviews, questionnaire design, written presentation of the project.

**Interview techniques:** sub-skills — interrupting, repeating, eliciting, probing, concluding.

**Presentation skills:** **Voice:** speed, pausing, clarity of intonation and pronunciation; **Body language:** appropriateness of gestures and movements, firm stance, smile; **Visuals:** introduction to, relevance of, pin-pointing reason for, few words in and not reading them aloud; **Structure:** introduction, purpose, logical points, time, what is to come, summary, recommendations, powerful end; **Language:** no major misunderstandings, as appropriate and varied as reasonable; **Overall Impact:** impression of confidence, message come across, listeners included and not bored.

Equipment: audio recording equipment (optional); video camera and film (optional); printed or visual materials.

Teacher’s preparation

1. Select, modify and provide paper-based materials (magazines, books, text-books, newspapers, etc.), for the students to read, discuss, collate and refer to. Note down relevant film, video or audio programmes, which may be useful. Later you can use learner-generated material.

2. Invite a guest speaker or another group of students for debate or a discussion, a seminar, or a workshop session.

3. Make use of role play, information-gap, simulation exercises in the classroom during the preparatory stages of the project.

**Procedure**

Find out what questions about diplomatists and diplomatic practice in general correspond to the interest of the students. In collaboration with them discuss what issues they would like to explore in more depth. In my experience the chosen topics of interest were:

— qualifications desirable in diplomatists;
— diplomatic ethics and etiquette on public occasions;
— the duties of a diplomat abroad;
— language problems in diplomatic intercourse.

During the next four weeks the topics are discussed. The students’ motivation and interest determine the success of a project. That is why the key words, especially at the initial stages of the project, will be «to suggest», «negotiate», «encourage», «inspire», «involve», «stimulate», «get positive reaction» and the list goes on. Here I will describe only some approaches which have been tried and have proved to be successful.
Ask your students, as a homework task, to define the notions diplomacy, diplomat or diplomatist consulting some dictionaries and making use of quotations (some of them can be disputable).

Encourage a brain-storming session on the questions — what personal and professional qualities and attainments a contemporary diplomatist needs for a job; and what qualities the would-be candidate for the diplomatic career shouldn’t possess. You can read or hang some quotations on the blackboard to stimulate a discussion. Bring to the class some materials, handouts on the topic in question for the students to skim, note and discuss in pairs or with another group of students.

After the content and scope of the project have been negotiated and students have divided into teams, they move out of the classroom to conduct and record interviews, to gather printed and visual information and then transform it into spoken and written format. At this stage you should act as a monitor, who keeps track of what the students are doing and helps them to deal with difficulties. Make sure that everyone is involved.

It is great when any individual or a team approach their task from a different angel. In my experience one female student who was working on the topic «Diplomatic Ethics and Etiquette on Public Occasions» made a wonderful performance about the image of a business woman pursuing diplomatic career. Her idea was so fresh and new that everyone listened to her presentation with a genuine interest.

Follow-up
1. Your students may prefer to present the results of their work to each other in the classroom. But offer them a challenge to invite university authorities and inform other teachers about the presentation, or encourage them to organise a debate or forum with their fellow students. If applicable, you may record the students’ presentations for analysis, etc. It will be a valuable material for your further work.

2. Alternatively, if you have a fairly ambitious group, together with the students you may decide to contact the media, and try to gain publicity through newspapers, magazines, radio, and television.

3. Written practice can also be based on the students’ research and can be tackled in a variety of ways from the formal report, to a large classroom broadsheet, booklet, chart, newspaper article or memorandum to all students of international relations.

4. It is very important to evaluate the students’ work. You can design a certificate for successful performance of the project. Your students would appreciate if you and your invitees add to the formal certificate your personal observations, words of praise and comments about the work and presentation of each team and individual.