Ombres
Grabado, 30 x 20 cm

Increasing EFL Students' Responsibility with Learning Activities through Project Work*[1]

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This action research project highlights the increased responsibility of Grade 7 students when implementing project work in an English foreign language classroom, in a public, co-ed school in Colombia. The action research was carried out over five months and the results show the positive attitudes and behavior that students displayed towards project work in class, the importance of scaffolding to students' confidence with class activities, and good grades with positive feedback enhancing students' learning. Difficulties found related to cancelled classes, and students' negative attitudes when groups were assigned by the teacher, along with unequal group work distribution.

Keywords: EFL project work, responsibility, students' confidence, students' interests, grouping, negotiation, learning activities, scaffolding, recycling vocabulary and structures

Este proyecto de investigación-acción resalta el incremento de la responsabilidad de los estudiantes de grado séptimo cuando se implementa el trabajo por proyectos en un curso de inglés como lengua extranjera, en una institución educativa de básica secundaria en Colombia. El proyecto fue realizado durante cinco meses y los resultados muestran las actitudes positivas de los estudiantes y el comportamiento que mostraron hacia el trabajo por proyectos, la importancia del andamiaje (*scaffolding*) como manera de fomentar su confianza hacia las actividades de clase, y la eficacia de las buenas notas con retroalimentación positiva para aumentar su aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: trabajo por proyectos, responsabilidad, confianza de los estudiantes, intereses de los estudiantes, agrupación, negociación, aftividades de aprendizaje, andamiaje, reciclaje de vocabulario y estructuras

Ce projet de recherche action nous a permis de noter la responsabilité croissante d'élèves de 4ème, lorsqu'est mise en place la méthode de travail par projets dans un cours d'anglais langue étrangère d'une institution colombienne. Le projet a été développé en cinq mois et les résultats montrent les attitudes positives des élèves, leur comportement vis à vis du travail par projet, l'importance de l'échafaudage (*scaffolding*) qui encourage leur confiance par rapport aux activités du cours, et l'efficacité des bonnes notes comme rétroaction positive pour augmenter leur apprentissage.

Mots clés : anglais langue étrangère, travaux par projets, responsabilité, confiance des étudiants, intérêts, groupement, négociation, activités d'apprentissage, échafaudage, recyclage du vocabulaire et des structures

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1. INTRODUCTION

Implementing the methodology of project work with English language learners in second language environments has been associated with enhancing students' responsibility in their learning process. In Colombia, where English is a foreign language, many public high school students are not motivated towards learning English due to the questioned usefulness of the target language in this context. Student beliefs related to the difficult nature of learning English and perceived limitations with the language further set them at a disadvantage with foreign language instruction. Quite often, teachers recognize that their students are inattentive, restless, not engaged with learning activities in class, and not committed to doing work outside the classroom. This action research project was directed towards giving students an opportunity to work with topics that are of interest to them in collaborative learning groups, and with language content that has been adapted to their language ability. It was hoped that students' performance in class activities would improve with the use of different motivational strategies such as negotiating topics, scaffolding language content, allowing students to form their own groups, and giving positive feedback on performance leading to better grades. To frame this research inquiry, the following action research question was posed: How does implementing project work with EFL Grade 7 students influence their responsibility with learning activities?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Project work in second and foreign language instruction has perceived benefits related to the notion of usability given to the target language in students' lives. Fried-Booth (1993:7) considers that this methodology can help students find the usefulness of English in diverse contexts, and reports that it "helps to bridge the gap between language study and language use". Project work has also been linked to encouraging meaningful learning as students can learn about topics of interest to them. This idea is supported by Sánchez (2002) who states that when students "feel" that English can be used to express ideas and feelings,

as in their first language, they will use it. With language as a means instead of an end, students can become more engaged in classes, link language use to their own lives, and relate knowledge to the solution of doubts and inquiries in the target language (Phillips; Burwood & Dunford, 2003). In addition, students can participate in real-world activities beyond the classroom (Intel Corporation, 2006) such as: exploring topics of interest, gathering and sharing information, and working collaboratively in groups, which are all recognized as stages of project work.

Stoller (2002) and Fried-Booth (1993) include a number of similar stages and features in their proposals for project work. The authors agree that it is necessary for teachers and students to agree on a topic and a final outcome, to practice language skills required for gathering information, and to present a final product of their work. While other stages such as designing and organizing written materials for gathering information and evaluating the project work experience may be included, both authors recognize that higher proficiency levels in the target language are needed. The stages of project work can be developed and adapted according to the needs and requirements of teachers and students in diverse teaching and learning contexts. A number of key features of project work identified by Stoller (2002) include: negotiation of students' interests; attention to topics and content that students are interested in as opposed to specific language targets; class instruction that is student-centered; integration of the four skills in lesson activities; preparation and presentation of a final product; and promotion of student autonomy in the learning process.

Fried-Booth (1993) highlights that project work enhances students' motivation and increases responsibility in the learning process. Motivation is present from the initial negotiation and selection of topics to explore, to the presentation of the final product. The author believes that for students, "[…] motivation comes from within not from without. The project is theirs. They themselves decide (in consultation with the teacher) what they will do and how they will do it, and this includes not only the content of the project, but also the language requirements" (1993:5). This intrinsic motivation helps to drive students' interests and encourages them to identify with the learning goals and take responsibility of the outcome (Scharle & Szabo, 2000). While Sánchez (2002)

recognizes the importance of students' interests, she suggests that the teachers' interests should be taken into consideration too.

The collaborative nature of project work is well recognized in educational paradigms where students construct learning together. Sánchez (2002) reports that language learning occurs as a construction of knowledge starting with social interaction in a particular context. The social nature of project work occurs when students engage in group work and collaborate in learning. Law and Eckes (2000), report that students can become more responsible and autonomous while engaging in cooperative work, as opposed to working alone. As learning is usually an activity that involves the people around us, whether they be teachers, classmates, family members, or acquaintances, the social aspect is fundamental (Hein, 1991). This author perceives that learning involves sharing, discussing concerns, and reflecting on what we learn, which leads to new knowledge. It is notable that students build new knowledge based on the prior knowledge that they have.

Scaffolding is a concept that can help teachers and students work more successfully during project work. Lipscomb, Swanson, and West (2004) define the term 'scaffolding' as "the type of assistance offered by a teacher or peer to support learning." Concerning the teacher, this process has been discussed by Freeman & Freeman (1994:61), who state that it can "support learners by providing a structure or support they can rely on to build their competence". Initially the teacher can provide assistance and help students master certain tasks that they can not perform by themselves. One important characteristic of scaffolding is the teacher as an expert model (Lipscomb, Swanson, and West, 2004) demonstrating what students are expected to do. In other words, students can observe the teacher modeling the activity and then imitate the teacher and model the scaffold, which can be directed towards students' language development at the grammar level, sentence level, etc. (Law and Eckes, 2000). This instructional support enables students to become slightly more independent and capable of completing the tasks by themselves without the aid of the teacher (Lipscomb, Swanson, West, 2004), this being the principal goal of the scaffolding process.

While project work has been used successfully in intermediate and advanced level courses in ESL contexts (Fried-Booth, 1995), documented experiences of

high school teachers implementing this approach with lower-proficiency students in similar EFL contexts is lacking. This action research project will report on a concrete experience for professionals in the Colombian context to draw upon.

3. METHOD OF THE ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

This research was carried out in accordance with the phases of educational action research laid out by Johnson (2005) and Burns (1999). Both authors emphasize the following phases: the identification of a research topic or problem within a given context; relating the research topic to the literature in order to give a theoretical context for findings; formulating objectives and proposing action strategies; making a data collection plan (see Appendix 1 – Data collection chart); collecting, organizing and analyzing data; and drawing conclusions and reporting findings. For data collection, I used methods such as small group conferencing (Johnson, 2005) with students in class which enabled them to speak informally and spontaneously about their project work; a student attitude scale (Appendix 2 – Student attitude scale) which gave me their perceptions of how they worked, both individually and in small groups, on the projects; a teacher-research journal with my reflections on the implementation and effectiveness of my action strategies (see Appendix 3 – Action strategies); and written class observation feedback from my cooperating teacher as a participant observer and my university practicum advisor as a non-participant observer. This data collection involved four types of data: conferences, interviews, journal reflections, and observations. Although the validation of findings supported by numerous authors (Burns, 1999; Johnson, 2005; Freeman, 1998) was difficult to carry out, as data analysis and interpretation was completed after participants had gone on school vacation, the perspectives of my advisor, cooperating teacher (CT) and another pre-service teacher in my seminar course were taken into account. I believed that this research design would enable me to question existing theory and come up with a more contextualized understanding of that theory from an EFL perspective.

4. CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

This action research project was carried out in a Grade 7 EFL class at a public, primary and secondary school in Itagüí (Antioquia, Colombia), in 2006. English

was taught in three 50-minute periods per week. At this institution, English instruction focused on the four language skills, as well as on grammar preparation for the ICFES (Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior – *Colombian Institute for Superior Education*) test. A textbook – New reading English is fun – was used regularly by teachers in their classes.

Participants in this study included my cooperating teacher, a university practicum advisor, 40 students, and myself, a pre-service teacher in the final semester of an undergraduate degree program in foreign language teaching. My cooperating teacher has a degree in Modern Languages (English and Spanish) and has been teaching English for 10 years, although for only 4 months at this school. She is interested in project work methodology and believes that this approach could help students learn the foreign language. My university practicum advisor has completed coursework for a postgraduate degree in teaching foreign languages and has taken part in action research at university level. There were 40 students in the class, 23 boys and 17 girls, whose native language is Spanish. Their ages ranged between 12 and 14. They were beginners in English with limited prior foreign language study.

In the English language classes, students were quite often restless, inattentive, and easily distracted during teacher-led instruction and individual work. Students often expressed that they did not know enough English to do the activities and that they were not confident enough to use English. In a class survey about students' learning styles and preferences, they reported a preference for pair and group work over individual work. However, during teacher assigned group work, individual differences emerged relating to activity performance, foreign language abilities, and commitment levels, and created some tension among students which affected their ability to work collaboratively on class activities.

5. Pedagogical implementation of project work

My first step was to tell students about my interest in helping them learn English with the methodology of project work, describe it, and ask for their opinions. Students responded well and showed an eagerness to learn English through topics in a more collaborative way. I told students that I wanted to take their

interests into account and that they should select a few of their favorite topics from the textbook to be integrated with the course syllabus. In class, students chose their topics and voted for their preferences. Four were chosen from a list: music, special effects, inventions, and planets. I also proposed a topic on sport that was in the textbook and in the syllabus. With this information, I began to design the first two units about sport and music, plan lessons, and look for materials. I checked the content in the syllabus and the textbook, and tried to integrate this with what the students wanted to know about their topics.

Now it was time to organize the different groups for the projects. After talking with my CT we agreed on assigning students to small groups of maximum five, which gave us nine groups. As my CT and I had perceived varying levels of proficiency and performance, we decided to organize the groups with mixed proficiency, performance and behavior. We also decided to nominate one student as an anchor in each group; this student was regarded as having overall good performance and behavior in class. During group work on the sport unit, we noticed that students' reactions to this grouping were not favorable. They had many problems working, mainly due to a lack of affinity and empathy among individuals. Confronted with this issue, I decided that for the upcoming unit on music it would be better to allow students to select their groups. When students were told this, they celebrated the decision.

Once the students and I had established both project topics, I elicited their prior knowledge about different sports and music genres in order to identify sub-topics to explore. They gave us long lists for both topics and the CT and I had to select those that students were most familiar with. For sport, students selected soccer, skating, basketball, baseball, swimming, boxing, athletics, tennis, and wrestling. Students also selected the sport of judo which I was able to use to introduce and model procedures for project work while they were developing their sub-topics. I did this as a motivational prompt and to model how to work with the project activities and materials. For music, students chose salsa, merengue, reggae, rock, reggaeton, pop, rap, and vallenato. While students told me what they wanted to know about these sub-topics, I realized that students were very eager to learn new things in English. As we began the units, we negotiated the final products of their projects. I suggested a few ideas,

such as designing a brochure for the sport project, and designing a music page for a magazine, and students agreed with these ideas.

Once students began with the class activities, I noticed that they had difficulties in organizing and storing their class work. This was most evident during the unit on sport and affected their final product because students did not have access to all of the class work that they had produced throughout the unit. For the second project, this was not a problem because students kept a portfolio and used their content to complete the final product. During the classes, my lessons were communicative and gave students the opportunity to learn with hands-on activities for learning new vocabulary, basic structures and content. I also promoted the integration of skills and the development of multiple intelligences (Appendix 4 – Lesson plans). I noticed that students participated and performed well. When I brought grammar oriented activities to class, students found learning difficult and became inattentive once again. I observed that students were more engaged, less noisy, and more productive when my instruction was more communicative.

At the end of the process, students eagerly posted their final products on a bulletin board in a hallway so that others could appreciate their work.

6. Findings

My findings were derived from different sources of data such as the teacher research journal, observation feedback from the CT and advisor, and the students' group conferences and attitude scale. I initially read and coded the data individually and then shared this information with a colleague and my university advisor. My codes were written in few words and conceptualized close to the data. On several occasions, my colleague, my advisor and myself had the opportunity to discuss these codes from our different perspectives. A list of preliminary categories emerged, from which I identified three main themes: students' positive attitudes and behavior towards the project topics and group learning which enhanced their responsibility during learning activities; challenge, scaffolding and reviewing language content, which led to student

expectancy or sense of competence, such that they believed that they could succeed with activities; and improved student performance as a result of giving positive feedback on their progress, aimed at promoting awareness of change, and assigning higher grades. These three interrelated themes helped students to feel more motivated towards the learning activities and become more responsible and successful in class. As it was the first time that the students had learned in this manner, it was very important for me to reflect on the following categories and relate them to existing theory.

6.1 Positive attitudes and behavior towards project work

For the most part, the attitudes that students reported during project work were positive, leading them to accomplish the tasks, despite the emergence of a few difficulties. Students enjoyed the project work due to a more *learner-centered methodology* that took into account their interests, their *class work activities, learning with friends in groups,* and *giving feedback* throughout the process.

Due to the nature of project work, it was necessary to make the classes more student-centered, but this feature was not fully achieved because the group continued to be quite teacher-dependent. Nonetheless, during the project work, classes tended to include a greater proportion of students, thus producing more active participants. Concerning this issue, my advisor wrote "it was interesting for me as an outsider to walk into your class today because I saw that you were not the center of attention, and the students were active and engaged with the activity" (advisor observation, October 12, 2006).

In having a more student-centered class, I was able to motivate students to work in the classroom by using a few stages and features of project work, such as *negotiation of topics, subtopics, groups, and language preparation to develop the projects* (Fried-Booth, 1993 & Stoller, 2002). The first stage of negotiation elicited their interests and enabled me to integrate topics in the syllabus that were more relevant to their lives (Crookes, 2003). Although this stage was limited in terms of the topics taken from the textbook, this stage was well received by students. The sub-topics, however, were not limited to the syllabus or textbook and were fully negotiated, taking into account the students' prior

knowledge and contributing towards motivation. Many students referred to it as fundamental in increasing their interest in the class (students' conferences, October 25, 30; November 15, 2006).

Another interesting aspect of their behavior, which indicated responsibility towards the class topics and content, was the enthusiasm displayed by some students in the selection and carrying out of class activities, as well as their desire to show improvement in their performance. Related to this issue, my CT wrote: "I have seen more willingness [sic] to work in each activity, and also they participate more in class." (CT feedback, November 26, 2006). Furthermore, I was approached on two occasions by students wanting to complete certain tasks that they had not previously done, and to inform me that they were working better with the new methodology (personal communication, October 25, 26, 2006). This kind of behavior illustrates the students' sense of responsibility to accomplish the assigned tasks and their increased commitment to project work.

Students enjoyed the collaborative nature of *working with other classmates on projects*. They displayed a clear preference for social learning, even when group work was preceded by individual work. This behavior is characteristic of project work and as Hein (1991) remarks, learning is strongly associated with the connections that the learner makes with the people that surround him/her. Crookes (2003) highlights the importance of affiliation where students can establish and maintain ties with classmates while they work. This social skill affected my students' level of participation and collaboration in group work.

When students chose their group members, they shared knowledge and were able to accomplish the tasks. On some occasions, I observed students dividing the activity within the group, then joining together and sharing what they had done before handing in the end result (students' conferences, October 25, 2006). Students normally said things like: "todo es más fácil y nos podemos repartir el trabajo" [everything is easier and we can divide the tasks] (student attitude scale, October 12, 2006) or "cada uno ha cumplido con su parte del trabajo" [everybody has accomplished his/her part of the work] (student attitude scale, October 26, 2006).

Students considered their selection of group members to be an important strategy which allowed them to work well during the project (personal communication, September 18, 2006). Edwards and Jones (1999:286) state that, "there also appear to be clear indications that working with friends [...] is important. It may be that this helps with the sharing and respecting of each others ideas and that, in the end, this helps with learning." During the conferences, students reported that working with friends was better for different reasons, one being that all opinions and suggestions expressed within the group were taken into account (students' conferences, October 25, 30; November 15, 2006). In response to one of the open-ended questions, students expressed that "no han habido peleas ni desacuerdos y hemos proyectado los trabajos que hemos hecho" [there have not been fights or disagreements and we have presented the work that we have done] (student attitude scale, November 16, 2006).

Additionally, students considered that working with their friends tended to make them feel more comfortable and more self-confident in working on the assigned tasks, as well as in using and understanding the language (students' conferences, October 25, 30; November 15, 2006). This is reflected in the following excerpt in which a student refers to working with friends as beneficial "porque mejor relacionado y más confianza, resultado mejor y más trabajo" [because there are better relationships and more confidence, resulting in better and more work] (student attitude scale, October 12, 2006). Students believe that they know how their peers work, and there is more understanding and communication among them (students' conference, October 30, 2006). Williams & Burden (1997) believe that enhancing students' self-confidence with tasks can help them begin to take control of their own learning.

This issue was continuously raised by students during the second project (music) as opposed to the first project (sport). In the first project the students were grouped by me and did not like the idea of having to work with certain classmates. Subsequently, the atmosphere within the groups was unpleasant. Students normally argued and had heated discussions over different ways of working during the projects (students' conferences, October 25, 30; November 15, 2006). It is important to state that although theory suggests that it is beneficial to group students in different ways in order to have a successful experience (Marzano, Pickering, Pollock, 2001),

sometimes it is not appropriate if there are not good relationships and good affinity among students in a group. Thorkildsen and Johnson (1995, reported in Crookes, 2003) report that students in U.S. classrooms produced poor results when students were assigned to groups by the teacher. This aspect can work against other positive features of project work cited by Johnson & Johnson (1999, cited in Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001), such as group processing, face-to-face interaction, and individual and group accountability. Overall, students consider that if the teacher gives them the opportunity to choose the classmates with whom they wish to work, they will work better and with fewer problems.

Notwithstanding, students forming their own groups also led to a few reported difficulties. Negative attitudes were expressed by some students due to the tasks not being equally distributed, and there were a few group members who did not do what they were supposed to. Some students said that a few of their group members did not work. They expressed that: "no ayudan y creen que porque son amigos a veces no hacen nada para que los demás lo hagan" [they do not help and believe that because they are friends they do not do anything so that the rest will do it] (student attitude scale, October 12, 2006). When this inequality in class work distribution occurred, there was also less commitment towards the class work with a few students doing little or no work. This attitude tended to diminish the importance that the other members of the group had given to the project. This was a significant concern because at certain stages of the projects, a number of students considered that they were doing all the tasks and that their peers were just waiting to be included in the final product, even if they had not done anything. There was a very clear case of inconformity when one student expressed that "(ella) no hace nada y falta para que le hagamos las tareas y luego se pueda meter" [(she) does not do anything and she does not attend some classes so that we do the work and later she wants to be included in it] (student attitude scale, November 16, 2006). These tasks included vocabulary activities or games that were important in the scaffolding and development of the projects.

6.2 Challenge, scaffolding and reviewing language content

During project work, I used some strategies to motivate and keep students working and focused on the activities. These strategies included bringing

activities which were not overly demanding for students, demonstrating expected performance of students in class, and recycling and reviewing language and content. These strategies were crucial because students were very insecure of their knowledge of English, and my aim was to prove to them that they really knew something and that they could learn and use the language and content taught. Besides, with these strategies I wanted to find out if the group would be able to work better and complete the agreed tasks.

I perceived that students engaged and assimilated the language and the content presented and taught during the classes. This assimilation was exemplified when students described activities as easy because the content had already been covered (advisor observation, October 12, 2006). Additionally, the language requirements for the project were taught in class during the time in which the projects were being developed. These language items were related strictly to the requirements of the projects and were adapted from the school syllabus. The textbook or syllabus content was not followed rigorously, a notion recommended by Fried-Booth (1993).

The increase in class participation was also a result of using activities with low level demands. Students were given less demanding activities and felt less anxiety in carrying out the tasks than they would normally feel due to their limited proficiency. However, the tasks were not over simplified, but were based on the content presented during class and complemented with students' prior knowledge. That is why students continuously referred to the activities as easy (students' conferences, October 25, 30; November 15, 2006). In addition, it is necessary to point out that most of the activities were hand-on tasks with visuals in which the content taught could be applied. I also demonstrated what students were expected to do with these activities which facilitated a shared intention of task (Williams & Burden, 1997). Students assimilated their new knowledge with their prior knowledge, creating a base for them to refer to. In other words, scaffolding was promoted. This issue is important for Freeman & Freeman (1994:61) who state that "scaffolds support learners by providing a structure or support they can rely on to build their competence". In addition to this, Benson (1997), as reported in Lipscomb, Swanson and West (2004), considers that "scaffolding is actually a bridge used to build upon what students

already know to arrive at something they do not know." Moreover, scaffolding includes the important aspect of recycling the vocabulary and content. Since the very beginning of my teaching practice, recycling has been paramount for me and has enabled students to apply content covered in previous classes. The use of this strategy led to an increase in the students' proficiency and self-confidence (advisor observation, October 12, 2006; CT feedback, November 7, 2006). Students believed that they had learnt and had improved their English (students' conferences, October 25, 30; November 15, 2006; attitude scale, October 26; November 16, 2006) making them feel more comfortable with the knowledge that they had acquired and motivated to continue working in class and to obtain good grades. Williams & Burden (1997) recognize the importance of students being aware of change in themselves, contributing towards feelings of control over the learning experience.

6.3 Motivating students with feedback and grades

As students are extremely motivated by grades in our school system, I used the strategy of rewarding them with good grades for the tasks and work handed in. As Dörnyei (2001) presents, if students are expected to succeed in learning, that success will only happen if it is rewarded positively. Therefore, one way to do this was to award them good grades for their performance. This feeling of success in learning was demonstrated when students stated that they were getting good grades and achieving better group performance (students' conference, November 15, 2006). Concerning their success, students stated that "hemos hecho todos los trabajos y nos han salido en excelente" [we have done all the tasks and we have got excellent grades] (student attitude scale, October 26, 2006). This belief of success was a motivating factor that made students feel competent having recognized that they were doing well in tasks (Williams and Burden, 1997).

In addition to this grading strategy, positive feedback in the classroom also played a very important role in increasing student motivation. In many classes, I found students who were always asking for feedback on the tasks that they were doing. This was also perceived by my advisor when students approached her to check their work and to tell them if it was correct or not (advisor observation, October 26, 2006). This positive feedback given to students

resulted in better class performance and their persistence to keep working on their tasks and assignments. Although students may not have been conscious of the importance of my feedback, I believe it helped to increase their motivation and self-confidence, and lead them to notice a change in their learning process. As Freeman & Freeman (1994:49) state "our learning continues in response to the feedback we receive". My students kept working and improved their performance due to the encouraging feedback that they received.

7. CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that project work has been underreported in my EFL context, I believe it is a good methodology to be implemented in Colombia. If teachers are able to link class activities to the topics that students like and are interested in, and adapt them to their proficiency level, project work can help raise students' level of responsibility. Moreover, using this methodology proved to be worth the risk as students found the language both meaningful and purposeful. Although this can be challenging for teachers and students in our non-English speaking environment, we can find real opportunities to motivate students to use the language and feel successful. The positive attitudes and behavior which students display during project work are encouraging for both novice and experienced teachers who are looking for a new way of teaching English.

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Appendix 1

DATA COLLECTION CHART

Researcher:					
Topic: Increasing Students' Responsibility in Project Work					
From Who?	What to collect?	Technique	Who does it?	When?	Where?
Teacher-researcher	Journal reflections on project work classroom practices	Participant observation Teacher research journal	Teacher-researcher	After every class daily (eight weeks)	At home
Students	Students' perceptions of their individual and group work with projects	1. Attitude scale 2. Small-group conferences	Students in class	1. Biweekly 2. Weekly (six week period)	In class
CT	CT's observations and reflections of my project work classroom practices	Participant observation CT's feedback session	CT and teacher-researcher	Twice during project (midway and end of project)	At school
Advisor	Advisor's observations and reflections regarding project work classroom practices	Non-participant observation Post-observation feedback session	Advisor	Mid-way and end of project work unit (twice)	At school

APPENDIX 2

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE SCALE

Evaluación de desempeño

Con este formato evaluarás como fue tu trabajo en clase y en el proyecto durante la semana.

Anota tu nombre en una de las columnas del cuadro y escribe sinceramente la nota que creas que mereces para cada ítem.

E= Excelente S= Sobresaliente A= Aceptable I= Insuficiente D= Deficiente

	Nombre	Nombre	Nombre	Nombre	Nombre	Nombre
¿Cómo crees que fue tu trabajo en clase esta semana?						
¿Cómo fue tu compromiso con el trabajo asignado para la clase?						
¿Cómo crees que fueron tus aportes para el trabajo del grupo?						
¿Cómo crees que fueron los materiales que trajiste para trabajar en grupo?						
¿Cómo fue tu trabajo en grupo esta semana?						
¿Cómo fue el trabajo en grupo esta semana?						

Open-ended question (*)
_____
_____
_____
_____

(*) In each administration of this instrument, the open-ended question was different. These questions were:
1. Como grupo, ¿creen que para los proyectos es mejor trabajar con los amigos? Sí___ No___ ¿Por qué?
2. Como grupo, ¿creen que han trabajado responsablemente? Sí___ No___ ¿Por qué?
3. ¿Creen que la actitud del grupo ha cambiado con los proyectos? Sí___ No___ ¿Por qué?

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE SCALE

Performance Evaluation

With this format you will evaluate how your work in class and during the project was this week. Write your name in one of the columns and write the letter grade that you think you deserve for each item.

E= Excellent S= Above Average A= Acceptable I= Insufficient D= Deficient

	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name	Name
How was your class work this week?						
How was your commitment with the assigned class work?						
How was your participation during the group work?						
How were the materials you brought to work in your group?						
How was your work in the group this week?						
How was the work done by your group this week?						
Open-ended question (*) _____ _____ _____ _____						

(*) Each time this instrument was administered, the open-ended question was different. These questions were:

1. As a group, do you think that it is better to work with friends for the projects? Yes___ No___ Why?
2. As a group, do you think that you have worked responsibly? Yes___ No___ Why?
3. Do you think that the group's attitude has changed with the projects? Yes___ No___ Why?

Appendix 3

Action Strategies

- to include four topics chosen by students from the Grade 7 textbook •
- to identify what students want to know and/or explore in each topic, i.e. the subtopics
- to give ideas about the final product to students
- to assign students with mixed proficiency levels to groups, and to give students the opportunity to form their own groups
- to give students input and practice with language vocabulary, structures, and expressions required for the project work
- to recycle language content throughout the projects
- to give students positive and clear feedback during the project in order to strengthen students' self-confidence
- to simplify the activities' demands so that students will use the language taught.

APPENDIX 4

LESSON PLANLESSON PLAN ON MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS (3)

Class date: October 23, 2006

Class description: grade seven, 39 students, 50 – minute class.

Main objective: To identify which instruments are played by the artists that students will interview. **Specific objectives:** To review the names of instruments, recognize sounds of instruments and fill-in a puzzle, identify the instruments played by the artists according to the genre students have.

Materials: Instruments puzzle, CD with instruments sounds, CD player.

Activities: 1. Opening: Review the name of the instruments presented on the previous class. **2. First activity:** Students listen to instrument sounds and fill-in a puzzle. **Time:** 20 min. **3. Second activity:** Individually, students answer the question: What instruments do the artists of my genre play? **Time:** 20 min. **4. Closure:** Each music group will share the questions which each group did for homework and the class will reach an agreement as to which questions will be used by students to interview the artists. **Time:** 10 min.

LESSON PLAN ON ARTISTS' CLOTHES

Class date: October 12, 2006

Class description: grade seven, 39 students, 50 – minute class.

Main objective: To identify and say the clothes worn by artists of different music genres. **Specific objectives:** To review vocabulary about the clothes and accessories that people wear, complete a worksheet with the personal information that students know about artists of their genre, say what an artist wears according to what is shown in a picture.

Materials: Worksheets with questions and images.

Activities: 1. Opening: Review vocabulary about clothes and accessories. **Time:** 10 min. **2. First activity:** Students answer the questions related to the personal information of the artists. **Time:** 20 min. **3. Second activity:** Students will ask what the artists of different genres wear. **Time:** 20 min. **4. Closure:** Students socialize what students answered on their sheets according to the artists they have.