

**„DESIGN YOUR ENGLISH, ENGLISH YOUR DESIGN”
– PROJECT BASED LEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH
TO PAINTING AND GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDENTS**

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Abstract. *Project-based learning (PBL), as an alternative to traditional teacher-led instruction, is one of the ways to bring classroom experience to a higher level and improve students' thinking skills. Proponents of PBL cite numerous benefits to the implementation of its strategies in the classroom, including a greater depth of understanding of concepts, broader knowledge base, improved communication and interpersonal or social skills, as well as increased creativity. The paper summarizes the effects of a project implemented in teaching ESP to second year students of Painting and Graphic Design at the Faculty of Arts – University of Niš, Serbia, during the second semester of the academic year 2014/2015. The teaching of the course resulted in a completion of a 205-page publication „English-Serbian & Serbian-English Glossary of Painting and Graphic Design Terms“.*

Key words: *Project-based learning, ESP classroom, English-Serbian/Serbian-English glossary of painting and graphic design terms*

New times call for new skills. Over almost a century we have witnessed a dramatic shift from a mainly manufacturing to a pronouncedly knowledge-service society. Fast growing information and communication technologies have changed the very nature of many professions, pushing us all to accept the student's role throughout our lives, and pressing the new generations to adapt to the new pace and demands in a fast changing society. In the situation when the competence and knowledge expectations of the past need to be replaced by some new skills, one of the major transformations should take place in the classroom which must become a “hothouse” for acquiring new competences

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such as problem solving, flexible and creative thinking, innovative professional skills, open-mindedness to various ideas, out-of-the-box thinking, resourcefulness, interpersonal and cross-cultural skills, ability to work effectively with diverse teams, setting and meeting goals, etc.

In this context project-based learning (PBL) as one of the ways to bring the classroom experience to a higher level and improve students' thinking skills remains one of the hot challenges for the teachers and students in the new century, along with an array of other classroom practices like problem-based learning, design-based learning, etc.

What makes project-based learning so important and challenging? For one thing, it dramatically changes the division of roles in the classroom: the classical teacher's role as the main actor in the classroom is substituted by the role of a facilitator and mind coach. This might sound easier, but the fact of the matter is that the new task is much more complex and delicate. It requires careful structuring of tasks, wise coaching throughout the process of instruction, and brand new methods for assessing students' achievements, to mention only some of the emerging requirements. Yet, the most delicate of all is to come up with a project that, among other things, fulfils two major criteria: to be *educationally significant*, and to be perceived by students as *meaningful*, and moreover, as *personally meaningful*. Typically, students are presented a problem to solve, a phenomenon to investigate, a model to design or a decision to make (David, 2008). Any teacher's failure to come up with carefully designed and structured plans and methods to organize PBL-based instruction, can easily lead to a string of activities with no clear purpose or outcome.

Generally speaking, project-based learning rests on several pillars (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010) that need to be creatively "processed" by the teacher:

- *A Need to Know* (convincing the students that they need to learn/know the proposed content),
- *A Driving Question* (invoking a sense of purpose and challenge),
- *Student Voice and Choice* (inviting students to be active in the entire process),
- *21st Century Skills* (creating opportunities to develop skills such as communication, critical thinking, information and technological literacy, etc.),
- *Inquiry and Innovation* (inviting students to search for resources and discover answers that often ultimately leads to generating new questions, testing ideas, and drawing students' own conclusions),
- *Feedback and Revision* (emphasizing that creating high-quality products and performances is an important purpose of the endeavour),
- *A Publicly Presented Product* (finding a way and creating opportunities to present the product – be it a writing, drawing, three-dimensional representations, video, or any other artefact – to wider public).

As a result of this, a PBL classroom is essentially student-centred, providing opportunities for a much more prominent and demanding role of students who are no longer mere listeners and recipients, but active protagonists in the learning process functioning on the basis of integrated *knowing* and *doing*. Very much unlike traditional teacher-led instruction, in a PBL classroom students often must organize their own work and manage their own time.

Numerous studies point to various benefits of project-based learning. For example, a three-year research carried out by Boaler (2002) based on a comparison of the results achieved by the students of mathematics in two similar British high schools (one using

traditional and the other using project-based instruction), revealed significant outperformance of the students exposed to PBL which was reflected in 1) three times higher number of students who passed the national exam; 2) reduced math anxiety, and 3) more positive attitude toward math.

Other short-term studies exploring the effects of traditional vs. project-based approaches point to the following benefits from PBL: 1) an increase in the ability to define problems (Gallagher, Stepien & Rosenthal, 1992, 2) a significant growth in students’ ability to support their reasoning with clear arguments (Stepien, Gallagher & Workman, 1993, 3) an enhanced ability to plan a project after working on an analogous problem-based challenge (Moore, Sherwood, Bateman, Bransford & Goldman, 1996, 4) an increased motivation, attitude toward learning, and skills, including work habits, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities (Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter 1995; Peck, Peck, Sentz & Zasa, 1998, 5) a significantly better performance of the students who had previously demonstrated difficulties with traditional teacher-led instruction (Boaler, 1997; Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 1998).

As a contribution to the above mentioned studies and research projects targeting the issue of project-based learning, this paper presents the experience of teaching an ESP course at the University of Niš, Serbia.

Namely, the project „English-Serbian and Serbian-English Glossary of Painting and Graphic Design Terms“ was implemented in the second semester of the 2014/2015 academic year (16 February – 1 June 2015) for the second year students of Painting and Graphic Design at the Faculty of Arts – University of Niš, Serbia. It is important to emphasize that the mentioned ESP students already have eight-year formal record of learning English and that the ESP syllabus is built around the skills needed to enhance their communicational abilities in a professional environment with the focus on the subject matter areas important to their particular profession-related functions.

The idea to work on a glossary of painting and graphic design terms was suggested to the students at the end of the first semester so that they would have enough time to decide whether they would go for such a challenge or not. As the students’ support came without hesitation, the second semester was organized in the following way:

1st class Introductory class: Brainstorming – each student was given an opportunity to make his/her contribution to the discussion on core issues regarding the project to be undertaken: *objectives, techniques, specific individual and group assignments and responsibilities, phases, schedule*. At this particular point, the students were asked to think about and mutually discuss and compare the topics they would want to work on in line with their personal professional interests, so as to be able to draw a specific task plan for individual and group work to follow.

As a direct outcome of the discussions, the following topics were singled out as *individual student tasks*: painting technology, oil painting, dry/wet techniques, aquarelle, acrylic painting, fresco painting, pigments, sculpture, anatomy, printmaking, photography, calligraphy, typography, graffiti, Photoshop and Corel Draw.

The topics singled out as suitable for *group work* during the classes included: art epochs and movements, materials and tools for visual arts, basic elements

and principles of art and Serbian-English glossary (as a check-up point for students' individual contributions based on their research at home)

- 2nd class Distribution of the topic-related materials to serve as a basis for individual/group work (English texts, papers, excerpts from textbooks, encyclopedias, web-sites, etc.).
- Further discussion on the requirements to be met and research techniques to be applied. Setting up a date for submission of individual contributions (20 April 2015).
- Classes 3-9 Work on group topics during regular classes;
Individual work at home;
Questions, suggestions, ideas springing from the students' home research;
- 10th class Submission of individual contributions;
Discussion;
Suggestions on further steps to be taken to improve individual contributions;
- 11th class Submission of corrected/improved individual contributions;
Further work on group topics
- 12th class First full version of the Serbian-English glossary shared among the members of the group – discussion
- 13th class Illustrations and annexes included in the working version of the glossary
- 14th class Group review of the material – final remarks, ideas for improvement/corrections
- 15th class Ideas for designing the graphical solutions for the book;
Evaluation of the project

The project resulted in a 205 B5 page Glossary covering 4,170 professional terms in the fields of painting and graphical design with the following structure:

English-Serbian Glossary	7– 78
Annex 1: Basic Human Anatomy	79– 86
Annex 2: Glossary of Colors	87– 96
Annex 3: Corel Draw Main Tools	97–100
Annex 4: Photoshop Tools	101–116
Annex 5: Pigments	117–122
Serbian-English Glossary	123–205

The project and its effects were evaluated by the students who participated in it. The evaluation questionnaire contained nine questions. The first four questions invited the students to make direct assessment (on the scale from 1 to 5) of: 1) the final outcome of the project, 2) students' personal contribution to the project, 3) teacher's role in guiding the work; and 4) organization and coordination of the project.

The questionnaire also contained the following questions: 5) How do you feel about having to work at home in addition to your regular classwork, 6) What would you single out as the key advantages of project-based teaching on the basis of your experience with this project; 7) Do you think that this project gave you a chance to learn more than traditional class-work; 8) What would you single out as the key disadvantages of project-based work judging on your own experience with this project; 9) Would you participate in another project of the kind.

The results of the students' assessment of the project (first four questions) are as follows:

- the outcome of the project: 4.9;
- individual contribution to the project: 4,3;
- teacher's guiding work: 5;
- organization and coordination of the project (general, including overall conditions): 4.3

Interestingly, the students stated that they did not find it hard to work at home during their work on the project. Only one student gave a “yes” answer, with a remark *“Only at some instances”*. As the students were given a chance to comment on this issue, here are some of their comments: *“It was very pleasant to work at home”, “I followed the teacher's suggestions and I found the right way to balance it all”, “I found this kind of work very suitable. It gave us all a chance to work at our own individual pace. Working in a group imposes limits to better students as it forces them to adjust to the tempo of the slow ones”*.

A list of the advantages of project-based teaching (question no. 6) emphasized by the students included: a chance to get direct experience about research work and project management, an opportunity to adopt useful learning skills, a fact that their work and efforts resulted in a tangible outcome (a useful publication), a chance to show creativity, an opportunity to come up with an outcome to serve as a means of their personal promotion, stimulating atmosphere, understanding that setting up high goals for personal improvement brings forth high results, expanding the limits of personal potentials.

Here is a short review of some of the most interesting answers: *“I think that this is the best experience our generation has had so far”, “I was skeptic at the beginning, but we functioned extremely well and came up with an extraordinary result”, “I learnt a lot about research methodology and had a chance to considerably improve my skills”, “I particularly appreciate a chance to learn a wide spectrum of professional vocabulary in an interesting way, and a fact that I did it in cooperation with my fellow colleagues and other teachers who were also helpful whenever we would address them to help us solve some professional dilemma”, “I am proud that we will leave a very useful publication to the future generations”...*

Question no. 7 (Do you think that this project gave you a chance to learn more than traditional class-work) prompted a straight “yes” answer from all the students. Here are some of the students' comments: *“I think that this experience is extremely useful”, “I think that this project brought us to the very core of our needs as ESP students. I will remember this semester throughout my life”;*

Asked to produce a list of key disadvantages, the students came up with an exceptionally short list including a wish that they were given more time to work on the project and a remark about the complexity of the project objective which was *„kind of scary“* at the beginning.

Asked to say if they would participate in a similar project in future, the students' answer was a definite “yes”, some adding short comments like *“With utmost pleasure”, “Hope we will be given a chance”*, etc.

The greatest benefit, recognized by all the participants, is that each student had a chance to explore the English vocabulary in his/her own field of professional interest, at his/her own pace, while the topics of the students common interest (art epochs and movements, materials and tools for visual arts, basic elements and principles of art) were explored and studied by all the students in the group work during the regular classes.

One of the interesting conclusions resulting from this direct experience with PBL was that several students who demonstrated difficulties with traditional teacher-led instruction based on strong reliance on textbook/lecture learning, showed much more interest and produced unexpectedly good results (in the field of sculpture and graffiti).

Generally speaking, the project was successfully completed to the satisfaction of both students and the teacher. The obtained results highly coincide with the results of the above-mentioned short-term studies on the effects of project-based approach. The resulting glossary is currently (summer 2015) reviewed by the Faculty teachers, experts in painting and graphic design. At the same time, the students of graphic design who participated in the project are working on the manuscript preparation for publishing. Hopefully, the glossary will be published by the Faculty of Arts in 2016, after the regular publishing selection procedure.

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„DIZAJNIRAJTE SVOJ ENGLSKI, ISKAŽITE SVOJ DIZAJN NA ENGLSKOM” – PROJEKTNI RAD U NASTAVI ENGLSKOG JEZIKA ZA STUDENTE SLIKARSTVA I GRAFIČKOG DIZAJNA

Projektna nastava, kao alternativa tradicionalnoj nastavi sa nastavnikom u dominantnoj ulozi, predstavlja jedan od načina da se iskustvo iz rada u učionici, kao i misaone veštine studenata podignu na viši nivo. Zastupnici ideje o implementaciji projektne nastave navode brojne prednosti ove metode, uključujući dublje razumevanje nastavnog sadržaja, širenje spoznajne osnove, unapređivanje komunikacijskih i interpersonalnih veština, kao i razvoj kreativnosti. U radu se sumiraju efekti projekta implementiranog u nastavi engleskog za posebne namene sa studentima druge godine slikarstva i grafičkog dizajna na Fakultetu umetnosti Univerziteta u Nišu, Srbija tokom drugog semestra akademske 2014/2015 godine. Projekat je rezultirao izradom publikacije „English-Serbian & Serbian-English Glossary of Painting and Graphic Design Terms“ (Englesko-srpski & srpsko-engleski glosar termina u oblasti slikarstva i grafičkog dizajna).

Ključne reči: projektna nastava, engleski za posebne namene, Englesko-srpski & srpsko-engleski glosar termina u oblasti slikarstva i grafičkog dizajna