

WAYS OF MOTIVATING ESL STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract: *in our English as a second language (ESL) Communications class, small teams of students speak enthusiastically to their peers about the companies, products, and services they created. When it comes time for students to continue to the next group, they are so focused on presenting the results of their projects that nobody moves. Later, the students fill out surveys that describe their total engagement, and their responses illustrate why the unit was a success. Almost every student liked the topic of entrepreneurship and envisioned using the information in the future.*

Keywords: *second language, motivation, project-based learning, entrepreneurship.*

Every student stated that his or her English skills improved as a result of working on the three-week project that inspired them to think and communicate like business people. As we planned the unit on entrepreneurship and discussed the class objectives, we kept a focus on student involvement. The discussion evolved and eventually centered on a major question: “How can we meet our department’s curricular objectives through an engaging project-based learning experience connected to our courses textbook?” [1, c. 48]. That question inspired the development of this unit and led to the positive results at the end. To describe how those results were achieved, this article outlines the entrepreneurship unit in detail. Motivation through authentic materials and project-based learning. Instructors in all disciplines understand the importance of student engagement and motivation to academic success. The idea of a classroom full of unmotivated (and therefore often unenthusiastic) students strikes fear into the heart of the best instructor. Motivation is a key element in language learning, as has been well established in the literature. Researchers distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the former stemming from a learner’s internal desire to learn a language for its own sake, and the latter indicating a desire to learn in order to reach an external goal (e.g., a better job). Learners of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) who demonstrate both types of motivation have a higher likelihood of continuing language study and accomplishing long-term goals. Research shows that the use of authentic materials and content encourages motivation in language learning. As access to these types of materials is increasingly available via the Internet, instructors are able to more easily incorporate them into lesson plans to supplement and enhance textbook units and topics.

Gilmore’s (2011) study suggests that using authentic materials allows students to better develop communicative competencies through “rich input” and “drawing learners’ attention to useful features through careful task design and follow-up practice activities” [2]. If instructors work to ensure that the materials fit well into the language objectives of the course, merging language and authentic content can greatly enhance students’ learning and motivation.

It is also important that students’ motives are congruent with their goals, which helps ensure interest and success. Project-based learning entails students working together over an extended period to research and report on complex tasks, and it teaches real-world skills and language that will be used in the workplace and other authentic environments.

Project-based learning uses authentic materials to allow for this merging of content and language. By integrating language, technology, and media education through Project-based learning, instructors encourage students to reflect on their own learning and focus on language that will help them reach their goals. To this end, instructors reach their productive goals when they use the tools of Project-based learning and incorporate authentic materials into their courses. Background of unit on entrepreneurship. We teach adults in the Academic English Studies (AES) program at a college in the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Intensive English Program consists of approximately 100 intermediate- to advanced-level students [3, c. 153]. We strongly feel that this project is adaptable and appropriate for large numbers of English-language learners around the world who plan to use their English in an international business setting. The students who participated in this project were a diverse group, and the majority of them were able to apply the topic to their personal interests and goals. With a bit of effort, students can tailor the content of numerous types of business ventures they study to their interests and experiences. For students with less education or business experience, this project could be an excellent introduction to the language of business.

Likewise, for those with more business experience, this project could help them review and become even more comfortable with business terminology that they use in their workplaces. The topic of entrepreneurship is particularly beneficial for English-language instructors because it inspires students to be creative and pursue their personal interests while learning valuable vocabulary and common business skills. We therefore hope that

this article provides ESL/EFL instructors with flexible tools to link teaching to students' practical plans with the goal of increasing their motivation and learning.

References

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