



*Full Length Research Paper*

# The effects of project work presentations on English speaking skill

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When students learn a language, they need to consolidate vocabulary and grammar forms. Projects make it possible for students to use language in a meaningful way. By interacting and negotiating meaning in project work, students can improve reading, writing and speaking skills. The aim of this study was to determine the effect of project work on students' speaking skills and improvement in English language learning. For the method of the study, the students were asked to prepare projects they could choose on their free will. After being guided on how to do project work, the students were requested to present their projects orally in the classroom. The results of the project work show that project work presentations can help students improve their speaking skill. While the students were preparing their projects, they found a genuine opportunity to negotiate meaning with their partners. This process enabled them to both improve language forms and learn vocabulary. The content analysis of recording of the projects show that presenting their projects made it possible for students to revise and consolidate the vocabulary and grammar forms they prepared for their projects. This improvement in choice of language form and vocabulary and speaking as a result was noticed in their expressing ideas about their projects.

**Keywords:** Project work, English speaking skills, presentation

## INTRODUCTION

Project work can become the most applicable teaching method that can enhance language learning when it is combined with constructivist concepts such as inquiry-based learning; cooperative learning and problem based learning (Knolls 1997). The use of project work in that sense can serve as a means to promote communicative language learning and meet learners' community language demands beyond the classroom (Eyring, 1997). In many classical language classrooms, students don't have access to authentic task. However, while students are engaged in doing project works, they are exposed to authentic language by means of doing authentic tasks with authentic purposes. These authentic tasks become highly motivational for students as they feel they do something from real life that is not artificial, at all. Students refer to websites, articles, books, newspapers in

order to take notes for meaningful purposes (Alan & Stoller, 2005; Sheppard & Stoller, 1995; Stoller, 1997, 2006).

Projects make it possible for students to use language in a meaningful way by recycling vocabulary and grammar forms. While students are engaged in authentic tasks in projects, they have repeated opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning; improve reading, writing and speaking. Project work, in that sense, prepare students to use those skills for lifelong learning (Stoller, 2006).

Project works can also have social benefits for students in that while students work with classmates to collect synthesize and report information; they improve their cooperative, collaborative and social skills. Allan & Stoller (2005) suggest that students learn to pay attention to

others' opinions, exchange information and negotiate meaning by means of improving social skills in their engagement with projects.

Another praiseworthy benefit of project work is related to the affective dimension of learning. Traditional classrooms lack in creativity, motivation and opportunity. Project work, on the other hand, can prevent boredom and monotony due to its positive impact on students' motivation, autonomy, self-confidence, decision making and cooperative learning (Legutke and Thomas, 1991). Stoller (2006) shows that students are actively engaged and involved in projects due to their motivation and enjoyment in doing projects.

#### Research Question

how well can project work presentations help students improve their speaking skills?

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted At Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Preparatory School of English participants

As doing project to develop speaking skills in English was not a compulsory component of the curriculum, there were two groups of students of six students who were eager to do projects and present those projects. Three of those students were boys and the other three were girls aged between 18 and 20 years. All of the participant students had learned English in preparatory schools of English but they couldn't pass the exemption exams they had taken before starting Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Preparatory School of English. As they had the same language experience, it was decided by the school authority that those students should study elementary level English at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Preparatory School of English (MSU, PSE) after they were given a level testing examination.

#### Instrument

As the instrument of the study, the students were asked to prepare projects they could choose on their free will. After being guided on how to do project work, the students were requested to present their projects orally in the classroom. The language content of the project work presentations were used to see how well those presentations can help students improve their speaking skills

#### Procedure

while the students were having their English courses, it has been observed by the instructor that although the students had good command of English grammar because they were Elementary students, they could not transfer their already acquired language content into practice. That is to say, they had a considerably substantial knowledge of English language but they could

not speak English accurately and fluently. Although they knew English grammar, they were making grammatical mistakes and were not able to find the suitable word for what they wanted to say. For that reason, it was decided that helping students do presentations would both improve their fluency and help them learn new vocabulary because preparing the steps of project and presenting their projects would provide students with genuine opportunities to convey meaning.

In order to help students do project work, Steps determined by Stoller (2001) were followed. those steps are taking over the subject of a project, determining the outcome of a project, having students design the project, gathering data, compiling and analyzing the information gathered, providing students with the language input necessary for the final presentation, presenting the final product of their projects and talking over the presentation. First, the students were advised to choose interesting topics that could appeal to them. As the audience were young people, topics that could attract the attention of young people were voted. By having the topics of presentations voted, it was taken for granted that the topics of the presentations were interesting enough and the interest of the audience can be attracted by the enthusiasm of the presenter.

Then, students were told to gather data for their presentations and make an outline of what to include in their presentations prior to writing their scripts. The duration of the presentation of each project was determined to make it possible to decide how much of the gathered data they should include. It was stated that drawing an outline would give direction to the student in what to include in their presentations. This outlined format could also be used by the presenters as a check list while they were doing their presentations. Looking at the outline of their presentation, rather than the whole script, would enable the presenters to interact with the audience by maintaining eye contact with them. Each of the outlines that were prepared by the students were analyzed by the instructor to discuss with the students and make necessary changes.

As for the script of the presentation, the students were asked to prepare an introduction to their topic. This introduction could include reasons for choosing the topic they have chosen as well as a brief summary of their presentation. It was stated by the researcher that an effective way to start a presentation would be asking questions, telling stories or giving facts about the presentation. For the ending of the presentation, the students were supposed draw a conclusion that could wrap up the presentation.

Then the students were encouraged to decide what language input they should use for their projects. The written drafts of the projects were corrected and edited by the students after discussing about the language content of the scripts. The written content of each presentation was analyzed by the instructor in order to discuss and negotiate meaning with the students and to make

necessary language changes in sentences where the meaning is not clearly conveyed.

Another step in the preparation process of the projects was practicing the prepared script. It was suggested that the students keep practicing their presentations until they can convey message comfortably and without being nervous. They were particularly advised to maintain eye contact, pay attention to intonation and the volume of their voice. They were also asked to deliver their presentation calmly with a moderate pace. Doing the presentation too fast would cause the audience lose track of the presentation while presenting too slowly would cause boredom. A checklist of all of the above mentioned processes were also provided for the students to follow while they were doing their presentations.

Finally, the students were ready to present their projects. The necessary visual or technical aids to do the presentations were made available by the instructor. Prior to presenting their projects, students were asked to provide all of the target vocabulary and a brief summary of the content of their projects so the students wrote all of the target vocabulary and they followed while they were doing their projects. By telling the presenters to write down on the board all their target vocabulary and show a brief summary of their projects, the instructor wanted to make sure that all of audience, the other students who are listening to their friends, can acquire the target vocabulary in order for them to contribute to the presentation by asking questions and expressing ideas about what is being presented. Therefore, while the presentations were presented, all of the students were encouraged to communicate ideas about the projects in order for them to speak English both accurately and fluently, which was the target of doing those projects.

**First project:** there were three boys doing the presentation. they decided to fry potatoes in their presentation and they were asked to record themselves to see the language they use while they were frying potatoes. The language content of this first project is as follows:

S1: hello, my name is Burak and I am a cook.

S2: hello, my name is Mete. I am a assistant cook and a speaker.

S3: hello, My name is Zülküf and I am cameraman.

S2: today, we are frying potatoes and he is washing the potatoes. he is peeling the potatoes. He is washing and cutting the potatoes in slice. We need glass of oil and teaspoon of salt. A glass of oil into frying pan. Now, into potatoes a frying pan.

S1: I am very hungry.

S2: delicious food. I hope so.

Second project: There were four girls who prepared the second project. They decided to cook two different dishes (rice and chickpea).

S4: Hello, I am Pınar. I am presenter and cameraman.

S5: Hi, I am Selin. I am rice cook.

S6: Hello, I am Kader and I am a cameraman.

S7: Hello everyone, I am a cook, I will make chickpeas. I am Gözde.

S6: yes Gözde, what do we need?

S7: firstly, we need two onions, one cup of chickpeas, two tablespoons of tomato paste, a half glass of olive oil, some salt, three glasses of water, some spice. we boiled the chickpeas in the evening and grated the onions. now we are poring oil into the pan. we are poring onions into the pan.

S6: She is stirring it until it turns to pink. Now we are adding two tablespoons of tamoto paste into the pan and she is stirring again.

S7: It sells good Kader?

S6: yes, it smells good.

S7: I am hungry.

S4, S5 and S6 (in chorus): me, too.

S6: Yes, now I think they turned to pink. Now she is pouring chickpeas into the pan and stirring again.

S7: what did you do at the weekend Kader?

S6: I went to Bodrum. My family are there and I saw them.

S5: how was the weather?

S6: it was very cold. I didn't want come here but I have to.

S7: what did you do your family?

S6: my family talked with me.

S7: what time!

S4: Yes, now she is pouring three glasses of water into the pan.

S7: Hello Pınar, how are you?

S4: I am fine.

S5: now we are adding a pinch of salt and some spice. I think this is red pepper.

S7: What did you do at the weekend?

S5: I went to Akyaka with my friend.

S7: who is your friend?

S5: Burak.

S7 : Can I taste?

S4, 5 and 6: of course! you are the cook.

S7: hmm! delicious! I have made it. we will wait about twenty minutes and it will be ready.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In many classical language classrooms, students don't have access to authentic task. However, while students are engaged in doing project works, they are exposed to authentic language by means of doing authentic tasks with authentic purposes. These authentic tasks become highly motivational for students as they feel they do something from real life that is not artificial, at all. (Alan & Stoller, 2005; Sheppard & Stoller, 1995; Stoller, 1997, 2006). In the study, the students didn't have to do projects but they wanted to engage in using English language because felt they were doing something from real life by preparing meals and giving the instructions in English. In that sense, they were highly motivated and used real language as follows:

Today, we are frying potatoes and he is washing the potatoes. He is peeling the potatoes.  
He is washing and cutting the potatoes in slice.  
We need glass of oil and teaspoon of salt.

Projects make it possible for students to use language in a meaningful way by recycling vocabulary and grammar forms. While students are engaged in authentic tasks in projects, they have repeated opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning (Stoller, 2006). While the students were preparing and presenting their projects, they had many opportunities to revise the grammar they learnt in a meaningful way. they had the chance to consolidate simple present tense and present continuous tense and simple past tense while they were doing the projects:

We need two onions,  
We boiled the chickpeas in the evening and grated the onions.  
Now we are pouring oil into the pan.

Stoller (2006) stated that projects give genuine opportunities to students in order for them to learn vocabulary. In our study, while the students did their projects they had the opportunity to learn words like one cup of chickpeas, two tablespoons of tomato paste, a half glass of olive oil, some salt, three glasses of water, some spice.

Traditional classrooms lack in creativity, motivation and opportunity. Project work, on the other hand, can prevent boredom and monotony due to its positive impact on students' motivation, autonomy, self-confidence, decision making and cooperative learning (Legutke and Thomas, 1991). The students stated that they were happy to do something with English and that they enjoyed doing something in English on their own.

Doing project works have positive impact on students' speaking. The students in the study, as they prepared a

lot, had a good command on their speaking while they were presenting their projects because while presenting the projects, they didn't search for words and they were fluent.

## CONCLUSION

This study was designed to see how well student project work presentations help students improve speaking skill in English. The language content of the project work presentations show that the presentations help students improve their speaking skills as students can have repeated opportunities to revise the grammatical structures they have studied in their courses. Besides, project work presentations help students learn new vocabulary, which as a result, contributes to their fluency while they speak English.

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