

Project – Based Learning Assessment Methods Comparison in Undergraduate EFL Classes

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Abstract: Educators use different teaching approaches to equip students with 21st century skills. Project-Based learning (PBL) is one of them. The main principal of PBL is active learning where student and their future career needs is the core of learning process. In Language acquisition (LA) and in English as a Foreign Language context PBL's essentials are to generate authentic learning environment which aids learners through various projects (power point presentation, short video, posters, magazines, and brochures). Project- Based Learning is an end-product oriented; therefore the evaluation process of learners' exertion is crucial, because non evaluated effort causes decreases in learners' motivation. It is a study case in one of the first year classes in the Faculty of Education at Ishik University. This paper focuses on PBL assessment in EFL undergraduate students English language teaching classes. Multiple-choice, true-false tests and standardized tests are not adequate to measure learners' PBL end products and their endeavors on the process of reaching required learning outcomes. This study probes and compares three different PBL assessment methods in order to reveal the most applicable and the easiest acceptable assessment method.

Keywords: Project – Based Learning, Self and Peer Assessment, EFL learners

1. Introduction

The 21st century competitive environment each passing day makes up progress. Therefore, success in education field connects with keeping up with century's technological innovations and to get well-equipped learners, rapid global and digital improvement requirements should not be ignored. Nowadays Project-based Learning (PBL) method establishes a ground to an in-depth knowledge and leads up learners to acquire real-life skills. Initially, PBL was used in scientific disciplines, then with the increase demands to professional English, PBL implementation entered into language acquisition field such as ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

The important cause of implementing PBL in EFL context is its influence on life-long learning. After graduating and facing with real life, learners cannot use what they have learnt through long years. Even the perfect English solely is not sufficient to improve and get required success in competitive professional world because life-long skills are essential.

PBL is also used very productively in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) context because traditional English teaching way is insufficient. PBL gives opportunities to students not just to learn English relevant to their specialties but also varied projects help to develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and self-direction. Furthermore, PBL opens the door to enjoyable and effective ways to learn English and gain real-life skills.

However, hence the end product is significant phase of learning process in PBL, elaborative and objective evaluation and assessment criteria are considerable not only for the end product but also for the whole product generation process from the beginning to the end. It goes without saying that assessment and evaluation are prominent in education. For teachers evaluation outcome is a map which shows whether planned and intended goals were achieved or not. It also aids to indicate learners' strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, in PBL well- designed evaluation and assessment criteria and process is one of the ways that assists to keep learners' enthusiasm level high while trying to accomplish projects. Moreover, to know what is going to be gained and appraised engenders positive interaction and increases learners' motivation. There is a question how learners' endeavors and final work results-projects (posters, power point presentations, short movies, videos, leaflets, magazine, debates) should be assessed? Can only standardized test be used to evaluate projects? The paper attempts to reveal the aspects of different types of evaluation and assessment of PBL.

2. Theoretical Background

General consensus seems that English language is no longer seen as a lingua franca or as a tool that can be taught without engagement with other disciplines and skills. Learners need not only make progress in their English language proficiency but also advance other generic, global competences such as intercultural and interpersonal communicative competence, digital competence and integrate them into their skills' repertoire which entails the attitudes of flexibility, tolerance and collaboration (Fitzpatrick & O'Dowd, 2012).

The 19th and 20th centuries' industrial changes and 21st century high-speed technological progress are the main causes and triggers of implementing PBL in EFL and ESL contexts (Baş & Beyhan, 2010; Rousová, 2008). According to Bas (2010) it synchronized with the need of an environment where learners acquire not only knowledge but also real-life skills. Therefore integration of PBL into EFL and ESL context increasingly has been growing since the early 1980s (Alan & Stoller, 2005; Fried-Booth, 2002; Haines, 1989; Papandreou, 1994; Sheppard & Stoller, 1995; Simpson, 2011; Tessema, 2005; Tomei, Glick, & Holst, 1999). PBL is based on constructivist theory (Ke, 2010) and it shifts away from traditional teaching method to learner-centered approach. According to constructivist theory, knowledge is not only what is taught, but it should also be shaped with learner's active behaviors (Benson, 2013; Yam & Rossini, 2010). Learning process occurs when learners connect new information with his or her background knowledge (Sidman-Taveau, 2005). Learning responsibility transfers from teacher to the learner (Doppelt, 2003). Consequently, teacher's roles change from lecturer to the role of partner, a facilitator, a guide and a tutor in the process of learning responsibility transfer (Barth, 1972). Learners are active; they gain knowledge through active thinking and solving problems. Knowledge is not rote-memorization, homework from books or exercises done for teachers (Gardner, 2011), is learner's selecting, retaining and elaborating information which allows them to satisfy their curiosity (Holt, 1995; Rogers, 1970). Learners build long-lasting knowledge and meaning when the new information is connected with her or his peculiar way of perception (Bas, 2010; Brooks, 1999). Learner active participation is prominent in PBL, it is a deep-learning approach which engages learners in the investigation of real-world problems and engenders active learning environment through substantial and valuable projects (Ribé & Vidal, 1993; Yam & Rossini, 2010). PBL conduces to learners to create links between textbooks and real life language (Fried-Booth, 2002). Besides enhancing learners' engagement

in probing important and meaningful questions PBL also assists learners to develop collaborative and communicative skills which are noteworthy features in learners later working life (Hadim & Esche, 2002). Collaborative learning improves learners' ideas and thought. As projects are often done in groups, this joint undertaking trains and advances learners abilities for team-work and productive collaboration (Henze & Nejdil, 1998). Hilton- Jones (1988) explained PBL as an eligible approach for mixed-abilities language classes because while fulfilling project learners it enables to work in the pace and level that is appropriate for them. PBL gives opportunities to learners to comprehend their real needs for using the target language (Dhieb-Henia, 1999; Hilton-Jones, 1988).

There are a lot of studies (MA and PhD thesis, longitudinal studies), researches that investigate the effects of PBL on not only language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) but also critical and analytical thinking, problem solving, generic and life-long skills, digital skills which are reported as positive and fruitful (Ke, 2010; Petersen, 2008; Rousová, 2008; Simpson, 2011). The adaptation of PBL in EFL classrooms can be prosperous and advantageous.

2.1 Evaluation and PBL Assessment

The first order of business in an exploration of PBL assessment is to find out what “assessment” and “evaluation” mean. Learners' awareness about her / his strengths and weakness is strongly based on sufficient amount of feedback, assessment and evaluation process. Feedback, assessment and evaluation are indispensable instruments in the learning development process. Learners generally will not be able to examine and manage their learning process adequately without assessment, evaluation and feedback which provides them the outcomes of their efforts. The validity of these evaluation instruments assists in developing the coherent and consistent model of EFL (English as a foreign Language) learning. One of the main purposes of assessment is to estimate the achievement of both sides – a learner and a teacher. The achievement of the assessment process is the feedback that promotes progress. Well-designed assessment enables instructors to indicate strengths and weaknesses in planned instructional goals. Other primary aspects of assessment in learning process is that it gives an opportunity to the learner to realize what was missed and the teacher is able to identify learners' needs and what should be done as a next stage to advance learning (Chastain, 1988).

2.2 PBL Assessment in EFL (English as a foreign Language) Context

Language assessment has showed a marked improvement in the last years. This paper aims to compare some contemporary PBL assessment types in EFL context. In addition to elaborated comparison, this paper undertakes eliciting convenient assessments forms.

From Lado's (1961) discrete –point test orientation to Ollers'(1979) integrative tests (cloze and dictation) various theoretical principals were offered and used by language test developers to get more benefits. However, in the early 80s Canale & Swain's work marked a new epoch in the language testing field. The communicative competence notion and sociolinguistics as a principal component became the focal points in language assessment process.

In the case of PBL assessment in EFL context, researches proved that it is a crucial and challenging phase. Compared to the traditional learning assessment PBL assessment is different as well as challenging. For example, teachers by implementing various forms of paper– and – pencil based tests

can measure learners' vocabulary and grammatical knowledge but communication skills (speaking skills) cannot be measured. Learners' spoken English communication skills require oral performance. Accordingly, in PBL implementation real-life skills such as higher order thinking, critical thinking, problem solving, formulating hypotheses, data collecting and drawing valid conclusions necessitate the use of different types of assessment. It goes without saying that for getting more reliable and efficient results for factual knowledge objective test items are important. However, different types of assessment are used to assess PBL. Some of which are self-assessment, peer assessment, case-based assessment, performance-based assessment and portfolio assessment. In PBL, true-false tests, multiple choice tests, types of standardized tests are not adequate to measure whole getting end-product process' phases, because there is rarely sole right or best answer, there might be multi-solutions, various outcomes and performances (Linn, 2008).

While implementing PBL in language teaching, learners accomplish required projects and achieve learning purposes through using real communication and authentic language and multiple learning experiences. Hence performance assessment forms are essential in PBL assessment. According to Hutchinson (1993) grammatical and linguistic accuracy should not be single focal of PBL assessment. In a nutshell, an effective assessment program can be defined as a harmonization of multiple types of summative and formative assessments integrated into the whole assessment process.

2.3 Self – and – Peer Assessment

Conventional language teaching argued that learners might not be able to assess properly themselves or their peers, most particularly in the early process of language acquisition. However, recent years researches reveal the necessity and benefit of self – and peer – assessment (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Self – and peer – assessment are implemented in different disciplines and courses to understand learning process in teams and between team members (Tan & Keat, 2005). Furthermore, as stated above PBL implementation in EFL context assists enhancing 21st century skills. Therefore, to measure these abilities, 21st century assessment system is vital.

One of the main instructional goals for all learners is to learn how to evaluate one's own work. Self – assessment skills are vital for learners' advancements in the path of being an independent learner. Moreover, self – assessment gives learners an opportunity to find out their strengths and weaknesses, in language acquisition process. Self – assessment also can be learners' personal needs analysis survey to generate more perfect and knowledgeable projects and to explore English learning process gaps. Self – assessment increases learners' own mistakes' awareness. It is common knowledge that people are more forgetful to external correction, on the contrary, when learners correct their own mistakes they hardly ever make them again which give rise to life – long learning. Self – assessment aids learners to clarify learning goals, determine their own directions, and accomplish required projects' objectives.

Another main source of assessment is peer-assessment. In fact, people are almost always in touch with each other. Peer – assessment is one of the real-life settings in the classroom. PBL's the most prominent features are to establish and encourage a positive environment for learners' team – working activities. The projects in PBL are the end product of learners' collaboration and cooperation. Collaborative and cooperative learning are the keystones in PBL. They allow learners to share their knowledge, language skills. Therefore, in PBL peer – assessment with well-designed rubrics, evaluation forms provided by

instructors or mutually agreed rubrics are significant, because they make evaluation process smoother. Learners can evaluate their own group or team member as well as other groups' projects or stages of works by offering positive recommendations and suggestions for projects' advancement or provide support and help each other to fulfill the requirements. Peer – assessment is not only the process of marking others' works or presentations but also the process of building knowledge with social interaction in meaningful context, with communicative and real – life aspects context. In peer – assessment learners are assessment providers as well as assessment receivers.

Peer – and self – assessment allow instructors to reveal what is overlooked and undetected to establish more substantial learning process, supervise and help learners in a better and more observant way. Nevertheless, self – and peer – assessment have been criticized with regard to fairness. Brindley and Scoffield (1998) stated that peers do not assign low marks to each other, even when the performance is insufficient or poor. Moreover, some students feel that they cannot judge themselves fairly while others feel that they are not judged fairly.

The researcher schematized the analysis and comparisons done above.

Table 1 Comparison table of Self – Assessment, Peer – Assessment and Tutor, Facilitator – Assessment

	Self – Assessment	Peer – Assessment	Tutor, Facilitator–Assessment
Popularity	Increase	Increase	Required
Assessment Form	Authentic, Alternative Evaluate one's own work	Authentic, Alternative Evaluate peer work	Traditional Evaluate learners' personal effort and teamwork
Learner	Active performer in the assessment process Learner autonomy increase	Interactive and active Performer in the assessment process Learner autonomy increase	Feedback and evaluation receiver
Approach	Student – centered	Student – centered	According to implemented assessment form it can be teacher – centered or the equilibrium mixture of teacher and student centered approaches.
Information	Obtained directly from learner herself/himself (self-check lists, self- evaluation form)	Getting information, constructive feedbacks and enlightenments from peers or team members (peer- checklists, observation, peer- evaluation form)	Comments about learners' individual or intergroup progress. Feedbacks which assists learners to avoid misconception and helps to advance the process of learning
Learning	Active, responsible for	Active, construct	Learner is passive,

Process	his/her own learning, self-correction, self – directing, acquired different assessment techniques	knowledge, share information	Instructor/Facilitator’s positive feedbacks
Questions	What is my progress and deficiencies? What is my responsibility to fulfill our project? What can be done?	How should I provide constructive, effective and not offensive feedbacks? Are my feedbacks and rubrics criteria able to increase her/his (or their if one team evaluates another) motivation, enthusiasm to accomplish project rather than generating negative competitive environment?	Are the requirements that should be accomplished while doing projects clear? How to keep students on track and make them not to lose focus? Do students shift from spoon-feeding towards active learning and being knowledge seeker?

Research Questions:

The researcher attempted to find out learners’ attitudes towards assessment types. The research questions were as follows:

1. What does assessment notion mean for you?
2. Do you think that test is sufficient to evaluate all their efforts while accomplishing project?
3. Do you prefer to be assessed by
 - a teacher
 - b peers
 - c self-evaluation

3. Method

Qualitative and quantitative instruments were used to collect data. For this study a five – point Likert scale was used, rating from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Codes 1 and 2 (strongly agree/agree) and codes 4 and 5 (disagree/strongly disagree) were tailed together to show clear opinions. As students thoughts are important, a qualitative research was accepted more suitable. Based on questionnaires semi – structured interview was conducted. The researcher used qualitative instrument-semi-structured interview not to limit the respondent and allow her/him to discuss some issues that the researcher may not have considered in the questionnaire. The aims of the questionnaire and the interview were mainly to reveal the students’ assessment perception and preferred assessment type.

3.1 The Participants

The participants of the study were Ishik University, Faculty of Education – Freshmen students with different educational backgrounds. During the semester various projects (power point, booklet, city guide book) were done by students who participated in the study.

3.2 Data Analysis

Table 2 Assessment Types

Assessment Types	%		
	Agree	Mid	Disagree
Test is quite good way to asses my all efforts while fulfilling project	17	13	70
I would like to be assessed by my friend	66,7	8,3	25
I would like to be assessed by my teacher	75	0	25
I am able to evaluate myself fairly	41,7	0	58,3

According to the study results 70% of students believe that tests are insufficient to explore their efforts made while doing projects. On the other hand, 17% stated that tests are completely sufficient instruments to evaluate them.

Moreover, approximately 67 % percent of the students want to be assessed by their friends. They are sure that their friends will not give them poor scores even when their performance is poor. At the same time 25% of students do not want to be assessed by their friends because they think that their friends experience and knowledge are not adequate to evaluate others and they are incompetent.

The questionnaire results also clearly demonstrate students' assessment perceptions about evaluation by the highest percentage of being assessed by teachers, because students believe that they are: more knowledgeable, more experienced and fairer person than others without prejudices and preoccupancy. While 58,3% of students stress that they cannot evaluate themselves properly, 41, 7 % of them state that they can fairly evaluate themselves.

3.3 Findings and Discussion

The questionnaire which was supported by the interview to get as much possible information as possible from participants showed that 73,9 % of students are of the opinion that self-assessment is more convenient. In the interview it was explored that:

1. If they want to be successful, self – assessment should be the first step in students' educational life advancements.
2. On the exam or test day or the day before they might be sick, they might miss it, they have studied hard but suddenly when exam starts they may forget everything, so in that moment self – assessment relives their worries, because students know how hard they studied.
3. Nobody is able to know his/her strengths and weaknesses as well as him/her

4. None of the student chose the peer – assessment type, as the researcher mentioned above all of the study participants had a traditional teaching background. Hence, peer – assessment is the new notion for them and they still have not got accustomed to it as they mentioned to researcher while interview.
5. None of the students accepted teacher’s class observation as an assessment type. It has some reasons such as;
 - a. In Ishik University, in Faculty of Education student centered, student active learning process is prevailed.
 - b. Lecturers try to implement various contemporary teaching – and learning approaches, which aim to shift learners from rote memorization to critical – analytical thinking, higher – order thinking, problem- solving and productivity. Therefore, the teacher is not in the main role, our students are leading actors and stars of learning process. As it is not teacher dominant environment, students know that they are responsible for the learning process.
 - c. Students also believe that mid-term and final exam results are more important than teacher observation. However, in their pre – Ishik University educational life students gave a lot of importance to teacher grading because they came from traditional – centered method. As the researcher implements Project –Based Learning (PBL), it also assists learners to comprehend teacher’s observation and feedbacks importance to get successful product or presentation.

26% of the respondents stated that grades (test scores, exam results) are significant for them, because it is the best evidence of their achievement for their parents, friends and others around them. With regard to participants’ responds, grade is the instrument which proved their knowledge.

4. Conclusion

All in all, the researcher’s concluding remarks are that teachers should not be the sole evaluators. Especially in new methods like PBL students should be involved into the evaluation process. It goes without saying that students will not know these criteria. Hence, while knowledge interaction teachers should also train students how they would be able to assess themselves or their peers, or how to prepare proper rubrics. Different types of assessments from standardized test to authentic assessment should be implemented in the learning process. PBL opens the door of opportunities to be active in the learning process as well as in assessment which entails interaction between students and teachers. PBL implementation in Education Faculty also helps teachers to train their learners.

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Books

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Chapter in a Book

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Libraries historically highly value intellectual freedom and patron confidentiality (LaRue, 2007).

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LaRue (2007) identified intellectual freedom and patron confidentiality as two key values held historically by libraries.

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Darwin used the metaphor of the tree of life "to express the other form of interconnectedness—genealogical rather than ecological" (Gould & Brown, 1991, p. 14).

Direct Quotation with Author as Part of the Narrative

Gould and Brown (1991) explained that Darwin used the metaphor of the tree of life "to express the other form of interconnectedness—genealogical rather than ecological" (p. 14).