

Project Template for “Shaping the Way We Teach English”

Module(s): 9 (Critical Thinking)
Date submitted: October 5, 2006

Project Creator: Ameera Balushi
Project Reviewer: Noora Al-Sabah

Give information for:

- Students' age(s): 16-17
- # of students: 30

- Language level: Intermediate to upper-intermediate
- Other (optional): The majority of class are low achievers and are dependent on good students.

My Class Now (Snapshot)

Many weak level students are reluctant to take part in everyday tasks and activities.

Technique(s) I use *now*.

Brainstorming on the board at the beginning. Students then brainstorm on a different topic in groups and write down notes on wall charts and display them to promote a discussion.

Material(s) I use *now*.

- The whiteboard.
- Wall charts.

My Class in the Future (Vision)

Every student in the group has a role and is engaged in the task.

Technique(s) from this module that I *will* use.

After deciding on a topic, e.g. electing women, each student interviews four other students from different groups. Students go back to their group and report back the ideas reflecting on them. A summary of the points is written in the form of (for/against). Each member then will present one point of the argument and her reflection on it.

Material(s) or ideas from this module that I *will* use.

- OHP and Transparencies.
- A set of questions to help weak students conduct the interviews.

Project Template for “Shaping the Way We Teach English”

Additional Explanation from Project Creator

In “My Class in the Future(Vision) you described and predicted a change that you would like to see happen in your class. Provide additional information for the following related items. Write as though you are informing a person who knows nothing at all about your educational setting.

Many students in my school generally and in my class specifically are reluctant to participate in class tasks or express their views since they believe they have very little to contribute to the topic with other outstanding students in the class. Therefore, they are usually waiting on the sideline watching others work.

With assigning roles to each student, I believe they will feel involved and gain self confidence from the feeling of contribution to the task. They will feel less threatened by other students and by the whole class as an audience as they will be conducting the interviews face-to-face with other students. I anticipate some resistance at the beginning especially with low achieving students. Therefore, a set of questions will be provided to help them in the interview stage with giving them freedom to add and modify the questions according to the responses they receive. With a lot of encouragement and good feedback from the teacher and from other students, I believe they will overcome this problem.

Needless to say that such change will take some time since changing deep rooted attitudes are difficult to change, but with patience, I think within a month a gradual change will take place. The change will be noticeable and assessable through observation of students’ confidence in taking parting activities and in reporting back their points and reflecting on them. I think it is very important not to over correct students’ mistakes and just provide some helpful words, phrases and hints since over correction of every mistake students make in oral communication will rebuild the shyness shield they have against participation and expressing their views. They should have the feeling that it alright to make mistakes while communicating.

Project Template for “Shaping the Way We Teach English”

Project Reviewer Comments

Ameera has drawn a clear picture of her class now and the changes she would like to do. Her aim is to encourage all students to participate actively in the lessons. She is realistic and knows her students' level as she expects some resistance from them in the beginning until they accept this change and become ready to be involved in it. One month is a sufficient time for the students as I have taught the course that she is teaching now and I know that it is a very demanding one and requires a lot of writing.

Having taught this course before, I can find this proposal very challenging to students and will definitely achieve her aims in encouraging all students to participate especially when conducting interviews with their colleagues. I think weak students will have a chance to participate too.

To avoid students resistance to this change, I would suggest that Ameera gives the students the freedom of choosing the topic of their argument because if it is of their own choice and of interest to them, they will be motivated to work hard to present it in a better way rather than discussing a topic suggested by the teacher. The aim of this project is to enable students to use English in context so the teacher's main focus is on communication of ideas. Therefore, her assessment matches her goals as she mentioned that she would not over-correct students mistakes.

I would like to know if this project will be followed with a written article of the students findings or will it be a discussion only?

Post Peer Review Comments

To clarify more on the task and to answer Noora's question, I would be asking students to follow their work with writing their findings and their discussion summary in an essay, since the focus in the course I am teaching on the writing skill, but we are using all the other skills to lead to the final output.

I am glad to say that I am already seeing great positive change in my students' attitude. As for the OHP transparencies, sorry for not clarifying this point, but they are for students to use to present their summary of points and reflection.