

Project Template for “Shaping the Way We Teach English”

Module(s): Modules 01, 02, 03, 08, 09
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Give information for:

- Students’ age(s): 17-19
- # of students: 46/4 groups

- Language level: Intermediate through advanced
- Other (optional):

My Class Now (Snapshot)

Provide a description of the item in your classroom that you are targeting for change:

- Student independent study: ESP group-projects (Project description, requirements and evaluation criteria are attached.)

Technique(s) I use *now*.

- Global simulation.
- Industry research.
- Presentations.
- Organizing company portfolios (including leaflets).

Material(s) I use *now*.

- Authentic materials including internet resources, annual company reports, newspaper and magazine/journal articles, brochures, booklets, advertisements, etc.
- Project description, requirements and evaluation criteria handouts.

My Class in the Future (Vision)

Provide a description of what you expect the item to look like after you’ve made the change:

- Adding “real life” flavor to the group project work. (I would like to ask students to visit a real company of a respective profile, to get acquainted with how it works, and to report later on the experience gained.)

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

- Fieldtrips.
- Compiling surveys.
- Interviewing.
- Writing reports.

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

- Contextualizing language.
- Building language awareness.
- Integrating skills.
- Socratic questions.

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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.

The students I teach specialize in Economics, Banking and Finance. All classes they attend (Economics, Math, IT, Intellectual History of Europe) are conducted in English. ESP group-projects my students have to work on during this semester are focused on developing a communication strategy on behalf of an “organization” that students have to ‘create and operate’ (their choice of an industry and a respective company depends on a variety of factors, for example, a parent or a relative works in the field, an individual’s desire to work in the field in future, it’s the best developed sector of the country nowadays and there are many opportunities to find a good job upon graduation). The group-project comprises three stages: (1) industry research, (2) planning and communication (company leaflet: vision, mission, goals and objectives, client base, organizational structure, job responsibilities, etc.), and (3) communication package: company portfolio. For this academic year my students have ‘organized’ 9 companies including a hotel, a bakery, a coffee shop, a fast food restaurant, a fitness center, an aluminum plant, on-line advertising, a PET (chemical) plant, a construction and design company.

The new idea that has come to my mind during the Shaping course is to organize fieldtrips to respective companies in our city (if there are alike), so that my students can see, feel and later report on how the real business works and communicates. Because our city is big and attractive for international businesses (especially oil and gas, transportation, banking, telecommunication, fast-moving consumer goods and many others) there are opportunities to organize fieldtrips to companies where staff members are expatriates or at least people with an international educational background who can speak English (we will negotiate that).

1. The benefits I predict from this change:

Students will be able...

- To get acquainted with how real business works.
- To apply ESP in real communication situations and contextualize the language.
- To build language awareness.
- To develop integrated skills (compiling questionnaires, interviewing and report writing in particular).
- To develop critical and creative thinking ability.

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2. Challenges I expect:

- Finding companies corresponding to the organizational profile students have chosen for their group projects.
- Negotiating with these companies for organizing fieldtrips to their locations and scheduling time for meeting people who could agree to be interviewed by students (in English!!!).
- Whether students are able to compile appropriate questionnaires.
- Whether students are able not to get lost and handle their interviews (in terms of language and interpersonal communication with strangers).
- Whether students are able to process and organize the feedback well.

3. How I will address those challenges:

- Research the market and figure out which companies in the city can be addressed for organizing fieldtrips.
- Establish contacts with selected companies through administration, colleagues, parents, former students, etc.
- Discuss with company representatives the framework for fieldtrips to make them successful.
- Provide respective tips for compiling questionnaires (Socratic questions), interviewing and survey report writing long before fieldtrips themselves.
- Discuss business communication rules and ethical norms in class before fieldtrips themselves.
- Rehearse the sample interviewing procedures with students during class before fieldtrips themselves.
- Organize teachers or senior students to accompany students during fieldtrips and render assistance if necessary.

4. Steps needed in order to complete the change:

- Develop a plan and a strategy for organizing fieldtrips.
- Work out detailed handouts for students which cover the training, logistical, organizational, implementation, feedback and assessment procedures.
- Provide additional resources and consultations for students if needed/requested.
- Implement the change.
- Access and evaluate the change.
- Figure out what is to be improved in the future.

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5. Timeline for completing the change:
Second (spring) semester, 2006-2007 academic year – February/March.
6. How I will assess the degree of success of the change:
 - Develop a questionnaire for students to receive feedback on their field trip experience.
 - Process student feedback.
 - Talk to respective company representatives to find out their impressions of our students in general and their English language competence and proficiency in particular.
 - Organize a conference where students can share their impressions.
 - Invite company representatives to that conference (if possible).
 - Develop an evaluation criteria for all the assignments students will have to fulfill.

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Project Reviewer Comments

1. Is the proposed change clear (the snapshot of “My Class Now” vs. a vision for “My Class in the Future”)?
 - Yes, it is. Though the change to be achieved will require a lot of investment in terms of time and effort on both the teacher and student sides
2. Do the steps and the amount of time allotted for the change seem realistic?
 - I think, yes.
3. What do you believe to be the strengths of the proposed change?
 - It is obviously the multi-faceted goal to be achieved and the diversity of issues to be involved, which is appropriate to the level of students. In addition, the pragmatic and applied character of the change will empower students and help them to be successful upon graduation.
4. Do you perceive any additional challenges and/or have additional advice for meeting challenges related to the proposed change?
 - I doubt that it is possible to find many companies which will agree to accept students to their facilities and allot enough time for interviewing. Maybe the questionnaires students prepare should be short, and fieldtrips themselves should concentrate more on a general acquaintance with realia, i.e. learning by watching.
5. Does the type of assessment match the goals and outcomes of the proposed change?
 - Yes, it does.

Larissa Petrova