

# **A project-based HL class**

**Four-part *group* project**

**College level**

**Intermediate-Level Spanish HL Class**

**One semester (3 units)**

# Spanish 250

- Learner-centered and genre-based (King de Ramírez & Lafford, 2013; Dudley-Evans & St. Johns);
- Teacher as facilitator of learning, coach;
- Skills-focused – skills students need in college and beyond – long term learning.
- Assessment: focus in on linguistic skills, not knowledge;  
An evaluation of *skills* required to carry out different specific tasks associated with the profession in the target language (King de Ramírez and Lafford, 2013; Douglas, 2000).

# Skills and Tasks

- Using the target language to learn about their field of study or intended career;
- Using their knowledge of their field of study to learn their HL;
- Acquiring skills needed to take advantage of their HL in the professional fields;
- Acquiring general academic skills that transfer to other classes.

## Process: 4 steps

Students with a common major or career goal work in groups (3-4) on four interconnected projects:

- (1) Guided reading about their field in the target language;
- (2) Creating a glossary of key terms and expressions;
- (3) Making a presentation to the class;
- (4) Preparing a CV and cover letter, and engaging in a mock job interview

# Step 1: Reading

## (Duration 4 weeks)

- Each student
  - finds seven readings online pertaining to their field of study or career;
  - annotates the readings for content, as well as language;
  - creates word clouds for each reading;
- The group (under the supervision of one person)
  - makes a list of “top 10” concepts or ideas;
  - makes a list of 50 most important terms and phrases;
  - submits package of lists and reading for a grade.



# Step 2: The glossary

**(Duration: 3 weeks)**

50-60 essential words (nouns, verbs, adjectives);

Contents of each entry:

- A definition;
- English equivalent;
- Five phrases that use the word (from BYU Corpus del español);
- Five most commonly used items with this word – collocational items (e.g. Family: home, parents, children);
- Two items with the same root (e.g. Family: familiar, familial).

- Termodinámica;
- Definición: [ing. thermodynamics] Parte de la física que estudia los intercambios de calor y de trabajo que se producen entre un sistema y su entorno y que origina variaciones en la energía interna del mismo;
- Palabras con la misma raíz (same roots): térmico, termómetro, dinámica;
- Palabras emparentadas (related words) (mínimo de 3): energía, turbina, generador, calor;
- Tres oraciones (sentences):
  - El tratamiento estadístico de la mecánica molecular se denomina mecánica estadística, y proporciona a la termodinámica una base mecánica.
  - La eficiencia termodinámica de una instalación de generación con vapor es mucho menor, dada la pérdida de energía del vapor que sale de la turbina.
  - El descubrimiento de que la energía no se crea ni se destruye debería disuadir a los inventores de máquinas de movimiento perpetuo, pero la segunda ley de la termodinámica supone un límite más complejo al rendimiento de cualquier motor de calor, ya sea una turbina o el motor de un automóvil.



# Step 3: The PPT presentation

## (Duration 3 weeks)

### Guidelines:

- Is well organized and coordinated;
- Uses appropriate language;
- Is level-appropriate for a general audience;
- PPT slides: Title, Overview, Vocabulary, Conclusion.



# The presentation: Steps and products

- Each student:
  - Prepares a five minute presentation, including PowerPoint slides;
- The group (under the supervision of a student):
  - Prepares and delivers a coordinated presentation

# Step 4: The CV, cover letter, and the mock interview

(Duration: 4 weeks)

Students

- Create a bank of CVs and cover letters in the target language and study the format and language of these documents;
- Prepare a CV and cover letter in the target language;
- Watch sample job interviews in the target language;
- Work together on strategies for answering a list of 30 interview questions;
- Interview each other in the target language.

# **THE PRODUCT**

# Discussion....

- What best practices and strategies of PBL are illustrated?
- How is this project responsive to the needs, goals, and preferences of individual learners?  
In other words, how is instruction differentiated?
- How can this project be adapted to different levels, teaching contexts, etc.?

**PBL STRATEGIES?**

- Students receive clear and detailed directions, which include the rationale behind the project, tools and resources that can help, and grading rubrics;
- The project is broken down into small steps and the objectives of each step are made explicit;
- The different components of the project are modeled by the instructor (provide good and bad examples);
- Students practice the various components and receive feedback before turning in the components for a grade. Exit cards are used to that end.
- Technology is an essential component.

# Gradual release of responsibility model

(Pearson and Gallagher, 1983)

- I do, you watch;
- I do, you help;
- You do , I help;
- You do, I watch



# From-to principles

- Reading -> writing

Reading - > speaking;

Reading to prepare a glossary

Reading to give a presentation

Reading to prepare for an interview

- Speaking -> writing;

Speaking and preparing a written presentation

**Differentiation?**

# Adaptations to different...

- Educational level?
- Proficiency levels?
- Contexts – mixed classes?

# Advantages of this approach

- Promotes interaction and team work with peers and promote learner agency and a sense of ownership;
- Promotes student autonomy and fosters higher levels of creative and critical thinking;
- Involves working towards some meaningful end goal;
- Balances the relation between teaching grammar and teaching with a communicative, macro orientation.
- Is learner-centered – i.e. lends itself to being used in classes with multiple levels.

**POTENTIAL PROBLEM**

When I die, I want  
the people I did  
group projects with  
to lower me into  
my grave so they  
can let me down  
one last time.



someecards  
user card

# Teaching and promoting positive student collaboration:

- Scenarios: Anticipate problems and prearrange options for dealing with them;
- Give a group grade + individual grade;
- Monitor students' progress closely.

# **Other uses of this approach: Native speakers**

- Independent studies;
- Service learning.



# References

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