The Four Freedoms: Raising Awareness of Human Rights in the English for Academic Purposes Classroom

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Abstract
This paper introduces an approach to teaching students about human rights, a term-long project that is being implemented in an intensive English for academic purposes (EAP) program at a Thai university. The objectives of the project are to improve students' language skills while also cultivating their knowledge of human rights. The project is informed by the theories of project-based learning, emphasizing student autonomy and constructive investigations. It introduces students to the history and development of human rights, focusing particularly on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Four Freedoms. Students are each assigned a different country to research, and they analyze current issues in that country through the lens of the Four Freedoms. Under the guidance of a faculty advisor, the students prepare a term paper and presentation highlighting their most significant findings. Through engagement with human rights issues in countries around the world, students are able to transcend their learning space and become better citizens of Thailand, ASEAN, and the global community. The contents of this paper will be of special interest to language teachers, but a similar project could be applied in a range of courses across the high school or university curriculum.

Keywords: English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Human Rights, Project-Based Learning

Introduction

The importance of human rights education cannot be overstated as understanding human rights is a prerequisite to respecting them: "A sustainable world peace can only be assured through the universal actualization of human dignity; human rights concepts and standards are tools for the realization of the conditions necessary to human dignity" (Reardon, 2015). The vital concepts and standards of human rights can be taught in a wide variety of ways. The approach that educators take to human rights education will depend on their particular context and the resources at their disposal.

In response to the need for human rights education, this paper offers one approach to raising students' awareness of human rights at the Preparation Center for Languages and Mathematics at Mahidol University International College. The center provides intensive English for academic purposes classes for students aiming to join the English-medium liberal arts program at the international college. Accordingly, although improving students' language skills remains the primary goal, the center aims to develop students' capabilities and knowledge in other areas as well, providing the foundation that they will need to succeed in a liberal arts program. The center's mission statement encompasses these goals: "To provide educational experiences which cultivate students' academic English communication skills, to foster their ability to be self-reflective and responsible learners, and to stimulate their curiosity about the world."

The approach to human rights education outlined in this paper centers around a term-long research project based on Franklin D. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms — freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. The project, which is aligned with content-based language instruction and project-based learning (PBL), develops students' academic English through content-based instruction. These approaches will be explained in the following section.

Literature Review

In recent years, content-based language instruction has become increasingly prevalent in language classrooms (Heidari-Shahreza, 2014). This approach to language teaching and learning integrates the learning of "real-world content" (Beglar & Hunt, 2011, p. 93) with language education (Brown, 2001). This stands in contrast with some earlier approaches to language education, such as the audiolingual method, which tended to use contrived dialogues to teach grammatical forms (Leaver & Willis, 2004). Content-based language instruction is consistent with the goals of the communicative approach to language, which focuses on the transmission of meaningful information rather than on the forms of language (Brown, 2001). Potential benefits of content-based instruction include increased attention, motivation and volunteering (Heidari-Shahreza, 2014), particularly when the right level of challenge is achieved (i.e., complex and challenging content for highly proficient students; less challenging material for less proficient students) (Stoller, 2002). That is, providing stimulating and meaningful content does not detract from language learning; it enhances language learning. The inclusion of meaningful content in language education is consistent with content-based language teaching, which aims to educate through realistic investigations of challenging questions.

The development and implementation of this project is also guided by project-based learning. This approach represents "a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks" (Markham, Larmer, & Ravitz, 2003, p. 4). Researchers have identified many benefits of project-based learning, including enhanced academic achievement (Buck Institute for Education, 2013) and attendance of classes (Creghan & Adair-Creghan, 2015). Project-based learning can be applied across the curriculum, including language courses, where it is effective in providing opportunities for students to acquire language: "By using authentic materials and focusing on self-guided, project-based learning, students notice target structures and practice them until they develop automaticity" (Grode & Stacy, 2015, p. 171). Because it requires a degree of autonomy, project-based learning is appropriate for learners who already have a strong foundation in the target language.

Project-based learning is best understood through the five criteria included in Thomas' (2000) thorough and insightful literature review on the subject, which are centrality, driving question, constructive investigations, autonomy, and realism. The criterion of centrality means that the project must be an integral part of the course. A project completed at the very end of a course to reinforce learning would not meet this criterion, nor would a project completed over a short period during a course. The criterion of driving question means that the project must aim to provide a meaningful answer to a question that pushes students to engage with key ideas in a given subject area. This aspect of discovery — of finding a solution to a substantial question — can result in enhanced student engagement. The criterion of constructive investigations means that the project must push students to develop new skills or new content knowledge. An assignment that can be completed without the development of new skills or content knowledge does not qualify as a project; it is "busywork" (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010, p. 34). The criterion of autonomy means that students must take significant responsibility for their own learning. Project-based learning is student-centered; teachers function as advisors or facilitators rather than as the focus of the classroom. Finally, the criterion of realism means that projects are not mere exercises. To the greatest extent possible, they should use real-world information and push students to engage with real-world issues. These five criteria have guided the creation and implementation of the human rights project described below.

Human Rights Term Project

The human rights term project that has been implemented in the intermediate course at the Preparation Center for Languages and Mathematics requires students to write a term paper of at least 1,200 words evaluating a country's human rights situation in terms of the Four Freedoms mentioned above. The term paper includes in-text citations and references in the APA 6th Edition format. Additionally, students deliver a 5-7 minute presentation explaining their most significant findings. The project spans the entire 10-week term.

In the first week, students are randomly assigned a country from a list compiled by the teachers. Certain countries (e.g., small island nations) are excluded from the list because relatively little information about them is available online. The students are also assigned a faculty advisor, who will guide them through the research and writing

process. Because this project is the first academic paper that many of the students have written, all steps of the process are scaffolded. During the first week, students are also given an outline template containing explanations of all of the major components of the term paper and links to recommended sources, including the United Nations Development Programme, Reporters Without Borders, Freedom House, and other major NGOs.

In the first two weeks of the term, students read several short texts (4-8 pages each) about the history of human rights from ancient to modern times, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Four Freedoms. They answer questions about these texts and discuss the texts in class. The purpose of reading these texts is to give students a basic understanding of human rights; a deeper understanding will be developed as they conduct their research.

Teachers provide a variety of materials to support students as they progress through the project, beginning with source analysis forms in Week 2. These forms, which are distributed and completed in Google Docs, require students to read source texts closely and respond to a series of questions about the source type, bias, and specific content that might be useful in their term paper. They are also asked to write a brief summary of each source. Students are asked to complete five forms about sources they have selected in their initial research; they are not asked to complete forms for all of their sources. Completing the source analysis forms early in the term pushes students to find appropriate academic sources and to engage meaningfully with the sources that they have selected.

The first draft of the term paper outline is due in Week 3. Students base their outlines on the template distributed in Week 1. They are not required to include all of the Four Freedoms in their paper; they may choose to write about two or three freedoms, depending on the situation in the country that they are researching. Often, students will need to complete more than one draft of the outline before receiving approval. Once the advisor has approved a student's outline, he or she can begin writing the first draft of the term paper.

In Week 5, students submit the first draft of the term paper through Turnitin, an online service that checks their term paper for similarity with websites and previously submitted student papers. Submitting the draft to Turnitin allows teachers to address at an early stage any issues with insufficient paraphrasing, lack of quotation marks, or other forms of plagiarism. Once the first draft has been submitted, the term paper advisors give feedback about content and organization only (grammar feedback will be given on the second draft). Students then have approximately two weeks to revise their term papers for the second draft, which is due in Week 7.

Students submit the second draft of their term paper to Turnitin in Week 7. At this point, they should have addressed any issues identified by the teachers in Week 5. They should also have edited their term papers based on the similarity report from Turnitin so that all instances of poor paraphrasing have been corrected. Advisors give grammar feedback about the second draft by identifying all errors on the first page of the paper with editing symbols (e.g., "SVA" for subject-verb agreement) and giving overall comments about the entire paper. Based on these comments, students prepare the final draft of the term paper, which is due in Week 9.

Before submitting the final draft of their term papers in Week 9, students present their major findings orally to their classmates and a teacher. The students receive feedback about their term paper presentation from their advisor; however, the final presentation is marked by another teacher in the program. The teacher marking the presentation will ask questions and provide feedback, aiming to uncover any parts of the paper that require improvement. Once the term papers have been submitted in Week 9, the advisors mark them, paying particular attention to the evidence of the writing process. Students receive considerable support over the course of the term, and the development of their ideas and writing should progress clearly through the outline, first draft, second draft, and final draft.

While the human rights term paper represents a significant challenge, the vast majority of students who work on their papers consistently throughout the term produce satisfactory results. The project is heavily scaffolded using structured source analysis forms and an outline template. The students engage in guided research, and are able to discuss any problems with their advisor as they arise. The process approach to writing is also emphasized, and students complete multiple drafts of their papers and present their findings orally before submitting the final draft. Overall, the project is structured to facilitate students' success.

Discussion
The human rights project at the Preparation Center for Languages and Mathematics meets all five of Thomas' (2000) criteria for project-based learning: centrality, driving question, constructive investigations, autonomy, and realism. In accordance with Thomas' (2000) criterion of centrality, the project is an integral part of the course. The project includes several components: source analysis forms, an outline, a first draft, a second draft, a term paper presentation, and a final draft. Class time is also devoted to completing core readings about human rights and completing other related activities. The other elements of the course, for example APA citing and referencing, are scheduled based on students' need to complete specific parts of the term paper. In short, the human rights term paper is central to the course.
In project-based learning, students' research is guided by a driving question (Thomas, 2000). In the case of the human rights term paper, students are asked to evaluate the situation in a given country. This question is relatively open, and the outcome is not predetermined. In order to answer the question, students must engage with the meaning of human rights.

Consistent with Thomas' (2000) criterion of constructive investigations, students must develop new skills and knowledge in order to complete this project. To respond to the question guiding their research, they must develop a clear understanding of human rights as well as knowledge of current events. In terms of language, they improve their academic vocabulary, outlining skills, and drafting skills. Most students undertaking the project have no prior experience writing extended essays, so they must develop these skills to successfully complete the term paper.
The human rights term paper also meets the criterion of autonomy. The students do receive some scaffolding for their research, but the majority of the project is done independently. The teacher acts as an advisor, but each student must take ownership of his or her project. Assigning each student a different country than their peers also contributes to autonomy. Because students' term paper topics are different, they can

discuss general ideas about human rights but cannot share information specific to their countries.

The project also meets Thomas' (2000) criterion of realism. To answer the driving question that they have been assigned, the students must engage with real news that is written in authentic English. The content of the paper is based on historical and current events; no element of the project has been fabricated as a language-learning exercise.

This project, which aligns with Thomas' (2000) five criteria for project-based learning, provides students with an opportunity to improve their language skills while learning about human rights. It uses content-based language instruction to simultaneously improve students' language skills and content knowledge. In doing so, it meets all elements of the mission statement of the Preparation Center for Languages and Mathematics and develops students' English skills while cultivating their autonomy and broadening their knowledge of the wider world.

Conclusion

This paper has described a project which aims to enhance students' knowledge of human rights in the English for academic purposes classroom. The project, which is aligned with content-based instruction and project-based learning, could be adapted for use in many contexts worldwide. Through this and similar projects, language educators have the ability to empower their students to become engaged citizens of their home countries and of the world.

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