Developing English Communicative Ability and Promoting Collaborative Learning through Project-based Voice Acting in Holistic Approach

Young Mee Kim, Korea Science Academy of KAIST, Republic of Korea

The Fifth Annual Asian Conference on Language Learning
Official Conference Proceedings 2015

Abstract
This study aims to assure the positive influence of integrated language learning and teaching focused on improving English communicative ability and promoting collaborative learning through voice acting. The study explores possibilities of promoting collaborative as well as holistic learning atmosphere in EFL(English as a Foreign Language) context through an integrated voice acting project. The class action project involves a process of reading first followed by selecting and reorganizing topics and themes, writing a script for voice acting and performing. Implementing learning and teaching strategies to assemble the whole work and practicing the outcome finalize the project. The survey shows that the voice acting project results in facilitating learners' collaborative learning attitude and holistic academic atmosphere as well as improving general communicative abilities for both spoken and written English. The study discusses advantages of extensive use of hand-on templates of voice acting not for limited language education only but for integrated project-based learning and teaching.

Keywords: project-based teaching and learning, English communicative ability, collaborative learning, voice acting, integrated language learning

Introduction

Project-based language learning is popularly implemented to provide opportunities for students to engage with language authentically (Kim 2014). It supports the idea that hands-on projects help develop integrated learning and activate knowledge into practical applications. One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view (Littlewood 1981). The learner must develop skills and strategies for using language to communicative meanings effectively. Communicative abilities embrace linguistic skills but not the reverse (Widdowson1978.) Overemphasis on drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentences tends to inhibit the development of communicative abilities. Language learning within a communicative curriculum is, therefore, most appropriately seen as communicative interaction involving all the participants in the learning and including the various materials resources. Breen and Candlin (1980) state that language learning may be seen as a process which grows out of the interaction between learners, teachers, texts and activities. The pedagogic rationale for project-based learning rests on the claim that they will help to develop learners' communicative skills and their linguistic development. Communication tasks are important for both fluency and accuracy (Brumfit 1984). They aid fluency by enabling learners to activate their linguistic knowledge for use and contribute to accuracy by enabling learners to discover new linguistic forms and also by increasing their control over already-acquired forms (Nobuyosh and Ellis 1993:203). Long and Crooks (1992) adopt tasks and projects as the unit of analysis, support a focus on form and aim to help students systematize and extend their knowledge of particular grammatical or lexical features.

Aim

The voice acting project intends to achieve the following aims:

1) To develop English communicative ability through project-based learning
2) To enhance holistic language learning through combination of productive and receptive language skills
3) To cultivate collaborative learning environment through team work

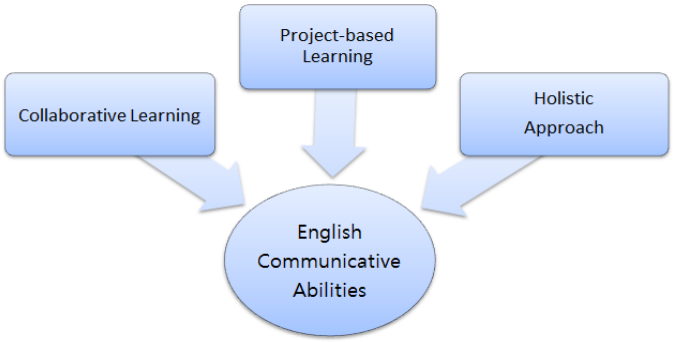

Figure 1: Principles of Project

Method

Project guidelines and evaluation information were given to 116 students along with previous project samples. Twelve to sixteen students in 8 classes were grouped into four. Sixteen groups of three or four students conducted 15-minute voice acting group project together. Students started brainstorming together, exchanging ideas and opinions to write an outline after selecting chapters and roles of each member. Each

group needed to submit a final script and perform voice acting in class for 15 minutes. Evaluation processes were followed at the end for feedback. The whole process continued and was completed for two weeks in the form of the round-tour method to maximize members' involvement and collaboration.

Table 1: Overview of the Project

PRE TASK
Individual reading & Group discussion
⇩
TASK
Individual writing, Group editing & Performance
⇩
POST TASK
Individual, peer, teacher evaluation & Discussion/ Questionnaire

Procedure/ Content

Four parts of the main task stage are the core content of a voice acting project. The first part is to write an outline, including key elements and a plot for the project. After Students are introduced to the details of the project with specified guidelines (Figure2), they are provided with two types of outline formats (Figure 3), descriptive and guided. One of students' main activities is to write a script for a fifteen-minute radio drama. Students go through sessions of discussion and role taking and interact with a teacher to complete their final scripts in the form of draft script editing. The other main activity is the performance of fifteen-minute voice acting in class. During the performance other students conduct peer evaluation in the forms provided by a teacher. Right after the performance students evaluate themselves with a self-evaluation form (Figure 4).

Table 2: Process of the Project

TASK STAGE 1
Writing an outline for elements & plot
⇩
TASK STAGE 2
Writing a script draft & final script, Editing
⇩
TASK STAGE 3
Voice acting
⇩
TASK STAGE 4
Self & peer evaluation

Materials and Outcome

At each part of the task stage, students are provided with relevant materials and appropriate outcome is expected to be produced. In the task stage one, documented specific guidelines for the whole project are given and students sign up for random grouping. In this stage, students' outcome is checked by the form of project outlines (Figure 2 and 3). For the stage of writing a script, teachers introduce script templates with samples of previous students' outlines and scripts (Figure 4). In the main performance and followed evaluation stage, teachers use formatted documents of peer evaluation and self-evaluation with the explanation of rationale of evaluation processes. Teachers provide each group with detailed feedback in the form of documented evaluation.

Table 3: Materials and Outcome Overview

TASK STAGE 1
GUIDELINES, SIGN UP, PROJECT OUTLINE
⇩
TASK STAGE 2
SCRIPT TEMPLATES, SAMPLES
⇩
TASK STAGE 3&4
SELF REFLECTION, PEER & TEACHER EVALUATION FORMS

Figure 2: Project Guideline

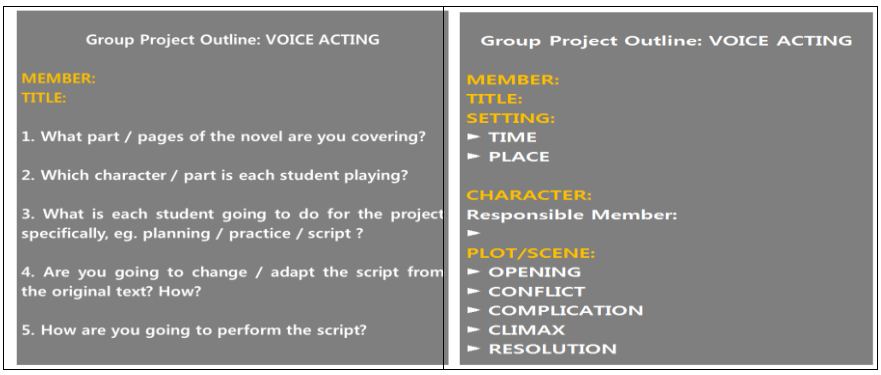

Figure 3: Project Outline

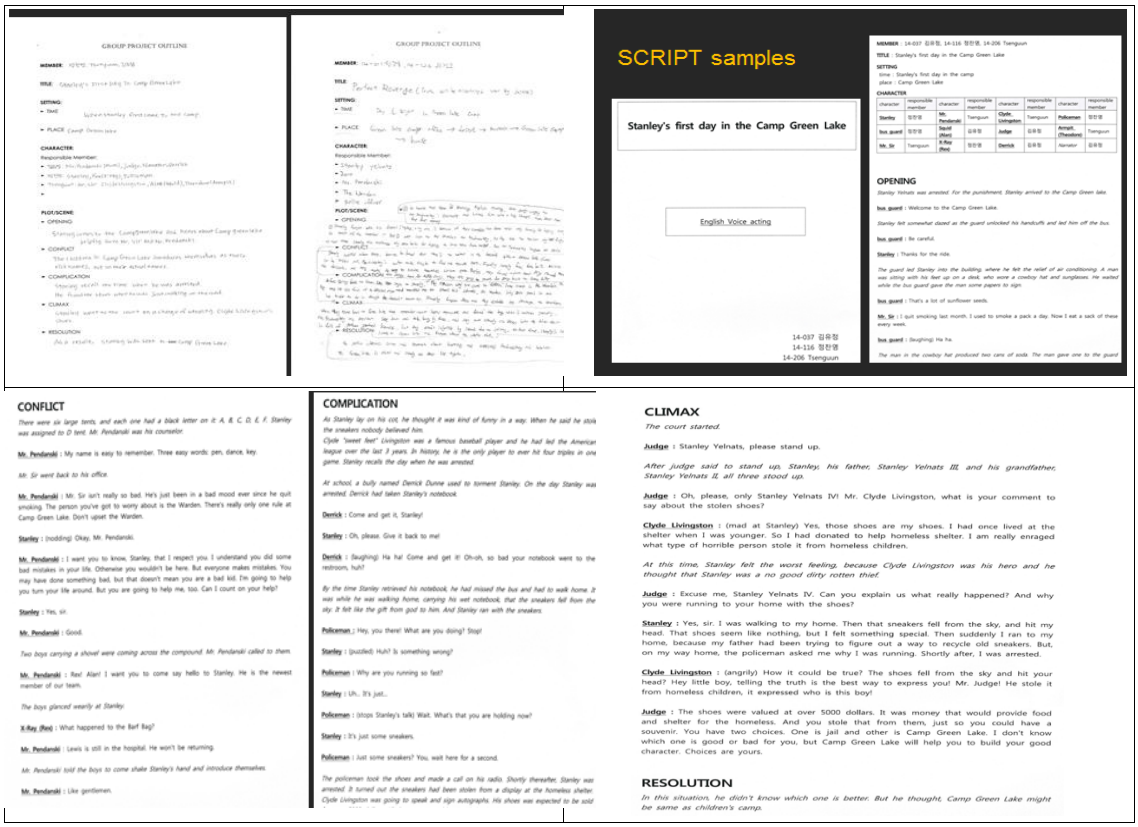

Figure 4: Samples of Outlines and Scripts

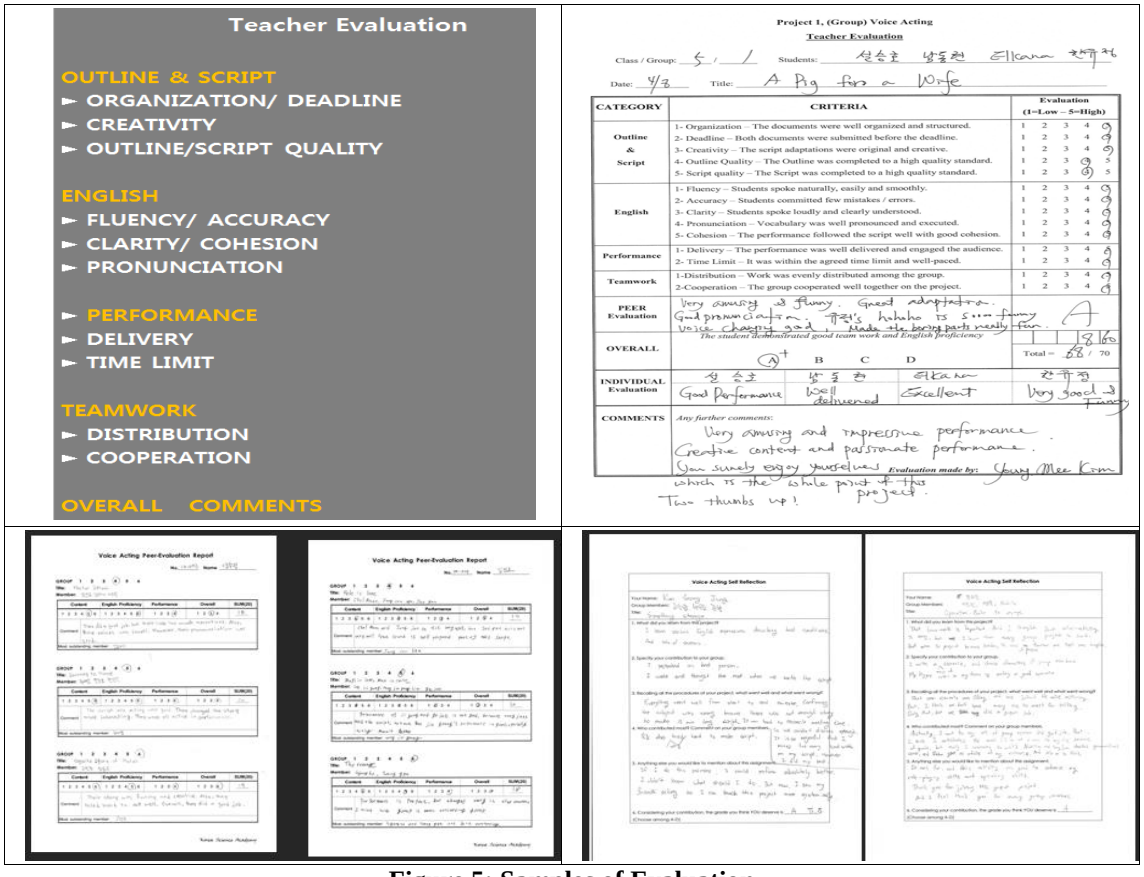

Figure 5: Samples of Evaluation

Figure 6: Student Participation

Discussion

Questionnaires followed the project and were analyzed for suggested research questions. The results show that the voice acting project helped enhance students' English communicative ability particularly for writing and speaking and raise awareness of the importance of cooperative learning. The project helped their confidence speaking in front of peers for an extended amount of time. It helped improve listening for the audience and reading (reading the text), speaking (performance) and writing (script production) for the speakers. The project encouraged students to work together, especially on the script production. In their feedback, many students said they made friends during the project. Also International students appreciated mixing with Korean students. The students responded very well to the project and it was especially useful for bringing freshmen students out of their shell in the first semester. It improved their knowledge of the book and encouraged and rewarded them for reading independently.

Table 4: Questionnaire Results

Students' Comments	Teachers' Comments
-enhanced English communicative abilities for all four skills, particularly speaking -raised awareness of the importance of cooperative learning -provided a chance to activate prior knowledge -adapt language learning skills in real life situations -facilitated flexible & creative thinking -highly satisfied with the process -'thank you' for teacher and other team mates -made friends during the project -fun and enjoyable environments -especially useful for bringing me out of my shell -would love to do more assignments like this -appreciated mixing with Korean students	-helped students' confidence speaking in front of peers for an extended amount of time -helped improve listening for the audience and reading (reading the text), speaking (performance) and writing (script production) for the speakers -encouraged students to work together, especially on the script production -improved their knowledge of the book and encouraged/ rewarded them for reading independently

Conclusion

Project-based activities involve individual and group research and give students opportunities to use English out of the class. Emphasis may be more on the process than the product itself (Byrne 1986) [17]. The process of voice acting project is focused on integrated language learning, covering speaking, listening, reading and writing. Collaborative learning environment is an additional merit for the project. The

project is found to be useful for English communicative abilities with the main impetus of speaking ability. The purposely designed project materials and processes have positive influence on collaborative learning and holistic language learning. The whole processes give an insight to teachers for their decisions for communicative language learning and teaching strategies. The project shows advantages not only for language education but for integrated project-based learning.

References

Breen, M. and Candlin, C. (1980). The essentials of a communicative curriculum in language teaching. *Applied Linguistics* 1(2), pp. 89-110.

Brumfit, C. J. (1984). *Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: CUP.

Byrne, D. (1986). Teaching Oral English. London: Longman.

Kim, Y. M. (2014). Developing Creative and Critical thinking Focused on English Communicative Ability through Project-based Learning for Science Gifted Learners. *EDULEARN* 14, pp. 425-431.

Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching*. Cambridge: CUP.

Long, M. H. and Crookes, G. (1992). Three approaches to task-based syllabus design. *TESOL Quarterly* 26(1), pp. 27-55.

Nobuyosh, J. and Ellis, R. (1993). Focused communicative tasks and second language acquisition. *ELT Journal* 47(1), pp. 203-10.

Widdowson, H. G. (1978). *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford: OUP.

Acknowledgement: This work was funded by Korean Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning.
Contact email: kymee@kaist.ac.kr