Using a Project Approach in a Profession-related English Course

Dr Viola Wong Yuk –Yue
Assistant Professor
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hunghom
Hong Kong
E-mail: ecvwong@polyu.edu.hk, Phone: (852) 2766 7646

Abstract

Project work is not only common in the workplace but also in language courses. The experience gained from working on projects can help one understand the appropriate and effective use of language skills. Empirical evidence has shown that project work can create contexts in which learners need to respond actively and engage in purposeful communication. In order to understand the dimensions of such a learning experience before discussing project work in learning, this paper reviews the current literature on the relationship between the learner and the learning context, commonly known as the ecology of learning. This paper also discusses and illustrates various pedagogical aspects of project work by means of a project-based course at university level.

Keywords: project work, ecology of learning, workplace communication

1. Ecology of Learning

Many educational theories have contributed to our understanding of learning. Yet, it seems that they only highlight a certain area in the complex and elusive learning process. An ecological approach seems more appropriate as it stresses the importance of looking at the bigger system to allow us to appreciate how the component areas work (Sanders, 2003). Cognition is important in learning, but there would be no cognition in the absence of interaction with the environment. Changes in beliefs in the process of learning are brought about by interactions with the environment.   An ecological approach does not just offer another perspective on learning because it also offers an opportunity to view the larger environment as a dynamic system in the process of learning. Such comprehension is crucial to any effort made in helping learners develop and strengthen their potential for understanding and knowing. The ecology of learning emphasises the factors and conditions, interrelationships and interactions that either hinder or facilitate the learning process (Dimitrov, 2002).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed an ecological model of human development, with an individual (with a microsystem of his/her own) at the centre of a series of concentric circles and directly influenced by the immediate environment (the context of his/her mesosystem), which in turn is influenced by the social and economic context (exosystem) that is under the influence of the outermost circle – the cultural context (macrosystem). In Bronfenbrenner's model, the individual is embedded within and interacts with all these interconnected and dynamic contexts or systems.   The person acts on the contexts while the contexts act on the person. Each context interacts with the others. Both the individual and the contexts are continually changing. The ecology of learning plays a central role in education. In the traditional classroom setting, the teacher is the only source of wisdom and knowledge. This tends to disempower students in their learning process. The ecology of learning addresses this weakness in the older model of learning as the concept brings to the fore the context of the educational process, without over-emphasising any single aspect.

The ecology of learning suggests that a study of the learning process is an examination of students' interactivity in the learning environment. A study of students' interactivity in a learning environment or context requires a close examination of the contextualised study approach adopted by individual students, which Meyer (1991, 297) calls 'study orchestration'. Apart from suggesting an element of regulation in studying, the concept stresses three aspects of student learning: individual differences in students' approach, the influence of context, and differing conceptions of learning among students, who direct their resources in a learning context in different ways. A study orchestration may be coherent or contain a certain amount of dissonance.   It will be coherent if its aspects of conceptualisation of and engagement in learning fit together and dissonant if they do not (Meyer, 2000). Dissonance reflects problematic relationships between students and their learning environment. The phenomenon of dissonance is also known as 'friction', a term used by Vermunt and Verloop (1999) to describe the incongruity between the student and his or her learning environment.   Friction will be constructive if it challenges students to learn, and destructive if it diminished their motivation to learn. To summarise, the concept of 'study orchestration' recognises the crucial link between students' perceptions and their experience in the learning environment.

The concepts of ecology of learning and study orchestration can shed light on the current discussion of the learner-centred approach in teaching. This new educational paradigm is essentially a cognitive one (Bruner, 1966; Piaget as translated by Flavell, 1963; Vygotsky, 1986;) that sees learning as an active and creative process of exploration, adaptation and meaning making. It regards the student as an active meaning maker, a seeker and creator of knowledge. This new paradigm is characterised by lifelong learning, learner autonomy and even the use of computer-mediated resources. New methods of learning include constructive, self-regulating and interactive learning with peers, teachers or via hypermedia packages.

2. Explicit Instruction and Project Work

Explicit instruction highlights interactions between students and their teacher, and emphasises guidance from the teacher who tailors materials to the needs of students and monitors their progress. There has been extensive research on the relationship between explicit instruction and positive outcomes for students (Hall, 2002). This form of instruction, known as 'scaffolding', is based on Vygotsky's notion of socially mediated learning. Guidance or guided practice forms the 'scaffold' for the students' learning process. After the students have gained experience and confidence, 'scaffolded' support or external mediation are rendered unnecessary. Explicit or scaffolded instruction is recursive, usually along a continuum from basic to more sophisticated skills. It is clear that explicit instruction helps students acquire and apply a particular skill; the students follow instructions from the teacher who identifies and addresses students' areas of weakness.

To help students appreciate the skill or to recognise the contexts in which it can be applied, meaningful learning-enhancing activities are needed. Integrating these activities in a project could encourage students to engage in purposeful communication, in which they will be required to build on their proficiencies with the assistance of their instructor. Students should not be viewed merely as customers or clients; they are also producers in the educational economy (McPherson et al 1994). Nor should they be regarded as mere consumers; they have to be conscientious consumers in order to engage intensively with their education (Higgins, 2002) and 'to be involved in determining what is considered appropriate knowledge, where it can be found and how it can be produced' (Gale 2002, p.76). A powerful learning-enhancing project could provide a vehicle for implementing such educational beliefs. The following is a description of the role of a project in a communication course.

3. Assessment and evaluation of student learning

Student learning in projects creates opportunities for process-oriented assessment and product-oriented evaluation. 'Assessments' are the tasks completed by students that provide information on how well the students have learnt; 'evaluation' refers to the measures or grading practices used to judge how well the students have performed in a task (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Effective assessments and evaluation can tell students what the teacher believes is important for them to learn and can provide the teacher with useful information about the results of instruction. Students will be able to manage their own learning if they know what is expected of them in assessments. A clear specification of how performances will be judged or evaluated will empower students to manage their own learning, as they know where to concentrate their efforts. Sound assessment and grading practices can help focus students' effort and enhance both their achievement and the quality of the teacher's instruction. In project work, multiple forms of assessments and different ways of evaluation are usually deployed, giving a more complete picture of students' learning profile.

4. Project Work in an English Communication Course

The English communication course that is of interest in this paper is a 28-hour university English course, 'Professional English for Engineering Students'. According to the official course document, by the end of the course, students should be able to:

- participate in and contribute to workplace meetings;
- write job-related correspondence;
- write documents to introduce and promote an organisation as well as a product or a service; and
- write summaries for job-related documents.

The students are working adults with a range of backgrounds and language abilities. All of them are in their second year of a part-time engineering degree programme. The faculty in the engineering department have reported that the students might have a strong sense of déjà vu about English learning which could interfere with their attitude to learning. The English course, therefore, has to take into consideration both the students' prior knowledge and the skills that are being learned, while fostering the authentic motivation that allows students to take ownership of what they are learning. In this course, the skills that are related to the learning outcomes are taught, practised and assessed in a project, providing a framework for learning on the course with the sequence of the topics closely aligning with the project progression.

(See Appendix I – table of contents in the course book; Appendix II – the assignment project.)

(4.1)   Design of the Project: Creating a Dynamic Context of Learning
(4.1.1) Learning Objectives

According to the concept of study orchestration (Meyer, 1991), contextual influence plays a role in students' learning and students differ in their conceptions of learning and adopt different learning approaches. It is practical to create course activities in which students can collaborate and learn from each other. Since the students are adults in a part-time program, the project takes advantage of the experience and skills that they possess and that they are about to acquire in order to produce artifacts that can showcase their communication performances in task situations. These adult learners hold different jobs – some are technicians or assistants to senior engineers in large engineering firms, aircraft companies, lift repairing or maintenance companies, toy or watch designing houses or in the transportation and logistics sector. The project has to be credible, capable of facilitating learning and engaging students' interest and attention. The artifacts that students produce will capture the their ability to apply the skills that they are expected to learn in the course, with all the tasks (which are developed from the project) and the corresponding learning outcomes (the skills to be acquired) on the course spelled out for the students. (Refer to Appendix III student information sheet.) In both group and individual work, students are expected to display full appreciation of the scenario for each task, to interact with the known and unknown elements embedded in each scenario, and to discuss and collaborate with peers in order to construct written documents and deliver oral presentations.

The project is expected to introduce students to a gamut of workplace experiences which reflects the importance of the application of the skills learned in the course. Three concepts have been instrumental in developing the project and determining the business of each task: voice, tone and persona. 'Voice' can be objective or personal. We express ourselves in the voice of a professional or a friend. 'Tone' is the student's stance or attitude held in the scenario of a task in the project – whether the purpose of the communication is to inform or persuade. The tone can be aloof, officious, helpful or courteous. 'Persona' is a version of self. We all have different versions of self and we select a persona to suit a particular situation, such as choosing a language and behavior to create a specific effect or create a desired impression. In the workplace, voice, tone and persona are essential as readers and audience will make assumptions about our professional abilities based on our tone and our persona. Project details will give students necessary information to determine the voice they need to adopt, the tone that is most appropriate, and the persona they would like to assume. When students are making these choices (whether in groups or individually), they are also making use of their prior and newly acquired knowledge and skills.

(4.1.2) Tasks in the Project

In order to facilitate students' application of skills in the project and to deal with the wide range of language abilities, resources that could offer differentiated instruction are essential. Students have different levels of competence and may encounter 'dissonance' or 'friction' in the learning process. They need guidance to compensate for their weaker areas, to meet the demands of the tasks in the projects, or to sharpen their skills. Easy access to a variety of resources would be beneficial both to students who are less skilled and to those who are keen to learn more. There are two types of resources: those for task completion and those for contingency purposes to help students who need additional assistance. Two additional factors that would affect the success of a project are the students' work on the project and the time that is available for the project. The work to be done on the project consists of all of the tasks which reflect the learning outcomes that the teacher expects the students to achieve in the course. Time is the project schedule, which is directly related to the size or scale of the project and the duration of the course. The amount of work that students can reasonably complete given the available resources and time to achieve the stated learning outcomes of the course is a key factor that a project designer has to consider.

(4.1.3) Assessments and Evaluation in the Project

The design of the project will not be complete without a specification of the assessments (which also act as a learning plan) and evaluation which include

  (a) assessment aims that are closely aligned with learning outcomes;
  (b) breadth and depth of coverage within a specified timeframe;
  (c) tasks that are readily understood by students; and
  (d) evaluation criteria that are appropriate for the task(s) and are clear to students.

Based on the information collected from the assessments during the project, the teacher can make judgements about students' performance and provide timely feedback that is relevant to students' specific needs, thus improving both the quality of teaching and of learning.

Meaningful feedback during the progress of the project can allow students to gauge their achievement in the course and reveal their areas of strength and weakness so that they arrive at a sense of the importance of putting efforts into both the final product and into its preparation. In order to make sure that feedback is meaningful, explicit assessment criteria which capture the multiple dimensions of student performance must be developed. Evaluation criteria are related to the standard that is required to meet the course objective(s) or to achieve the learning outcome(s), covering essential attributes or elements of a piece of work to be judged or evaluated such as language accuracy and relevance. Criteria are linked to marks and a composite score is then produced to show the performance level.

(4.2)   The Project Work

The project illustrated in this paper comprises the backbone of the course; the sequence and timing of the tasks in the project determines the learning schedule. Topics covered in the classroom are related to the learning outcomes which are shown clearly in each assessed task. There are two essential documents for students: 'Information for Students', and the 'Assessment Project'. 'Information for Students' includes the objective and learning outcomes of the course, learning schedule, materials used, attendance policies, expected effort to be put into the course (in terms of number of hours on the whole course) and assignment tasks. The following is taken from the information sheet.

Information for students

I.   Objective
This subject aims to develop the English language skills required by students to communicate effectively in their careers.

II.   Learning outcomes
By the end of the subject, students should be able to communicate in workplace contexts through
1.   Participating in, and contributing, workplace meetings
2.   Writing job-related correspondence.
3.   Writing documents to introduce and promote an organisation as well as a product or a
          service, and
4.   Writing summaries for job-related documents
To achieve these outcomes, students are expected to use language and text structure appropriate to the context, select information critically, present ideas systematically and logically, and provide support for stance and opinion.

III.   Learning schedule

Weeks	Topics	Contents	Assessments
1-2	Writing correctly	Writing steps Sentence structures	Meeting (20%) Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 1 In-class Week 6

IV.   Materials

V.   Attendance and punctuality

VI.   Out-of-class work

VII.   Assessed assignments
          Assessment 1: Meeting (individual assessment)
In this assessment, you have to participate in a meeting to discuss how to introduce your company and present your products/services in a newspaper supplement.
Type of assessment: In-class
Duration: 20 minutes each group
Assessment date: Week 5
Weighting: 20%

(For more details of the student information sheet, please refer to Appendix III.)

The assignment project document gives the details on the rationale for working on the project, the project context, procedures and an example for each task (together with a clear description of the assessment weightings for the tasks) in the project. A short description of the project scenario helps students establish the scope and parameters of the project. It also sets the scene for developing appropriate and effective communication skills and strategies, so that students can appreciate the motivations behind each communicative act and understand how the use of language can affect attitudes and results in communication.

> Project Scenario
>
> As the business of your company has been growing rapidly in the home country, the company is planning to set up new offices in other parts of the world. You and three/four other colleagues have been asked to prepare a brochure to promote the company to the locals in the HKSAR.

Steps to be taken to complete the project and at what time are explicitly stated:

Step 1   Form a company. (Weeks 1 & 2)
Step 2   Make decision on what to include in the newspaper supplement. (Weeks 3, 4 and 5)
Step 3   Carry out follow-up action after the meeting (Weeks 6, 7 and 8)
Step 4   Promote a product/service to a target group of consumers (Weeks 9, 10 & 11)

Details about how to carry out the step, an example of the assignment product and the expected performance abilities that are related to evaluation are also given. The following is an illustration of Step 2.

Make a decision on what to include in the brochure (Weeks 3, 4 and 5)

(a)   Think about some prominent features of the product/service that you have chosen.

(b)   **Hold a meeting** (**Week 5**) to discuss how to introduce your company and present the products/services that you think might be of particular interest to the readers, and to decide on the details to be included in a brochure as well as the preparation schedule. (**Group work**)

Members taking part in the **meeting** of the project are expected to display abilities to perform the following in the course of the discussion:

●   identify the problem(s)/issue(s).
●   emphasise the crux of the problem(s)/issue(s).
●   offer solutions to the problem(s) and give reasons.
●   listen to other members' opinions and give appropriate response.
●   give views on the solutions given by other members.
●   show partial/complete agreement/disagreement.
●   clarify ideas and support them with details/examples.
●   present relevant and/or useful ideas/information.
●   present one's own stance.
●   help the meeting arrive at decisions/conclusions.

The following is an example of the notes made at the meeting.

It was agreed to promote to car owners one of the new car accessories developed by our company – EASYMAPS, a small device to help drivers to locate their destinations. It is a novel and extremely useful product for all drivers. It is a tiny computer with a display screen.

Special features of EASYMAPS:

•   easy access to information on getting to destinations
•   user-friendly instructions
•   efficient after-sales service – 24-hour hotline

Service fee HK$100.00/ per year

A passage will be written on the advantages of EASYMAPS. There will be a description of the characteristics and a comparison between EASYMAPS and some similar products on the market. This passage will:

(1)   introduce the background/context for the new product/service or the project brief
(2)   describe the concept development
(3)   introduce the special features of the product/service
(4)   show how the features meet the objective(s)
(5)   describe the problems and solutions

The two documents ('Information for Students' and the 'Assessment Project') provide students with a clear outline of what is expected of them, including when and how their performance will be evaluated.

Classroom instruction supports the skills that are required for task completion and resources in terms of both human (the class teacher) and material (print and on-line). To be consistent in meeting the needs of students in relation to their skills and language, topics covered in the course include writing correctly and concisely, and interacting effectively and appropriately. Several aspects of each topic are the learning foci for the lessons. Referring to the assignment on meetings, students have to learn the skills and language to interact with readers or listeners. In-class instructions on the tone, voice and persona that are required to perform the task are given, covering the use of vocabulary on reporting verbs that convey different attitudes and opinions, expressions for showing complete or partial dis/agreement, offering or asking for explanation and clarification, and ways of conducting negotiations and discussions in formal workplace situations. These in-class instructions give students a starting-point to complete the assignments.

When students have questions or problems applying the skills learned in class (such as those that are related to language issues and language needs, difficulties with group members, uneasiness with peers with superior language proficiency, and concerns about the course materials and resources), they are encouraged to approach the teacher. Such questions or problems can be used to give students just-in-time instructions. Since the students come to the class with a variety of backgrounds and language abilities, a certain amount of 'dissonance' is to be expected. In terms of assessment, a clear and common understanding between students and the teacher is the key to good preparation and accurate measurement of student performances. The teacher will give feedback and recommendations for improvement based on students' performance. The following is a student feedback form used in the course, with a description of each of the criteria used to evaluate student performances in the assignment on participating in meetings.

Student Feedback Form	
Student name	
Content	(information, details, ideas or arguments that can show student's awareness about his/her role in the company and ability to share what s/he knows in that capacity)
Interactive strategies	(strategies used such as holding the floor, turn taking, picking up lines of arguments, showing agreement or disagreement)
Register	(use of semi-formal language which is considered appropriate for the task)
Language	(ability to express ideas clearly and effectively)
Pronunciation	(accuracy and comprehensibility of pronunciation)
Fluency	(smooth flow of thoughts and confidence in delivery)
Overall comments	(a few remarks on the strengths and weaknesses of the performance)
Grade	
Teamwork comments	(fulfilment of the task and effort to work as a team, such as inviting quiet members to speak up, following the agenda closely, being ready and willing to negotiate, being co-operative during the discussion or negotiation process, etc.)

This feedback form will not only give a snapshot of the student performance at the time of the assessment, but also offers pointers to students on how to improve. Students are expected to learn from this experience and to apply what they have learnt to the rest of the project when similar occasions present themselves, for example, when students are engaging in the in-class discussion about issues that are related to the completion of the project. Thus the feedback form can be for both assessment and developmental purposes.

(4.3)   Student Response to the Project Work

To obtain students' perceptions of the learning experience, at the end of the course, students are asked to give their understanding of the subject aim, the teaching and learning activities, assessments, evaluation criteria and the workload.

Your learning experience of the subject – Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), No strong view (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1) Q1   I have a clear understanding of what I am expected to learn from this subject. Q2   The teaching and learning activities (e.g. lectures, discussions, case studies, projects, etc) have helped me to achieve the subject learning outcomes. Q3   The assessments require me to demonstrate my knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject. Q 4   I understand the criteria according to which I will be graded. Q.5   Relative to the subject learning outcomes, the workload for this subject has been: Too heavy (3) Appropriate (2) Too light (1)

The score on a scale from 1-5 for each of the questions for the academic years 2007/08 and 2008/09 is as follows:

Year	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5 (heavy)	Q.5 (appropriate)	Q.5(light)
2007/08	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	12%	88%	0
2008/09	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.2	5%	95%	0
2009/10	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.4	12%	88%	0

The general impression was that the learning activities and the project were well-received, as the University's averages are between 4.0 and 4.1. In the focus meeting with students at the end of the course, some students mentioned the difficulty of juggling time to meet their commitments in the university and in the workplace; a few students had problems with logistical arrangements of group work. Most found the course and the project useful. It seems that previous worries about adult students being apprehensive about learning English learning more than ten years after studying it in secondary school were not justified.

5. *Management of Project Work*

The description of the project design in the previous sections has pointed out three aspects that deserve teachers' attention: the scope of project, the time constraints, and the available resources.

The Essentials of Project Work
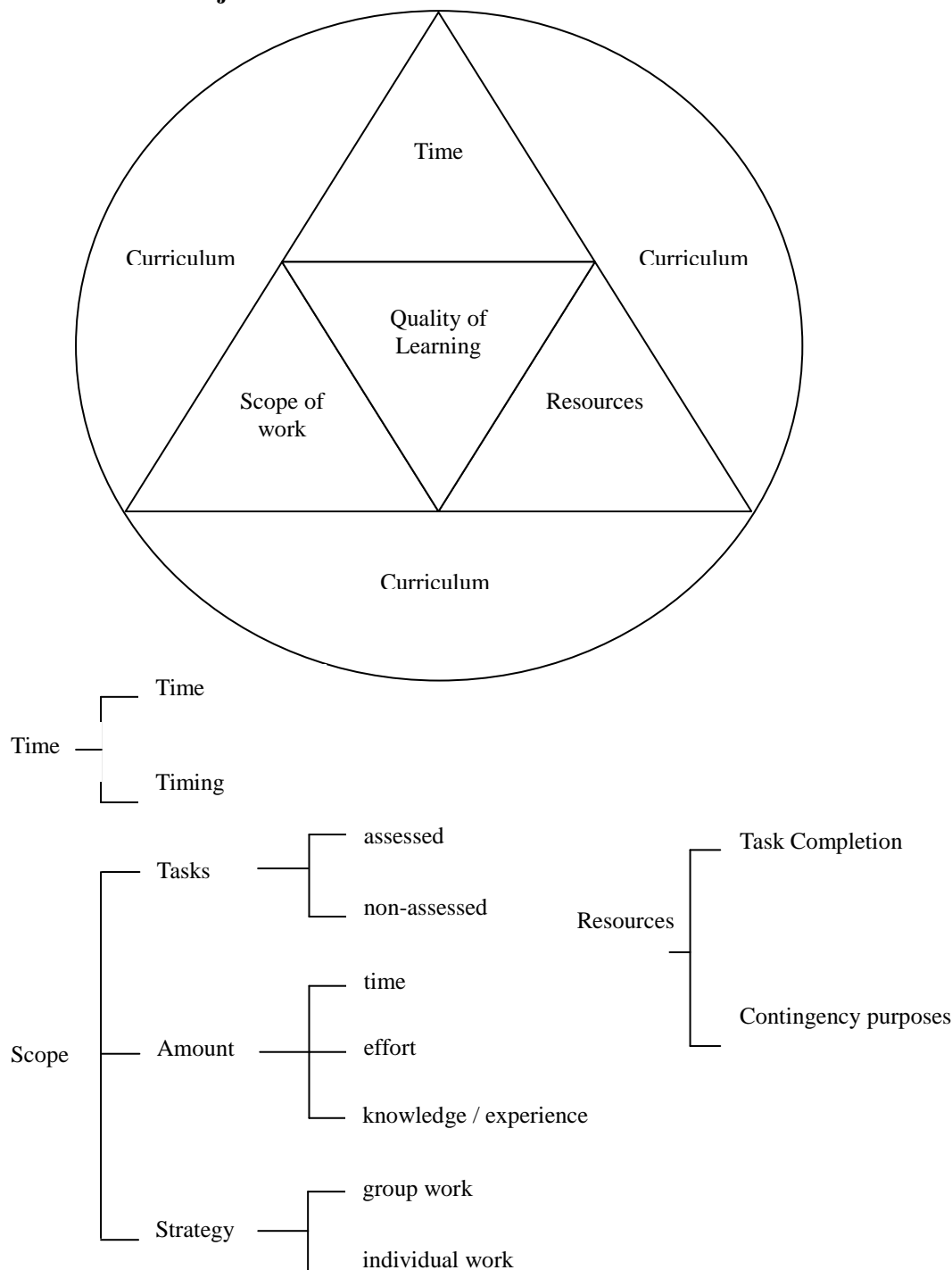
The scope consists of all the work or tasks that are needed to complete the project and the processes involved, in addition to the rationale and purpose of the project. There are three dimensions of scope: type of task (assessed or non-assessed), amount of work (student effort, knowledge and/or experience) and strategy (the way in which students carry out the task). The time is the schedule and the amount of time required to complete the project. Time management requires careful identification and sequencing of tasks. Resources refer to the manpower and materials to help students complete the tasks or to meet individual needs. Scope, time and resources all have a significant bearing on students' quality of learning. It is clear that in a course that includes project work, the teacher is essentially a project manager and is responsible for project design and implementation, and for creating a dynamic learning environment in which students can learn through meaningful communication. The following is a diagrammatic representation of the management of project work.

6. Conclusion

The profession-related project that was described in this paper highlighted the importance of interactivity during the learning process– interactivity between teacher and student (for example, in the design of project scenarios by students and teacher's feedback on students' work) and interactivity among the students themselves (in group work and on their meeting assignment). However there is one more type of interactivity which was beyond the scope of this paper: interactivity between students and computer technology in completing assignments such as the brochure. In fact, all of the written assignments on the project required the application of some computer skills, because the teacher would not accept hand-written home assignments. Interactivity at the three levels described here can increase students' effectiveness and efficiency in learning; it can also enhance students' sociability, which is widely believed to be important in workplace and lifelong learning.

This paper examined a sample project-based course whose topics were introduced to support and keep the project on track. This project-oriented approach provides students with 'just-in-time' learning and the opportunity for skill application, simulating some real-world workplace situations while demonstrating the learning topics on the course and building a practical foundation for workplace communication. Implementing projects in a curriculum requires an understanding of numerous strategies that can maintain students' involvement, ways to organize and structure their learning, and to reinforce the learning experience in the classroom. The more teachers understand the issues involved in project work on a course, the more efficient and effective the teachers can be when they assist students with the projects. The success of a project depends on the skills and knowledge of the teacher (as the project manager) to take into consideration all the context-specific constraints (such as time and resources), to develop plans and processes to keep the constraints in balance. The more we learn about the intricacies of adopting a project approach to teaching and learning, the more we understand that such an approach is not just a pedagogical decision but also an economic one, as the process of completing a project on a course is a reflection of the effort and performance that are required in today's workplace.

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Appendix I   Table of contents

Lesson 1	Writing Correctly	- Writing Steps
Lesson 2	Writing Correctly	- Sentence Structures
Lesson 3	Interacting Effectively	- Meetings I
Lesson 4	Interacting Effectively	- Meetings II
(Lesson 5	In-class Writing)	
Lesson 6	Writing Effectively	- Brochures I
Lesson 7	Writing Effectively	- Brochures II
Lesson 8	Writing Effectively	- Brochures III
Lesson 9	Interacting Appropriately	- Letters I
Lesson 10	Interacting Appropriately	- Letters II
Lesson 11	Interacting Appropriately	- Memos
Lesson 12	Writing Concisely	- Abstracts
Lesson 13	Writing Concisely	- Executive Summaries I
Lesson 14	Writing Concisely	- Executive Summaries II

Appendix II   Assignment project

Guidelines for the Group Project

Completion of the project is a requirement of the subject ELC3502. Working on the project is a learning experience, which will provide you with an opportunity to improve communication skills, enhance language proficiency, acquire the ability to integrate different areas of knowledge, and further develop skills necessary for collaborative work as well as independent learning. Successful completion of the project reflects your achievements in the subject, which include your abilities to enhance language proficiency, your knowledge and capability to address areas of language weakness, and to write and present ideas effectively, cogently and coherently in the workplace.

This project forms the basis for the following tasks:
1. Meeting, in-class in Week 6 (20%)
2. Brochure, submitted in Week 9 (30%)
3. Letter of reply, submitted in Week 11 (15%)
4. Executive summary (not assessed, but provides practice for Assessment 4 of this subject)

Project scenario

As the business of your company has been growing rapidly in the home country, the company is planning to set up new offices in other parts of the world. You and three/four other colleagues have been asked to prepare a brochure to promote the company to the locals in the HKSAR.

Steps to complete the project

Step 1

Form a company (Weeks 1 and 2)

(a)   Form groups of 4 or 5 students to set up a company.

(b)   Decide on a line of business (e.g. developing and producing car   accessories).

(c)   Decide on the characteristics of your company and details of the company's line of business and products/services. Other details may include the company's motto and other special features.

(An example of the task for this step is given.)

Step 2

Make decision on the content of the brochure (Weeks 3-6)

(a)   Think about some prominent features of the products/services that you think might be of particular interest to the readers of the brochure.

(b)   **Hold a meeting** (**Week 6**) to discuss how to introduce your company and present the products/services that you have chosen to promote in the brochure, and to decide the details to be included in the brochure as well as the work schedule. Take notes during the meeting. (**Group work**)

(An example of the task and details of expected performances are given.)

Step 3

Prepare the brochure (Weeks 6-9)

(Out-of-class group work)

Based on your discussion and agreements at the meeting in Week 6, write the brochure. The brochure should include:

(a)   Details about the company (such as the uniqueness of the company)

(An example for (a) is given)

(b)   Products/Services

●   Images

●   Factual details

●   A few lines promoting each product (about 50 words)

(c)   Contact details for more information

(d)   Or any other details that will help promote a positive image of the company.

Please also refer to a sample given by your teacher.

Week 9 – Submit the brochure to your teacher in class.

Step 4

Promote a product/service to a target group of consumers (Weeks 9-11)

Your company has received a letter enquiring about a product/service introduced in the brochure. (The enquiry letter is written by another group of students in Week 9.) Write a reply in not more than 100 words. This is out-of-class **individual work**.

Week 11 – Submit the reply letter to your class teacher in class.

Step 5

Report on the effort made in improving the product(s)/service(s) (Weeks 12-14)

Week 12 – Imagine your company has received compliments and complaints about some of the products/services. (Discuss with group members the details.)

Week 13 – Imagine that Investigations have been carried out, measures have been taken to improve the situation and a very detailed report has been drafted. Discuss with group members the content of the report and the main ideas to be included in an executive summary for your report. **Write the executive summary in class individually**.

(An example of the task and details of the expected performance are given/)

Week 14 – In the first hour of the meeting, compare the executive summary of the report that you wrote in Week 13 with those written by your group members. Exchange opinions on how to improve the writing. Ask your teacher if you have questions.

Appendix III   Student Information Sheet

Information for Students

I. Objective

This subject aims to develop the English language skills required by students to communicate effectively in their professional careers.

II. Learning outcomes

By the end of the subject, students should be able to communicate effectively in workplace contexts through

1. participating in, and contributing to, workplace meetings,
2. writing job-related correspondence,
3. writing documents to introduce and promote an organisation as well as a product or a service, and
4. writing summaries for job-related documents.

To achieve the above outcomes, students are expected to use language and text structure appropriate to the context, select information critically, present ideas systematically and logically, and provide support for stance and opinion.

III. Learning schedule

Weeks	Topics	Contents	Assessments
1-2	Writing correctly	Writing steps Sentence structures	1. Meeting (20%)
3-4	Interacting effectively	Meetings: writing agendas; participating in meetings; writing minutes	Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 1 In-class Week 6
5-8		Describing products and services: texts and visuals; persuasive and concise language; appropriate tone; information selection	Brochure (30%) 2. Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 3 Out-of-class Week 9
9-11	Interacting appropriately	Letters and memos: formats and layouts; style and tone; letters of enquiry and replies; letters of complaint and adjustment	Letter of reply to an enquiry (15%) 3. Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 2 Out-of-class Week 11
12-14	Writing concisely	Abstracts and executive summaries: identifying the purpose; selecting information; organising the content; using concise and appropriate language	Executive summary of a report (35%) Learning outcome assessed: 4. Outcome 4 In-class Week 14

IV.   Materials

V.   Attendance and punctuality

VI.   Out-of-class work

VII. Assessments

As shown in the table on p.1 of this handout, there are four assessments that evaluate your achievement of the learning outcomes of this subject. You are required to do all four assessments in order to pass the subject. If, due to **extenuating** circumstances, you cannot complete a certain assessment on time, notify the teacher as soon as possible (in person, by phone or by email) and arrange to do the assessment on another occasion. It is your responsibility as a student to make such arrangements.

Assessment 1: Meeting (20%)
Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 1
In this assessment, you have to participate in a meeting to discuss how to introduce your company and present your products or services in a brochure. Your performance is assessed individually.
Type of assessment: In-class
Duration: 20 minutes each group
Assessment date: Week 6

Assessment 2: Brochure (30%)
Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 3
In this assessment, you have to introduce your company in a brochure, describing some of the products/services produced or provided by your company. This is group work and your performance is assessed in groups.
Type of assessment: Out-of-class
Length of writing: About 500 words
Due date: Week 9

Assessment 3: Letter of reply to an enquiry (15%)
Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 2
In this assessment, you have to write a reply to a letter of enquiry from a prospective customer who has shown interests in the products or services introduced in the brochure of Assessment 2. This is individual work.
Type of assessment: Out-of-class
Length of writing: Not more than 100 words
Due date: Week 11

Assessment 4: Executive summary (35%)
Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 4
In this assessment, you have to write an executive summary of a long report.
Type of assessment: In-class
Length of writing: About 200 words
Time allowed: 1 hour
Assessment date: Week 14

Assessment criteria
Your performance in this subject will be assessed according to the following criteria.
Assessment 1
Content and organisation (25%)
Interaction (25%)
Language: grammar, vocabulary, style and tone (25%)
Pronunciation and fluency (25%)

Assessments 2, 3 and 4
Content and organisation (40%)
Language: grammar, vocabulary, style and tone (40%)
Conventions: layout and format, and word length (20%)