IINTRODUCTION: Project-based Learning
Janine Sepulveda, University of Oregon

Words that are both italicized and underlined are glossary items. These words can be found in the document named "Glossary: Common Terms."

What is Project-based Learning?
Project-based Learning (PBL) is a method of teaching that presents students with a problem or challenge to solve, requires them to gather information from various resources, and asks them to come up with an original solution that ends in a product or performance. Projects are great learning tools because they challenge students to work together, think in new ways, use a variety of linguistic, content, and social skills, and incorporate creativity. PBL is an excellent approach to providing multiple options for students with different learning preferences and linguistic levels. Projects can engage students in a way that other types of classroom activities generally do not, which leads to better managed classes and more effective learning. Projects should be tied to the curriculum and allow students to apply their knowledge in ways that lead to deep, meaningful learning and real communication. Often projects are long-term endeavors that last weeks or months, but this is not essential. Although short-term projects do not have all the benefits of longer, more involved projects, they can also be very effective. If you have a very full curriculum or are new to Project-based Learning, consider starting out with a shorter, simpler project. Projects are appropriate for all ages and linguistic levels; it is up to the teacher to design a project that is age and level appropriate. So, what are the essential elements of Project-based Learning?

Essential Elements of Project-based Learning (PBL) – Edutopia, 2007
1. **Start with the essential question.**
   The essential question is the problem or challenge you pose to your students to solve. This should be an open-ended question to which there is no ONE right answer. Every student or group should be able to come up with an answer or solution that is unique. The essential question should, of course, be geared to students' age and language level. It could be as simple as "What does an ideal house look like?" or as complex as "Think of a serious problem in your community. How can it be solved?" or "What is a new invention the world needs?" Essential questions should engage students and be relevant and authentic. You can also ask your students to create essential questions as this gets them more involved and thinking more deeply. There is no limit to the types of essential questions you can ask!
2. **Plan your project design.**
   Think about what linguistic and content skills you want students to learn as they work on the project and find ways to make sure students must practice and develop these skills during the project. Think about how they will gather the information they need – online, from classmates, from books, from community members, etc. Set clear objectives for the project and think about what the _outcome_ will be. The outcome for a project is never a test. It is a student-created product or performance (poster, presentation, paper, role-play, story, script, video, digital story, brochure, book, etc.). While technology can be very useful in PBL, it is not a requirement! The only requirement is your imagination.
3. **Provide students choices.**
   Even though you have designed the project, think about ways students can make choices about how they approach or develop the project. For example, students may receive a list of topics they would like to research, or they may be able to choose what

kind of end product they will create. The more students are involved in making their own choices, the more invested they will be in the project. As you become more experienced with PBL, you can experiment with ways to increase student choice.

4. **Create a schedule.**
Think about how long the project will last and set a deadline. Will it all be done in class? Outside of class? A combination? Provide a timeline and checklist for students to follow. If you have designed a longer project, make sure to create mini-deadlines so that you can check in on student progress and provide feedback and guidance. Sometimes students can get stuck or off-track. The teacher's job during a project is to help students stay focused. Of course, if you design a shorter project that is all done in class, a timeline and mini-deadlines will not be necessary. Projects can be large or small. Think about what is appropriate for your students and teaching context.

5. **Assess the outcome.**
Think about how you will assess student work. What are the skills you want to evaluate? Some people think that projects are just for fun – the "dessert" of the class. In reality, if they are well designed, they can be very powerful learning tools that require students to go deeper into a topic and use more skills than traditional classroom activities. So, make sure you have clear _learning objectives_ and a good way to assess them.

6. **Find a wider audience.**
Think about ways students can share their products outside of the class. Can they post them on a class blog? Share with other students at a school assembly? Put posters in the hall? Invite parents to see their outcomes? Finding a wider audience makes student work more authentic and provides extra value and a sense of pride and achievement.

Samples of possible projects

Essential Question	Process	Linguistic focus	Outcome
What should tourists see and do when visiting your town/region?	Online research, surveys, etc.	Simple present, simple past, complete sentences, questions	Presentation, poster, or tourist brochure (hand-made or on the computer)
What does an ideal house look like?	In-class discussion or survey; students combine ideas into one outcome.	Vocabulary related to houses	Poster with rooms and house items labeled; possible presentation of reasons for choices
What is the main environmental problem in our town/region, and how can we solve it?	Online research or other research, class and community surveys, etc.	Questions, modal verbs, environment vocabulary	Paper, poster, presentation, or video
Who are the most influential people of our time and why?	Online or other research, surveys, etc.	Verb tenses, questions, complex sentences, etc.	Paper, poster, presentation, or video
What is our region's main industry, and	Group brainstorming,	Simple present, imperatives, modal	Commercial/ advertisement in written,

| how could we most effectively market it? | online (or other) research, evaluation of advertisements, etc. | verbs | recorded, or video format or role-play of advertisement |
| Think of a famous story or movie. What could an alternate ending be? | Group discussion of story and characters; brainstorming | Will vary, depending on level of students | Role-play, video, written narrative |

How can I get started?
Think about your _curriculum_ (topics/themes/skills) and your students' needs and interests. Create a project that will effectively tie all of these together while keeping in mind the amount of time you have and the resources you have access to. If you or your students are new to PBL, start small and simple. Reflect on what went well and what you need to change for the future. Keep track of how effective the project was for learning and how engaging it was for your students. Find ways to get as much student input as possible – the more they are involved, the more they will care!

Conclusion
Not only can PBL be a motivating factor in the classroom, it can lead to more student _engagement_ and better learning. When we find ways to use student curiosity and creativity, the class is well managed and students learn more.

For more information and project ideas
Buck Institute for Education. (2016). *Why project-based learning?* Retrieved from http://bie.org/

> This website is an excellent resource for designing and implementing projects. It is not geared specifically toward language classes, but all the ideas can be adapted to fit English-language classrooms.

Brenner, K. (2014). Digital stories: A 21st-century communication tool for the English language classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, *52*(1), 22-29. Retrieved from http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/52_1_5_brenner.pdf

> This article provides details on how to set up a project using digital stories.

Bulent, A. & Stoller, F. (2005). Maximizing the benefits of project work in foreign language classrooms. *English Teaching Forum*, *43*(4), 10-21. Retrieved from http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/05-43-4-c.pdf

> This article provides an excellent overview of the steps a teacher should follow when designing and implementing a project in a language class. The authors share many practical tips.

Carney, N., & Foss, P. (2008). Student-produced video: Two approaches. *English Teaching Forum, 46*(2). Retrieved from http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/08-46-2-b.pdf

This article provides specific tips on how to set up a video project with students.

Edutopia. (2007). *How does project-based learning work?* Retrieved from http://www.edutopia
.org/project-based-learning-guide-implementation

This website provides an excellent overview of the essential elements of Project-based Learning. If you are new to PBL, this is a great place to start!

Wang, Y. (2004). English magazines = motivation + improved EFL writing skills. *English Teaching Forum, 42*(1). Retrieved from http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/04-42-1-g.pdf

This article provides specific tips on how to set up an English magazine project with students.

Reference

Edutopia. (2007). *How does project-based learning work?* Retrieved from http://www.edutopia
.org/project-based-learning-guide-implementation

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