

A Report on Project-Based Teaching and Learning Across the Multiple Intelligences

Jack Brajcich

Introduction

This paper is a report on several projects done in four different classes and in two extra-curricular clubs with students of various levels during the 2013-2014 school year at Fukuoka Jo Gakuin Junior College. The projects were chosen to more appropriately and effectively match students with their own personal interests, learning preferences and multiple intelligences. In this paper “projects” will include activities conducted within the classroom as well as several extra-curricular activities outside the classroom.

The subjects

The students (roughly 150 in total) who participated in the projects were of various levels of English proficiency. There were students from four classes; 1) Global Issues, 2) Speaking & Listening II, 3) Speaking & Listening III & IV, 4) Oral Presentation, 5) Seminar and two clubs; 1) English Lounge and, 2) Team Mission (volunteer club). All classes met twice a week for an hour. The clubs met weekly for 30 minutes.

Multiple Intelligences

The multiple intelligences were taken from the research conducted by Harvard University Professor Howard Gardner (1993). The following is a list of those

multiple intelligences along with a brief description of each of the multiple intelligences.

Spatial

An ability to recognize and manipulate large-scale and fine-grained spatial images.

Bodily-kinesthetic

An ability to use one' s own body to create products or solve problems.

Musical

An ability to produce, remember, and make meaning of different patterns of sound.

Naturalist

An ability to identify and distinguish among different types of plants, animals, and weather formations that are found in the natural world.

Interpersonal

An ability to recognize and understand other people' s moods, desires, motivations, and intentions

Intrapersonal

An ability to recognize and understand his or her own moods, desires,

motivations, and intentions

Linguistic

An ability to analyze information and create products involving oral and written language such as speeches, books, and memos.

Logical -Mathematical

An ability to develop equations and proofs, make calculations, and solve abstract problems.

The Projects

The projects included in this report include the following. A description of each project is also included. Projects were chosen for their complexity (from simple to more complex) and so that students could use as many of the multiple intelligences listed above as possible. Also, projects usually were done individually at first and later moved to pairs and final to small group work (3-5 students).

-Zoo visit

Students were given an animal to introduce on a small A4 size poster. Information on the poster included what type of problems each animal faces by society and ways to help them. Students then visited the zoo to take photos of their animal. Finally, a video collection of all the photos and posters was created and shown to the entire class.

-Show and Tell

In this simple project, students were asked to bring any object they wanted

and talk about that object in English. The students were encouraged to talk about why the object was important to them including any type of emotional attachment and so on.

-Verbal Reports on Music and Movies

These reports were also somewhat simple. Students were asked to talk for 2-3 minutes about music/musicians and movies that they liked in front of the class.

-Mini Posters

Depending on the class, different “themes” were chosen for these A4-sized posters. Topics were mostly on global and/or social issues. Students made their mini-poster presentations in front of the class in English.

-Posters

Students presented on various topics again centering mostly on global and/or social issues. This time, posters were created and presented on in small groups of 2-4 students.

- “Kamishibai” /Storybooks

The “Kamishibai” projects were also done in groups. Students could choose any story they wanted or create their own original story. All stories were presented to the class in English.

- “Pecha Kucha” Presentations

“Pecha Kucha” presentations are made with PowerPoint (or the like) software. All presentations must include 20 slides. All slides are set to change every 20 seconds making each presentation six minutes and 40 seconds long. Students are strongly encouraged not to read from their slides thus using a minimal number of words on their slides and using mostly photos and images.

-Commercials/Short Video Parodies

These videos were set to be 30 seconds long. Students could create any kind of video they wanted, from serious to humorous topics. All creativity was left to the students.

-One-Minute Videos

One-Minute Videos was a more serious project. Students were asked to create a one-minute video on any global or social issue they wanted. Videos created in the first semester were then sent to Unicef Japan for their One-Minute Video Contest in August. Videos created in the second semester will be sent to Unicef Japan for the 2014 contest.

-English Lounge activities

The English Lounge student staff planned and held several activities and events throughout the year including parties, movie watching days, a BBQ, charity bake and ice cream sales, guest lectures, and student presentations.

-Team Mission activities

Team Mission does various community projects on the local and global levels. This student-lead volunteer club also works with individuals and groups outside school to help create better communities and offer a variety of support to those in need.

Matching Projects with Multiple Intelligences

The projects mentioned in this paper were all chosen by the students first and foremost as a way to encourage their learner autonomy (Benson, 2011) and motivation (Dornyei, 2001). By encouraging students to do what they were most interested in and love, it was hoped that they would, as a result, learn more and be most creative and thus most productive. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990

& 1996, Robinson, 2009). Many of the projects involved student-creativity and self-expression. There was a strong focus and emphasis on presentation so that students could become better at presenting their ideas to others (Berkun, 2010, Duarte, 2008, Reynolds, 2008 & 2011). Below is a chart of how projects were matched with various multiple intelligences.

-Zoo visit: Naturalist, Interpersonal , Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical -Mathematical (for expressing numbers, statistics, percentages and so on)

-Show and Tell: Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic

-Verbal Reports on Music and Movies: Musical (for the reports on music), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical -Mathematical (for expressing numbers, statistics, percentages and so on)

-Mini Posters: Spatial (design, layout), Naturalist (for nature-related presentations), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical -Mathematical (for expressing numbers, statistics, percentages and so on)

-Posters: Spatial (design, layout): Naturalist (for nature-related presentations), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical -Mathematical (for expressing numbers, statistics, percentages and so on)

- “Kamishibai”/Storybooks: Spatial (design, layout): Naturalist (for nature-related stories), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic

- “Pecha Kucha” Presentations: Spatial (design, layout): Naturalist (for nature-related presentations), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical -Mathematical (for expressing numbers, statistics, percentages and so on)

-Commercials/Short Video Parodies: Musical (for video including music), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic

-One-Minute Videos: Musical (for video including music): Naturalist (for nature-related videos), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical -Mathematical (for expressing numbers, statistics, percentages and so on)

-English Lounge activities: Bodily-kinesthetic and Musical (videos involving dance and music), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical -Mathematical (for expressing numbers, statistics, percentages, budgeting, sales and so on)

-Team Mission activities: Bodily-kinesthetic (sports days), Musical (for events involving music), Naturalist (for nature-related activities such as beach or neighborhood cleanups), Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical -Mathematical (for expressing numbers, statistics, percentages, budgeting, sales and so on)

Reflections and Considerations for Future Projects

Students have a variety of interests and skills (intelligences). Teachers and students alike can explore together what interests and skills best match the projects they choose to get involved with. At the same time, teachers and students can discuss and decide together which skills they would like to develop more. This may be students' more developed skills and/or their weak or less developed skills. By encouraging students to perform various tasks according to their interests and skills, they can be more engaged in their learning and each other and get more value from their active involvement. Teachers and learners alike can search together for different projects everyone can enjoy and in the process of completing their projects share their experiences together and express themselves with various presentation

methods.

This paper did not look into more academic and scientific-based ways to access students' multiple intelligences. Future work could involve carefully planned assessment to get a better inventory of what students both like to do and what they are good at. With such an assessment and inventory, teachers could more effectively find out what students are interested in and good at and match such preferences and skills with various projects and work with other individual students and groups.

References

Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy*. New York: Applied Linguistics in Action Series.

Berkun, S. (2010). *Confessions of a Public Speaker*. Sebastopol, California: O' Reilly Media, Inc.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Motivation*. New York: Applied Linguistics in Action Series.

Duarte, N. (2008). *Slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations*. Sebastopol, California: O' Reilly Media, Inc.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Robinson, K. (2009). *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*. New York: Viking.

Reynolds, G. (2008). *Presentationzen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery*. Berkeley: New Riders.

Reynolds, G. (2011). *The Naked Presenter: Delivering Powerful Presentations With or Without Slides*. Berkeley: New Riders.