

## **Exploring the Potential of Project-Based Learning in EFL Instruction of Bulgarian University Students**

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**Abstract:** *The study explores the potential of project-based learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction at the university level. It aims to analyze students' engagement in a project, the goal of which is to facilitate their preparation for the English practical exams and their self-study process in general in order to develop their language competence and promote autonomy in learning; assess their work results, and gather their perceptions through a self-reported survey. The analysis of the project outcomes and questionnaire data reveals the project's effectiveness, students' attitudes and challenges, and key considerations for future implementations.*

**Keywords:** *PBL; university students; project work; EFL instruction; learning resources;*

### **Introduction**

Project-based learning (PBL) methods ensure the transformation from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction, promoting students' autonomy and initiative. This approach serves the dual purpose of enriching students' cognitive knowledge and developing new skills, including 21st-century skills necessary to prepare them for the modern reality.

Although foreign language instruction is generally more student-centered, Bulgarian students still tend to be rather passive learners. Hence, foreign language education requires different methods to shift their mindset and motivate them to become more active and independent in their studies.

Project-based learning emerges as an instructional approach capable of providing students with a fresh perspective on their learning and engaging them in exploring the subject matter and their own abilities. Reflecting on their experience with project work can additionally stimulate them to regard it as a factor for their learning and development, as well as consider its role in the interpersonal communication in their educational environment.

For a considerable number of students finding the proper sources to gather information and hone skills on the Internet could be a great challenge. Not being certain how to find and select materials from myriads of websites and platforms can be quite discouraging and actually demotivate students to search. Instructors can offer a list of dependable sources to be of help to their students, but a more efficient approach would be to encourage them to

attempt at discovering such materials working together. This was the concept of the project conducted with two focus groups of Bulgarian students doing their bachelor programs at the University of Shumen. The ultimate goal is to facilitate students in their preparation for the English practical exams and in their self-study process in general in order to develop their language competence and promote their self-regulation in learning.

The aim of the present article is to describe and discuss the project and its outcomes. The focus of the study is to examine the effectiveness of project-based learning in a higher education context, identifying the essential factors for its successful execution, and understanding the students' perceptions of their involvement in the project. The research aimed at addressing the following questions:

1. How would the project work benefit the students in their studies?
2. Does project-based learning have the potential to influence students' academic development?

### **Literature review**

Project-based learning has been extensively researched across various educational contexts, examining its broad impacts and numerous opportunities to enhance students' learning, language and social skill development.

There are numerous definitions of the method, which are trying to encompass the short- and long-term benefits of its application. Blumenfeld et al. present PBL as “a comprehensive perspective focused on teaching by engaging students in investigation” (371). This definition is rather broad and emphasizes the process, while the more recent view about project-based learning, suggested by Allison alternatively presents it as an instructional approach directed to students' common “work together to solve a problem by creating an artifact or tangible end product” (Allison 6). Although the goal of the project is what students put their efforts into while working on it, Ford and Kluge state that it is the process and not only the product they should be concentrated on and it should be made meaningful to them (Ford & Kluge 17). In the process students are likely to broaden and reconstruct their knowledge and develop abilities such as working in a team that are reflected in the final products of their project work (Guo 5).

The wide range of competences that students can additionally acquire or improve through participation in individual and group projects includes the 21st-century skills, which are key attributes of successful learners. Degebas highlights the four Cs – collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity – that can be cultivated through project-based learning (Degebas 52). This method provides an educational setting where students can develop abilities necessary for higher-level cognitive processes such as problem-

solving and decision-making (Çakmak 87). Implementing this approach can also significantly enhance students' presentation, research, technical, and time management skills (Devkota et al. 48). Therefore, its potential extends beyond merely gaining knowledge and creating a product.

From the perspective of how PBL is structured, it is defined as “an individual or group activity that goes on over a period of time, resulting in a product, presentation, or performance” (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice 4). Ivanova highlights flexibility and applicability as two of the most significant features of project-based learning, referring to its practical use and educational purpose (Ivanova 40). These characteristics are emphasized by technology integration in project work.

Technology is an intrinsic part of PBL and it is essential for all its aspects (Bell 42). The successful implementation of project work heavily relies on technology for constructing knowledge and communication (Jaleniauskiene 272). Apart from using the Internet and digital learning tools as sources for information and research, it allows students to communicate online in the course of their work and prepare their presentations to report the results. As the greater part of students is technology-savvy, they are not expected to have serious difficulties accomplishing the project tasks. Alternatively, students with basic or inadequate digital skills have the opportunity to develop them during the course of the project work.

Students widely use technology and foreign languages in their free time activities, so it seems logical to focus on how they can intentionally use these tools to support their language development. Research conducted within the project framework can be driven by their personal interests, transforming them into active learners (Yimwilai 217).

In an overview of the research on PBL in post-secondary education Guo et al. categorize the main areas in which studies are focused – the practice of project-based learning and its impact on students' learning (Guo et al. 2). According to Shpeizer, PBL is not considered to be fully integrated in higher education, and it is mainly applied in a limited number of academic fields, such as engineering and teacher training (1766). A plausible explanation could be that certain challenges occur in its implementation, especially when it refers to group projects. These challenges are related to the established roles of lecturers and students; the students' expectations related to the different educational environment, group dynamics issues, and the lack of opportunity for direct monitoring of students' work (ibid. 1767; Mali 172).

Although Jaleniauskiene states that “the application of PBL is less frequent” in social sciences and humanities (266), there is detailed research on the method's effective implementation in EFL context, regardless of the educational level (Yimwilai 2020; Thuan 2018; Yuliani & Lengkanawati 2017; Poonpon 2011). The use of PBL in FL classrooms can be beneficial for

students' learning in diverse aspects in addition to the aforementioned advantages. The foreign language can be both the target for language skill development – e.g., EFL writing (Aghayani & Hajmohammadi 2019; Sa'diyah & Cahyono 2019; Firdausah & Sari 2023), and the means of achieving the goals in cross-curricular and particularly CLIL projects (Lastra-Mercado 2016; Yufrizal 2021). As suggested by Cubero Vázquez, the integration of PBL and CLIL instructional approaches provides educational conditions that can enhance language development and intercultural communicative competence (267). The latter is fostered by the social nature of language, along with the interaction and communication that arise from it, which PBL environments ensure. Finally, another advantage of PBL in an EFL setting is the opportunity to immerse oneself in authentic learning materials during independent research.

In order to generate students' motivation to participate in a project, its purpose should be made clear and practical to them, and they should be given the freedom to present their own ideas about how the project would be carried out (Aldabbus 74). The project topic should be either suggested by them and/or driven by a problem they are eager or willing to explore (Lund & Jensen 1), or it should be directed specifically to them as learners, so that they would fully benefit from its results. In the present study the second option was preferred due to a number of reasons. Firstly, compared to secondary school education, group projects are not a common practice in university learning settings, as generally projects are identified as individual assignments. Secondly, students may find it difficult to produce ideas for project topics if they have never been tasked with it before or are unsure how to define them. Finally, their passivity as learners, waiting to be rendered knowledge rather than pursue it themselves, does not leave many alternatives.

Having students involved in long-term project work gives them the opportunity to self-direct, plan and select the most suitable strategies for achieving their project goals, thus fostering self-regulation in learning. Promoting autonomy in learning is highlighted as a valuable outcome of students' participation in project work (Stefanou et al. 2013; McCarthy 2010; Malkova & Kiselyova 2014). Therefore, PBL has the capacity to provide for the students' increasing autonomy in the independent inquiry which can help them “develop a sense of ownership and control over their learning” (Kokotsaki et al. 16).

PBL constitutes a metacognitive approach to learning, involving students actively in the executive processes of planning, monitoring their work, and evaluating both the process and the results through deep reflection and close analysis, thereby harnessing their knowledge and lifelong learning skills.

### **Project framework, participants and methodology**

The participation in the project required the students to collaborate and search for online resources (websites, educational platforms, blogs, vlogs, videos, tutorials, podcasts, etc.) which could be used in their individual language learning and practice.

The students were assigned to work in groups according to the subject area in which they would seek materials and learning resources that would assist them in their practice and mastering reading, listening, speaking, writing, vocabulary and grammar. Each group was required to cooperate, study, discuss and select 10 most appropriate and useful tools for each skill area. When each group was ready with their list of selected resources, the members prepared and gave a short presentation to their fellow-students to describe the nature of the materials and what they can be used for. Then they provided their colleagues with the full list of these resources, so they could use them in their studies as well.

The students were acquainted with the criteria for the selection of the materials, according to which they had to be reliable, useful, and easy to operate and focused on developing the language skills related to the subject area.

At the end of the project all students were expected to have all the selected resources available to use in their independent learning.

The project period was planned for the winter semester of the academic 2023-2024 year, from mid-September to 22 December, when the final results of the project work had to be presented in front of the whole class. The project period encompassed three phases. In the first one the students were assigned to work individually or in pairs to seek resources, check their credibility and effectiveness as language learning tools and choose the best ones to present to the other members of the group.

In the second phase the students worked in their smaller groups and each student had to share with the others what he/she had found in his/her search. Then all members got together, reviewed the resources, discussed them and compiled the final lists for each language skill area. The number of the resources on the full list of each group was not necessarily limited to 10 and could be increased in case the students had found more valuable ones. The final phase was allotted for the project outcomes, and each group's members chose a spokesperson or a couple of spokespeople to give a presentation to announce the results of each group's work.

After completing their project work, all students were asked to participate in a survey designed to gather feedback on their project experience and their perceptions of their involvement. The survey also aimed to provide insight into how tasks were implemented since the project took place outside regular class time, without direct supervision from the

instructor. The questionnaire consisted of 7 questions, including 4 open-ended and 3 close-ended questions. A total of 24 students responded to the survey - 15 third-year students and 9 first-year students. While all students of the two classes were invited to join the project, the exact number of the students actually involved in it remains unknown. This is a probable explanation for the limited response rate, particularly among the first-year students. It can be inferred that only students who actively participated in and contributed to the project completed the questionnaire, indicating their motivation and level of engagement.

### **The participants**

The project was initially targeted at the first-year students with the purpose of facilitating them in their self-study preparation for the practical English language examination (one of their finals). However, it seemed reasonable to suggest the project topic to the third-year students as well, which gave a good ground for comparison of the involvement among the students in both classes and the final results they achieved.

The students whose majors are English Studies and Applied Linguistics (English and Russian Languages) have to sit this examination at the end of each academic year, and its aim is to evaluate their overall language progress in written and verbal format. The language practice which they have includes seminars exercising the four basic language skills, grammar and translation. In order to develop their language abilities, students need to study individually in addition to the instruction they receive at university, so presumably they would benefit from supplementary self-preparation materials and resources.

The students of both focus groups were introduced to the topic and the description of the project and given written instructions on how to implement the task.

### **The first-year students**

The freshman class of the English Studies bachelor program consists of 30 students, all of whom were invited to participate in the project. These students were divided into two main groups, each comprising 15 students, based on their respective subject areas for gathering materials. However, a smaller number of students actually worked on the project and were listed in the presentations: 13 in one group and 11 in the other. The first group's task was to find learning resources to aid in grammar and writing practice, while the second group focused on resources for reading and listening skills. Each major group was further divided into three smaller subgroups, each with 5 students, to facilitate cooperation. This was particularly important as the

project was mainly conducted during their extracurricular time and relied on online collaboration.

The project was intended for the freshmen for several reasons. The main one was to encourage them to find learning resources that would be useful to them in their studies throughout the whole bachelor program. Due to the importance of the Practical English examination the students have to take at the end of each academic year, it appeared justifiable to promote the search of the materials as early as possible, and additionally emphasize the purpose and value of self-study. Another motive was involving the students in active collaboration, so they would more easily get to know one another and devote their efforts to a meaningful cause in their own interest.

The first-year students were tasked with working on the project in the very beginning of their academic year, as a parallel activity to the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) course of instruction. They did not know one another, and therefore could not decide how to form the work groups, but they could choose the learning resources subject area. The instructor divided the class into small groups according to it, and the students were given the freedom and responsibility to organize their work in their own way.

### **The third-year students**

The 20 students who were invited to participate in the project were enrolled in two bachelor's programs: English Studies (11 students) and Applied Linguistics (English and Russian Languages) (9 students). They were also part of the Teacher Qualification/Training Program and its elective course *Metacognitive Strategy Instruction in EFL Teaching and Learning*. The course content was related to the self-regulatory skills which the project aimed to develop in students. Fifteen third-year students responded to the questionnaire about their work on the project, indicating the number of the actual participants. Their relatively high participation rate reflects the stronger motivation compared to the freshmen.

Despite not being in the early stage of their university studies, the third-year students appreciated the project's topic, recognized its usefulness, and fully embraced its concept. They proposed forming three groups based on different subject areas: listening and speaking, vocabulary and writing, and reading and grammar resources. Each student chose a group based on their interests and peers, and the groups were responsible for organizing their work.

### **Results and discussion**

The assessment of the project work outcomes is based on three criteria: the resources found and shared among all students, the end product

(presentations) as well as the qualitative data collected from the survey after project completion.

There are a number of differences between the two focus groups of students that are worth highlighting. The aspects in which they are compared are motivation, involvement, group dynamics, and the project work outcomes. The analysis of these dissimilarities is valuable as it would give information about the degree of success of the project work with both classes, its potential based on the results and the collected feedback, and what procedural changes should be made if the study is conducted again.

Drawing a parallel between both groups of students it can be noted that the third-year students were more motivated to work on the project judging by their readiness and enthusiasm at the start. The comprehensive lists of the resources and the well-prepared presentations gave evidence for their generally more active involvement and commitment to the project in comparison to the first-year students. Furthermore, the third-year undergraduates gave more adequate and rational responses in the survey, which imparted further information about their opinions and perceptions.

The distinctions in team dynamics can be interpreted in view of the relationships between the students in each group. The freshmen did not know one another at the onset of the project – a factor that might have affected their motivation to participate. Conversely, working on the project was a suitable occasion to start communicating more easily and establish relations.

Taking the product into consideration, all groups presented the selected materials and resources as it was required. In contrast to the third-year class, who had taken the task very seriously and gave relevant, detailed, and visually appealing presentations, only one of the two freshmen's groups accomplished the assignment properly. The eleven members of that group had a spokesperson to present their selection of appropriate reading and listening resources. The second major group had prepared a video presentation but the class could only watch it as none of the group members attended the session to give a detailed talk about it. Another flaw in their work was that they had misread and misunderstood the instructions, and as a result, they had searched and found materials in the same subject areas as the other group, instead of writing and grammar, for which the students ended up with no available learning materials. It was not the desired outcome, however, their collective efforts contributed to extending the volume of the first group's resources.

There are several features that the focus groups products have in common. Among the online resources which the students had decided on were websites, apps and learning platforms that some of them admitted they had already tried and used in their own self-study, and that is why they recommended them. As a result of collaborative work, students with strong



self-learning habits could share effective and credible resources with their peers.

Some of the presentations were structurally divided into two halves, each presenting the subject areas in an equal number of slides. Several groups have listed the platform YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com>) in use of developing reading, listening and vocabulary skills, as well as BBC Learning English (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish>) and Cambridge English (<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org>). It is noteworthy that apart from these learning tools each group compiled lists of different websites and platforms all of which could be of great assistance to the students' language learning.

Significantly, none of the groups listed ChatGPT or any other AI tools for language learning purposes, even though the students were clearly familiar with some of them.

### **The first-year students' collection of resources**

As it was mentioned above, both major groups of the freshmen presented their materials on reading and listening, but there are some distinctions between their approaches. Although the first group described the reading and listening resources separately, there were five sites and platforms which offer a wide range of language activities and, therefore, were indicated as suitable for practicing both skills ([www.lingua.com](http://www.lingua.com); [www.test-English.com](http://www.test-English.com); [www.lingolia.com](http://www.lingolia.com); [www.britishcouncil.com](http://www.britishcouncil.com); [www.esolcourses.com](http://www.esolcourses.com)). Among the listening resources are ELLLO, an abbreviation of English Listening Lesson Library Online (<https://www.elllo.org>), Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab for ESL and EFL learners (<https://www.esl-lab.com>) which offer listening lessons and quizzes for different levels, the streaming audiobooks service Storytel (<https://www.storytel.com>), and TED talks video platform (<https://www.ted.com/talks>), which can also give guidance to students on how to improve their presentation skills.

The second group of the first-year students classified the reading resources into three groups: seven websites for online books, five websites for students with lower level of language competence, and five websites for academic reading. As far as the listening resources (nine in total) are concerned, the group was expected to give an apt description of the various types and the benefits of their use and not merely list them.

### **The third-year students' collection of resources**

Each of the third-year students' groups offered comprehensive presentations with relevant information about every learning resource they had on their lists, and made very interesting suggestions for the use of unconventional educational materials that could aid language skill development. As an illustration, the group that had worked on vocabulary and writing included

video games (e.g. Criminal Case) as both an entertaining and educational tool for expanding one's vocabulary. For the same purpose, the students produced an inventory of reference books. Apart from some monolingual online dictionaries such as the most widely used ones <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/>, etc., the students added two Bulgarian online dictionaries – the multilingual <https://eurodict.com> and the bilingual <https://slovoed.com/>.

The group that had explored reading and grammar resources outlined <https://www.FluentU.com> – an application with authentic video content for practicing all the language skills and a library for learners of different levels. Another idea was using YouTube for reading, but the videos which the students had selected are directed precisely at reading comprehension strategies and not at reading materials.

The last group of the third-year students' subject areas were listening and speaking. They provided a different perspective on the ways these two skills could be improved. In addition to some applications for graded listening (<https://english-improve.com/> and <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/apps/learnenglish-podcasts>), the untypical tools that were included in their presentation were again meant to combine learning and entertainment - Discord Channel (<https://discord.com>) for both listening and speaking, used mainly by teenagers and gamers, Accent Rosie (<https://biglanguages.com/accentsrosie>), an app mainly for the social media Facebook Messenger users, Netflix and HBO platforms for watching films and series without subtitles, and the gamified app Lyricstraining (<https://lyricstraining.com>) for learning languages through intensive listening to music. Other websites that in the students' judgement can be applied for both skills are the radio program and podcast This American life (<https://www.thisamericanlife.org>) and the game-based learning platform Kahoot (<https://kahoot.com>). Lastly, they placed the game Smarty cards, focused on very young children's acquisition of listening and vocabulary skills.

As already stated above, the third-year students are enrolled in the Teacher qualification and training course, and for that reason, while seeking educational materials for their own learning, they regarded the work on the project as an opportunity to consider their future school students' learning needs and helping them establish good study habits. In other words, in the course of exploring viable online educational options for self-study, they thought that the latter could be beneficial in their future work as language teachers. It appeared to have positively influenced the search process and placed greater value to the project results.

### **The survey data analysis**

The data derived from the questionnaire on the project work shed light on the students' conceptions and experience of working on projects and general attitude towards the project work, the extent to which they were involved in it, the challenges they faced in the course of the task completion, their views on the usefulness of the project topic.

The survey started with a question about the students' previous experience of working on projects at school or/and university. Prior to the beginning of the work on this particular project they generally admitted being familiar with this type of assignments. However, as they were required to be more specific about their experience, their responses revealed some vague details. Some of the respondents, who declared to have some experience, especially among the third-year students, appeared to have different ideas of what exactly a project is, and apparently defined individual assignments (essays/course or term papers) and their research and joint work in the preparation for exams as projects. This could explain why 20% of the third-year respondents stated that they did not have almost any experience because they were not given many group projects at university. Another 20% answered that they had plenty of experience, but did not describe it adequately, and three of the responses were irrelevant to the question.

The majority of the first-year students seemed to have a slightly clearer idea of project work and some experience from school. Five of them (55%) shared that they had worked on other subject projects (Languages, Biology, History, Arts), but only two of the responses indicated that these were group projects. One student responded that they "haven't really had any projects except doing some presentations". It leads to the assumption that the students refer to the presentation only as the goal of the project and not as a means of demonstrating the results of some research which is usually part of continuous work. The students who admitted that they had no experience were only two.

The second question asked the respondents to outline the benefits of working on the project. For more than half of the freshmen, among the substantial benefits were gaining new knowledge and learning about useful learning options which would be of use to them in the future. For the remaining almost 40% of the students the most beneficial was working with new people, getting to know their colleagues and learning to work as a group, which certainly helped them to both establish interpersonal relations in the new educational setting and affiliate through the project work.

The third-year students' responses also highlighted learning about new sites, apps and books for self-study, exchanging, sharing and discussing information and ideas, but additionally, alternative ways to learn English and other languages. Even though the students had studied together for more than

two academic years, some of them acknowledged that they got to know new people and their points of view, and improved their teamwork skills.

The next question aimed to find out whether the students encountered any challenges when working on the project. The comparison between the first- and third-year students shows that 67% of the freshmen's responses were negative against only 33% of the third-year respondents. The remaining percentage of the first-year students found it difficult to connect with their teammates and make certain that the information they had collected is correct, about which 13% of the third-year students had the same doubts. Among the other problems the latter class identified was lack of motivation and interest (20%), hence organization difficulties; technical issues (13%), and finally, structuring the presentation with the project results. The last issue again reflects some of the students' views on the meaning of the presentation in the context of the project work.

The fourth survey question referred to whether the participants thought the work on the project was effective. The greater number of them, regardless of the class, answered positively, accentuating the new perspective that the project provided on learning, the alternative ways to get assisted when they struggle while studying the language, as well as the fact that the project work helped them interact and socialize with their colleagues. One of the third-year students explained that “this type of group project makes people more organized and responsible because meeting a deadline, competently researching and completing the task, as well as working in a team, make us more disciplined”. Another respondent expressed the opinion that the project work was effective to some extent as some of the students' participation was limited, and they did not contribute actively to the common endeavor.

Further on, the respondents were asked to reflect on what they learnt from the work on the project. The freshmen's responses varied, and apart from the most frequent ones – new learning resources and generally new knowledge – there were some more concrete answers referring to the work process: “That almost all of us have bad time management” and “There were definitely interesting sites that could help to improve your English faster than usual, obviously if you are willing to put the effort”.

The third-year participants' responses showed that 26% of them realized and emphasized the advantages of working together, sharing ideas and, thus, learning from one another as long as all team members are fully committed to the project. As one student responded, “Regarding working with colleagues, I learned who takes the task seriously and who does not”.

The following item in the questionnaire focused on exploring whether the students viewed working in a team with their fellow students as enjoyable

and productive. The vast majority of the freshmen (78%) answered positively, the rest agreed to a certain extent.

The prevailing responses of the third-year students (93%) were also affirmative, despite the challenges they met and the compromises that they had to make while working as a team.

Lastly, the students were asked if they found the project topic useful and what aspects of the project they thought could be suggested differently (topic, organization, timing, group coordination, etc.). The first-year students were unanimous about the usefulness of the topic, and one of them added that “it could definitely help you improve your English on a much higher level”. The third-year students offered more detailed answers and a practical recommendation about the timing, implying that the period for the project could be shorter. One of the students looked at the project from another angle recognizing the usefulness of the topic to her “as a learner, as well as a future teacher to recommend to students”, and two other responses indicated that the students had related the metacognitive strategy instruction course content to one of the sub goals of the project work – raising metacognitive awareness.

### **Limitations**

The main aim of the project was to provide students with useful resources for self-study and incentivize their use. However, a major limitation is that there is no guarantee students will be sufficiently motivated to effectively utilize these resources in the future to develop their language skills and competences at their own pace and in their preferred manner.

Upon reviewing the project's execution, another limitation becomes apparent: the instructor lacked opportunities to observe the students' process of completing project tasks and any potential challenges they may have faced. Consequently, students could not rely on the instructor's support and guidance when needed, even though they had the option to consult with her at any time.

### **Conclusion**

A comprehensive study of the project results and survey data leads to the conclusion that the project was successful in achieving its main objectives. Additionally, the analysis provided meaningful insights into the two research questions posed at the study's outset. The project offered students a different perspective on self-learning and furnished them with a collection of educational materials to enrich their knowledge and enhance their language skills.

The close comparison revealed certain differences between the two focus groups in aspects such as motivation and involvement, team dynamics, and project outcomes. In measuring the effectiveness of the project, the focus

group of third-year undergraduates surpassed the freshmen focus group. The contrast between the two groups also extended to participation in the follow-up survey, which was higher among third-year students.

The survey, which aimed to collect students' perceptions and attitudes towards the project, provided valuable feedback and encouraged them to reflect on their learning experience and evaluate both their own work and that of their colleagues.

In spite of the fact that not all students took part in the project or contributed equally to it, eventually the full collections of the materials from the research were made available to the total number of students from both classes to use in their individual learning.

Last but not least, the project offered the students the opportunity to work together, fostering interpersonal communication and collaboration. It encouraged them to assume responsibility for their studies, promoted critical thinking, and emphasized self-regulated learning, thereby raising their metacognitive awareness.

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