How can Problem-Posing foster meaningful learning experiences for EFL ninth graders?

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Abstract

This action research was designed to determine the effects of the implementation of Problem-posing and how it leads to meaningful learning experiences on the students from the ninth grade in a public institution in San Javier. The data was gathered though teacher journal, Cooperating teacher's observation card as well as students' feedback cards. The analysis and interpretations of the data indicated some positive outcomes of the implementation of a Problem-Posing unit as students were able to relate to the problem and think beyond it. Furthermore, some challenges were identified for both the teacher and the researcher in terms of the planning and language required respectively when following a Problem-posing Approach.

Key words: meaningful learning, problem-posing approach

Degree Requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellin, Colombia.

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Table of Contents

Preface

Learning English in a traditional way with many students and the learning of structures has proven to be ineffective considering that what is learnt is not really connected to the student's life. At least, this was the experience I had while studying English at Liceo America where learning English could be summarized in learning vocabulary and the verb to be. Luckily, this perspective had the completely different turn when I had the opportunity to live in the Philippines as a teenager. There, I realized that learning was more than just learning the verb to be and isolated vocabulary; it was using what I learned in my everyday life, this made learning a language meaningful. Finally the time to start my practicum arrived and I had to think about how to do this. I mean, make the language learning experience more meaningful for the 9th graders at Benedikta Zur Nieden. In this way, change what I experienced and were experiencing the students at this school. The many years teaching at a language academy called smart and my studies at UdeA, enable me to come up with the idea of fostering meaningful language learning experiences with my students at the practicum center through the use of a problem posing cycle. In other words, bring their realities and context into the classroom; talk, think and discuss about it and together find a possible solution that will, in a way, enable them to take action in their lives. I believe the later, together with a good disposition towards teaching would make learning English become more significant and meaningful.

Description of the Context

In its need to be competitive with the global markets and as new free trade agreements are signed, the National Government in Colombia has introduced, in its national development program (2014-2018) "Todos por un Nuevo pais " and with the participation of the National Ministry of education, The program Colombia Bilingüe. One of the purposes of the program is to make of the country the most educated of the region by the year 2025. The other, is to help students reach a level of language proficiency enabling them to communicate, interact and share knowledge while developing their human and professional capacities. Among the different approaches proposed in the program for assessing and teaching, the problem based approach is suggested; a methodology that requires students' active participation in the solution of problems with the teacher as a mediator and facilitator.

In order to achieve what the Ministry of Education intends with its teachers and students, they launched a set support materials in the learning of a second language for grades 9 to 11 like English please. The ultimate goal of this tool is to create meaningful learning contexts through the use of relevant, current and sensible topics for students, themes like plurality and diversity as well as juvenile culture. In doing so, they hope to form students with a B1 English language level at the end of their school year.

While this may be true, what was taking place in the classroom where this research was conducted was quite the opposite and not in relation to what government and the institution wanted. First, the way students were learning English was not through the solutions of problems in collaboration with their classmates. Rather, it was through the individual memorization, translation and the learning of structure for the sake of a grade, which the teacher believed helped in their motivation. Second, all this memorization of vocabulary and structures did not

help them express themselves, their ideas and opinions about current issues it was just a mere prepetition of sentences that were not directly related to their lives. Finally, as the topics discussed in class did not go beyond the grammar form, there was no opportunity for discussion and solution of problems, language was not used for communication and learning was anything but relevant.

Therefore, the ultimate goal of this study is to make students' learning experiences meaningful through the use of the problem posing approach and thus, develop what is stated in both the program "Colombia bilingue" and in the Institutions' mission and vision which is, make students active participants and the solution of problems that are sensible and relevant in their lives with the teacher as learning facilitator.

Statement of Problem

Identifying the problem for my project came after some observation experiences, short informal conversations and surveys with the students. Furthermore, the initial teaching experiences I had, shed more light into the issue. What follows is what I observed and how it helped me identify the problem and thus be able to come with a solution.

The first problem came after I read the syllabus and what I observed in class. The syllabus stated that the goal of the English area is to provide students with the necessary tools to understand themselves and other cultures, giving them as much contact with the foreign language as possible from the beginning. It also stated that the curriculum should be understood as a set of gratifying experiences that will enable the student to enjoy his/her learning and formative process. However what was taking place in the classroom was quite different. Students' learning

experiences were not gratifying and they were not enjoying their learning and formative process, therefore Students were not motivated enough to participate in the class activities. First of all, their class was focused on learning structures, memorization and repetition of sentences. For instance: how to make a question using the auxiliary do, does, did, how to answer these very questions in an affirmative and negative way taking into account the class activities. As a result, learning became for them something mechanical, a process that did not require them to think, just to follow a structure and be rewarded for doing so. Which in turn will introduce the second aspect that affected their motivation, grading.

During informal conversations with my CT, she told me that grading was a way of keeping her students motivated during her course. Consequently, whatever was done in class (writing activities, quizzes and speaking activities, homework) was graded. Some of these grades were used to change a bad grade they may have gotten during the semester but it did not motivate them to participate, many of them would pretend to be doing the task where in fact they were doing something different: Chatting, talking about other things and in some cases nothing. Students would stay in the classroom just looking around. Very few took advantage of the grade given for the activity. "*If grades were used to motivate students, how come very few are participating during the activity proposed by the teacher?*" Journal Oct 17th, 2016. I concluded that grade was not motivating them to participating in class. There were various reasons for these to happen. First, instruction was not clear. "*profe yo no le entiendo a esa profesora… más bien no le pregunto…como no entiendo más bien no hago nada…*" 9th grader Journal Sep 26th 2016 The teacher would give a short introduction to the activity but she did not check if they understood or not, it was assumed. Therefore, Students would ask the teacher over and over to

clarify their doubts in relation to what they had to do. Some of them would not ask to about

responses like this "*si no entienden algo, búsquenlo en el diccionario, cópienlo en su cuaderno y

memoricen*" journal Aug 22nd 2016 as a result they translated everything.

The dictionary had an important part in the class; it was used for almost everything

related to language learning. In some of the observations I could see that Students translated

everything they wanted to say. The problem was not the use of the dictionary rather what they

found. The translations were not accurate; Students did not know the grammatical function of

what they found. Therefore, what they wanted to say was completely different from what they

wrote; this will lead to the other problem, Lack of connection between each of the activities.

As there was not a connection between the activities and to their lives, students were not

able to recycle language, they translated everything. First because language was not presented in

context, and second, there was no recycling vocabulary. As a result they were not able to express

themselves clearly. Their participation in the class was limited to what they wrote from their

book guide or from their classmates.

For this reason, I believe that in meaningful language learning there is an answer this this

situation-In specific, problem solving. This approach does not only go hand in hand with what

the area plan wants students to achieve which is to provide students with the necessary tools to

know themselves as well to know the other culture, but also bring students context into the

classroom; in this way traditional lessons will become life learning lessons.

Theoretical Background

"Tell me and I forget,

Teach me and I may remember,

Involve me and I learn."

Benjamin Franklin

This quote expresses the need that education has today, changing from a traditional teacher centered class to a student centered class. It is not an easy endeavor. However, we need to get started to be able to provide the learners with a more meaningful learning experience so that he may truly learn and consequently apply what he has learnt to transform his world. In this text, The theories the will support my action research. What meaningful learning is and how the problem-posing approach helps in achieving this. Then, I will explain what can be done to find the themes that will guide my lesson, and how Problem-posing can complement traditional language learning. Next, I will present the different steps to follow when developing a course. Finally, I will present the advantages and challenges when following this approach.

Meaningful learning

According to Wallerstein & Auerbach, (2004) "language and knowledge acquisition becomes meaningful and significant when the content comes from students' lives who are members of a larger historical, political, and social context" Therefore, one characteristic for knowledge to be meaningful is that is comes from the students context. Darling-Hammond & Barron, (2008) expand this definition by claiming that "knowledge becomes meaningful when student can engage in more challenging and authentic activities that require them to use subject

knowledge to solve real-world problems" According to these authors learning becomes

meaningful when it arises from the learner itself. When he can use what he knows to give a

solution to a problem that is challenging and he is familiarized with. Darling-Hammond &

Barron, (2008) adds by saying that "Studies have shown a positive impact on learning when

students participate in lessons that require them to construct and organize knowledge, consider

alternatives, engage in detailed research, inquiry, writing, and analysis, and to communicate

effectively to audiences" (p, 1) in other words, education acquires greater value when it is

experienced-centered, when it relates to students real needs. Students become motivated by their

personal involvement as the experts in their live experiences. (Larsen-freeman & Anderson,

2011) Therefore, for my project, it is important that knowledge be connected to students' reality,

and that students have opportunities to be active learners and make use of their knowledge while

engaging in activities that require them to contemplate alternatives and solving real-life

problems.

Problem-posing for meaningful learning experiences

Problem-posing has the capacity of making learning experiences more meaningful and

significant for many reasons. First, as stated by Barrows and Myers, (1993) in colombia bilingue

"It places students at the center of the curriculum as being capable of solving problems by using

the knowledge they have and that they attain in the solving of problems that are authentic or

related to their everyday life". Therefore, the problem posing approach places the learner at the

center and gives him some attributes as capable of solving problems not by the knowledge given

to him by the teacher rather by the knowledge he has and that he acquires by solving problems.

Schleppegrell & Bowman, (1995) expand on this definition by saying that "since language

learning evolves out of an issue that is relevant to students' lives, it has the advantage of being

highly motivating and providing a purposefulness to language-learning activities." Consequently,

another characteristic in the problem-based approach is the presence of a purpose in the learning

activities, a goal we want to attain. Elsa, (1992) finishes by saying. "People learn best when

learning starts with what they already know, builds on their strengths, engages them in the

learning process, and enables them to accomplish something they want to accomplish" (p. 18). In

this approach there is an importance in identifying the problems, those things that are important

and relevant to student's lives.

Finding what is really relevant to students' lives

Identifying the themes is one of the key concepts of this approach in contrast to

traditional methods that start with a priori needs assessments and curriculum outlines that are

usually developed by someone external who usually does know what takes place in the

classroom. The participatory approach starts by involving students in the process of uncovering

themes and issues as an integral part of classroom interaction. For this to take place the

classroom should be a place where discussion and collaborative work is possible. Elsa, (1992)

says that "Themes will not emerge easily since students voices were not heard in the more

traditional methods" she further develops on this by saying that "When ask what they want to

study or what their concerns are, students may come up with vague ideas" Therefore, the first

thing first is to create an environment of trust through non-threatening activities which will help

students to feel at ease. Once this is achieved, the role of the teacher is not the one of someone

who sits down and waits for themes to emerge. He has to create the perfect environment for

those themes to arise, (p. 53) the teacher may make use of some strategies like codes in the form

of dialogues and pictures for concerns to emerge spontaneously. However, the activities

developed should not be modeled much; otherwise students' responses will be conditioned by

what the teacher says. The role of the teacher is to help students get started to help them

contribute with their ideas. Schleppegrell & Bowman, (1995) compliment by saying that "the

text or visual should not provide solutions so that a discussion of the problem will encourage

students to think of options and possibilities" They continue by saying that "The themes should

not provide problems that are overwhelming, they should be solvable". In conclusion, the themes

arise from classroom discussion. For this to happen, the teacher has to facilitate the scenario for

these to appear through the use of codes that will activate what students know. Language is

developed as students need to express what they really want to say. In other words teachers may

go back to a more traditional environment to improve those grammatical concepts that may arise

in the discussion of the codes. It does not mean PBL replaces traditional methods of teaching;

instead it is a valuable addition to traditional methods. (Lambros, 2004)

Developing a class following this approach

Schleppegrell & Bowman, (1995) propose a series of steps in developing a course

following the problem based approach developed by Paulo freire.

The first step in this approach is to identify topics of concern to students, then this

concerns are presented back to students through visuals or linguistic input (a picture, dialogue or

a text) Next, teachers encourage discussion of the text or visual through questions which lead

students to describe the situation, identify the problem, relate the problem to their own

experience, analyze the causes of the problem and seek solutions. However, it does not end here.

"Each unit has an application activity that links classroom learning with the broader context in

which students live" (p.301) these may be presented to the community in the form of posters

role-plays which are developed with the help of the teacher.

Some of the advantages of this approach in that it emerges from the classroom for this

reason it is great tool for difficult teaching circumstances where there is a lack of resources. Also

it is more student centered finally, as Lambros, (2014) puts is "it will remove the ever-present

question "why do we need learn this" (p.6) as the emphasis is on understanding rather than on

the memorization of facts and structures for no purpose. One thing is for sure, what has been

mentioned will not take place immediately; we have to get started however.

Research Question

How can problem-posing foster meaningful learning experiences for EFL ninth graders?

General Objective

To foster meaningful learning experiences for EFL students with problem posing

Specific Objectives

- To let students identify and explore topics of concern to them.

- To let students share their background knowledge and life experience related to the topics
  of concern, to build on this.

- To help students expand their vocabulary and expressions as they explore topics of
  concern

- To let students work with each other as they explore the topics.

- To let students suggest solutions they could act upon concerning the problems identified
  with an application activity

Action plan

With the five objectives above, I planned the following actions to be developed during one unit in the EFL class.

To let students identify and explore topics of concern to them

At the beginning of the semester, my students told me in a survey that they were interested in learning about **current issues**, **music, their personal lives, and videogames** in our ninth grade English class. But they also said that they didn't want to talk about really personal things. As these topics don't suggest real problems or issues in their lives, yet my students and I would have to specify them for my problem-posing lessons. From the topics they mentioned, and to be more realistic I would develop two units following the problem posing approach, the first one a pilot unit, and the second will be my research unit

Concerning current events, as they have been working on this topic throughout the year by bringing a short piece of news in Spanish or English to class and talk about it, I would continue with this brief activity. I would also get students to identify possible issues that are more common and important for them in the current events, and then I would continue working on those in the lessons. I could bring the piece of news connected to their lives in the form of a short dialogue to be developed throughout a series of classes.

It would be important for me and the students to choose a few issues that are sensitive to their local contexts, not too broad and ones that could have various solutions.

In order to explore these issues, I would develop a series of classes with a problem-posing stage including a) describing the code, b) identifying a problem in the code, c)

personalizing the problem, d) reflect on the problem, and e) suggesting solutions and possible

actions to the problem.

In relation to music, I considered that I could start the class with this word on the board. I

would ask them to write a few questions in pairs that they could ask other classmates in order to

talk about tastes for music. I would be able to help students with language demands during this

activity, and when they are ready, they could start doing this as an open class activity. I would

also add a few questions that might get students to come up with some issues (e.g. what do the

artists write about?). Depending on what they talk about in class, I would choose a couple of

songs and bring them back to them developed in a unit.

To let students share their background knowledge and experience related to the topics of

concern, and to build on this.

After students describe the code and define the problem, and they are about to personalize

the issue, I would ask a number of questions to get students to reflect on this problem in their

lives. I could ask and show students written questions such as: Do you know a person with this

problem? What happened? How did s/he feel? Why? What did s/he do about the situation? At

another moment during the lesson, I could ask, what would you do? These questions could

students share prior knowledge or experience with the code. I would also work with reading

comprehension to help facilitate some discussion of the questions.

With this plan of action, I also considered what type of information or data I could collect

in order to see how effective these actions are.

To let students work with each other as they read and talk about the topics of concern.

I would let students initially choose their small groups for the problem posing lessons. I would tell them that if students did not work well, then I would make changes to the groups. I would ask students to think about when they worked effectively with other students and to write one idea related to this. I would ask students to share their answers and write a list of these points on the board. With these ideas, I would tell students to choose their groups since they know what is expected from them during the team activity.

To let students show their solutions to the problems identified with an application activity during class.

Now that students are familiarized with the problem and can talk and write about it, I would ask them to decide what type of final product they could use in order to share their solutions with the rest of the class. Students could describe the problem briefly, the consequences it may bring into their lives, how they feel, what could be done, and moreover, they could socialize real-life actions and the best options for them. The final application activities could be a brief video clip with a written script, a role-play, a labeled poster or art exhibit, music lyrics, or comics, etc.) This again, would be shared with their peers and the school community.

<p align="center">**Development of Actions**</p>

This development of actions was developed in two moments. The first moment, was mainly exploratory. There was a need to know what students wanted their classes to be focused on. For this reason, I provided a needs assessment survey in which students expressed what they wanted their classes to be focused on. What they were able to express was: current issues, music, their personal lives, and videogames. Therefore, the first unit was focused on music but not

going too deep into the message found in music. Instead, into what kind of music they liked or did not and how it made them feel. For this purpose, students were asked to copy some words gospel, Reggaetton, Country, Classical, Jazz, Bachata, Heavy metal, Rap /Hip hop, Salsa, Rock, Pop, Instrumental on their notebooks. The different types of music were played on a computer and they had to number them from 1 to 14 in the order they listen to them. After this, students were asked to copy adjectives on the board in relation to how the music made them feel. Some of the adjectives they wrote were: sad, happy, noisy, relaxing, inspiring, catchy, danceable, energetic, peaceful, upbeat, depressing, entertaining, seductive, and ear-piercing. Some adjectives were added and explained by the teacher. To put these two activities together, a sample sentences were written on the board in which they said what kind of music they liked, hate, enjoy, love and why they liked it. Next, students were asked to come up with questions in order to learn more about what music their classmates liked or did not. With the questions they wrote on their notebooks they had to interview there students and report what they found to the class. The results were copied on the board by the teacher. The type of music that generated more controversy among students was reggaeton. Some students said "*a mí no me gusta el regaeton porque tratan mal a las mujeres… las ponen como un objeto sexual*" Journal march 27, 2017 other students on the other hand said "*a mí me gusta el regeton porque suena muy bien… me gusta bailarlo*" Journal march 27, 2017. Therefore, taking into account what they said on this first part, the second moment was developed.

The second moment was develop taking into account the cycles of the problem posing proposed by Schleppegrell & Bowman, (1995) which are: describe the content, define the problem, Personalize the problem, discuss the problem, and discuss alternatives to the problem.

For the first part of the cycle a dialogue was created in which a daughter and her mother show different opinions in relation to reggaeton. The mother saw it as something offensive since it denigrated women. The daughter on the other hand, saw it as something normal. The dialogue was presented to then in a disorganized way; they organized it and answered some questions that checked their understanding of the dialogue. This first cycle was fished with the song "travesuras by nicky jam" some relevant sentences related to the objectification of women were taken out and translated. The class was finished with a feedback card in which they said if they achieved the objectives of the class and what helped them, or what stopped them from not achieving the goals.

For the second cycle, which was to identify the problem, we played a memory game containing sentences using adjectives. Students had to find the opposite adjective and write the sentences on their notebook. After this, structures for the description activity were explained. Students had to write sentences describing someone, in this occasion a woman. Next students formed groups and different magazines were given to each of the groups. Some groups did not receive magazines. Instead, they were given the name of a reggaetton song. With the magazines and song they had to describe the woman presented in each. The names of the magazines were written on the board, students came forward and wrote the adjectives they used to describe the woman under the magazine or song they had. Students were asked to find those adjectives that were common among the different groups. Then, the teacher facilitated the definition of the problem by questioning students in relation to what was written on the board finally the problem was identified.

For the third cycle, which was to relate to personalize the problem, different ideas and thoughts shared in class were translated into English and given back to the students. In pairs they understood the sentence and presented them to the whole class. The sentences were the written on the board, and individually they had to come up front and mark with a color those sentences they agreed with a different color those they did not. In order to get students feeling without being judge the activity was finished with to questions which they had to answer on a piece of paper without saying their names, these were then collected.

For the fourth cycle, which was to discuss the problem was done in two different moments. During the first moment a stop had to be made in order to understand why the development of the action research project was not helping in the engagement of the class. Therefore, pieces of paper were distributed among the students in which they had to answer two questions. The first one, are you engaged in class? How do I know that? And the second, if you are not engaged in class state your reasons? After this, students were given a piece of paper with different categories like family, tv, magazines and answered how each of the categories was a part of the problem or of the solution. Finally, they said what the results of these actions in our lives were.

The second moment of the forth cycle was focuses mainly on discussion on what they wrote of the pieces of paper. Each student read what they wrote; other students agreed or disagreed and had to give reasons for their responses. The CT also participated with their comments.

The final part of the cycle was a not done as there was an external factor that affected the development of this. During the days of the implementation there was a national strike and students were not present in the institution. Therefore, the project concluded with the fourth cycle.

Findings and Interpretations

The findings of this research study which intended to analyze how problem posing foster meaningful language learning experiences will be presented in five main themes that emerged from the analysis: first, socially and culturally relevant issues: second, mixed student disposition working through problem posing events: third, the teacher as a learning facilitator: fourth, changing strategies to promote engagement: finally, students going beyond.

Socially and culturally relevant issues

One of the relevant aspects in a problem-posing approach is that the content is relevant so that students can easily relate to what is taking place in the classroom. It was the teacher's goal from the beginning of the research process; identify relevant topics that students can easily relate to.

It was observed that the teacher was taking into consideration what students wanted their course to be focus on what taking into account what they expressed during a needs assessment " from the needs assessment can be concluded that students what their class to be focus on topics such as current event, music and personal life" Survey #1 August 8, 2017.

During the unit related to music it was observed that student could easily relate to the topic as as this permitted them to express opposite opinions about the same topic during the various stages of the unit. For instance, during the first moment valentina said " *a mí no me gusta el reggaetón ya que habla mal de las mujeres yo prefiero escuchas otra música*" Journal April 17th 2017. In another moment, another students said " *profe por eso es que me gusta el Reggaetton, solo perreo* " Journal April 20th 2016. What students but what was taking place in the city during the time of the research project. During the time of the implementation of the unit, there was uproar in the city in relation to an award given to a Reggaetton singer for the song "cuatro babys"   this incident gave more importance and relevance to what was being done in the classroom during the implementation unit. Therefore, it was concluded that the topic was relevant as it was culturally relevant and students could relate to it in different ways expressing their opinions.

> Problem based learning creates opportunities in the classroom that traditional approaches do not perhaps the most significant is that the relevance of the learning is highlighted for students because the problem scenarios have a real- world frame of reference, they are center on an event that students can imagine in their own life. (Lambros, 2004, p.6)

Elsa (1992) complements this conclusion by saying that "people learn best when learning starts with what they already know, builds on their strengths, engages them in the learning process, and enables them to accomplish something they want to accomplish" (p.18)

However, it was also concluded that even if all of the above was taking place, it did mean that learning was meaningful. It was observed that there was another aspect of great importance the role of the teacher.

The teacher as a learning facilitator

Another important finding that emerged from the analysis of the data is the teacher. This acquires a great value even if it is a student's based approach. He has to be very attentive to identify all those things that are relevant to student´s lives transform them and bring them to class to help students to think about and thus suggest possible solutions. He has to be a good facilitator as the teacher researcher states it "I also believe this is another aspect of what makes learning meaningful, that the teacher is concerned about what is going on in the class, about students and the different difficulties they might encounter while doing a task" Journal April 17th, 2017. However, it was also found that what really help students perform well during a task was indeed the help the teacher provided giving answers to various questions students have, explaining well the task at hand and by going to the places of those students who were not doing anything and get them started. When the students were questioned on what help them achieve the task the majority commented that it was the teachers help and explanation. Feedback card 2 may 18th 2017. The teacher researcher also meditated on this

> However, there are moments in which it is necessary to make use of our humanity to understand another human. I mean; understand students as humans who may have other difficulties. I believe it also makes learning meaningful that the teacher is not there only to depart knowledge, but he is also there to listen to me, to understand me. Many of these students are never heard, the system never listens to them. Journal may 18th 2017.

Therefore, it was concluded that the teacher play a very important role in the development of any task as Lambros (2014) "the teacher is no longer the focus of all that happens, although the teacher plays a crucial role in selecting the problem and facilitating the student groups" (p.9) nonetheless, to facilitate does not only mean listen and help students with whatever difficulty the encounter, it is also facilitating learning and engagement in the classroom, this was the third finding

Changing strategies to promote engagement and critical thinking

So far it has been concluded that the role the teacher plays in a problem-posing approach is one of importance. Not only because he is the one to be sensitive enough to identify the problem and help students with the difficulties they may encounter concerning their understanding of the task but also because he has to constantly change activities in the classroom to get students active; more than this, that student express their opinions, think beyond, freely express what they believe. It was observed that they were able to do this because the teacher did push them to express their ideas openly in such a way they may feel embarrassed. Instead, he develop strategies to get students responses and opinions in a more discrete and private way " I guess that I was able to get students opinions about the class and topic because I asked them to do it in Spanish and on a separate sheet of paper to be collected at the end" Journal may 18th 2017. It was observed that not only did he develop strategies to get students opinions but also strategies to get students engaged and active during class

Introducing a grammar concept starting from what students have said is very effective. Students do not have to do much thinking, the sentences that are written on the board directly relate to their lives. It is not something external not related to my reality.

Bringing back what they had said in the previous class helped me address an issue in the

class without getting angry or two afraid to talk to them about it. Journal May 18th 2017.

It was perceived that the teacher did not mind his student's use of the mother tongue, what he did

however, was to translate what they said and bring it to the next class. It was observed that

students participated more as they knew the meaning of what was written on the board " as

students do not express complex ideas in English, I will just let them express themselves in

Spanish and latter bring to the classroom what they have said and go beyond" Journal May 1st

2017. Another thing that was perceived was that he also made used of proverbs to get students

to think beyond. "The proverb I used help me address a problem without getting angry or too

involved… students were attentive and participated actively during the opening activity" Journal

March 9th 2017. As Schleppegrell & Bowman, (1995) put it " PBL Empowers teachers to take

control of the curriculum and to generate discourse-level communication in the classroom as the

basis for materials development. It helps teachers give new direction to familiar topics"

Conclusions

From the findings and implementation of the actions it can be concluded that there are

some benefits, challenges as well as difficulties for both for the students as well as for the

teachers. Students benefit from this approach as language is recycled and reused in the different

stages of the problem posing approach. It is easier for them to relate to what is taking place in the

classroom because what is taking place in it is directly related to them it was something that

arouse from them. On the other hand however, students may struggle with PPA as they are not

accustomed to speaking their minds and more; in another language, since they lack structures to do so.

Teachers, will benefit from using PPA as content comes from students' lives, classroom interactions and informal conversations with them, what teachers have to do is transform all these content into a class. Nevertheless, teachers have to be very sensitive to the needs and interests of the students to be able to identify all these content. The advantage of doing this is that classes are more related to students realities, to what they are experiencing, not something that is distant from them. Furthermore, something that was concluded to be very challenging when using PPA was fostering critical thinking in students. It was a great difficulty to get students thinking and move beyond a mere concept. One of the reasons is because their voices are not heard, or taken into account, but when they are given the chance to express themselves and speak their minds they do it but in Spanish, the struggled comes when it has to be done in another language like English, as they have not been given the structure to form complex sentences. Therefore, teachers have to do a lot of recycling and modeling for students to be able to express more elaborate structures. Additionally teachers have to constantly change their strategies striving to foster critical thinking in his students accompanying and facilitating the learning process.

On the other hand, one of the benefits identified when using this approach, and from which students were able to benefit from, is the recycling of vocabulary. The classes following this approach always have a connection, a sequencing of activities. Therefore, content is recycled from one cycle to the other. Students can look back on what has been done and reuse those ideas that have been used to move on.

To conclude with, there can be many things taking place in the classroom that will facilitate learning, teacher attitudes toward his students and the many strategies he develop to help them be engaged and active participants. However as there are many things taking place in a student's life what is relevant now may not be at the end of the le problem-posing lesson. Therefor sometimes it might be necessary to make a stop and address other issues more relevant.

Another aspect to consider when using this approach is that students may not express their opinions openly as the may fear being laugh at, this is a challenge. Thus, Teachers have to be very creative in order to get students thinking, which is essential for the whole problem-posing unit. For this to happen students have to feel at ease in the group. One big challenge however is to achieve this with a big group. Whatever they say will provide extra material to work with and that can further developed into a grammar unit.

Reflection

Being a teacher is not an easy job to do. It is not as easy as to bring photocopies into the classroom for students to work on. In this case I would not be doing the job of a teacher, rather the job of someone, anyone who brings a photocopy to be developed. For this you do not have to study, for this you do not have to think or stay up planning; there are plenty of books from which you can get these worksheets. We teacher all call to do more than that. We are called to care for our students because at the end this is what is to last and will have a greater impact on them. Once we have cared for them learning will follow. It may also happened that learning does not take place, then it is our turn to reorganize and rethink what we have planned as to reach those in need. My experience in this action research process has been of great value as I was able to understand what the characteristics of a good teacher are and what students really want, which is their realities taken into account, when developing our classes.

Nothing in the world is statistic nor learning that's why we have to change and in doing so change the lives of our students so that they may be good citizens and active participants in their lives.

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