

## PBL AS A TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN A MULTILINGUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Urakhaeva Kumiskanyam Zhanarbekovna

[Kumiskhanym@list.ru](mailto:Kumiskhanym@list.ru)

1st-year Master's student of the educational program "Foreign languages and intercultural communication"

K. Dosmukhamedov Atyrau University, Atyrau, Kazakhstan

Scientific lecturer: Kulmagambetova, S.S. - candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor

of Methods of foreign language teaching department, Faculty of Polylingual Education, Kh. Dosmukhamedov Atyrau University, Atyrau, Kazakhstan; svetlana-sk-68@mail.ru

**Introduction.** Modern methodologies of foreign language education focus on the integration of soft skills into the educational process through project activities, which helps prepare students for real life and professional activities in the context of globalization and digitalization. Project activity is an innovative approach to learning that is actively used in modern educational systems to develop various competencies among students in the context of multilingual education. Project activity is becoming an important tool for the formation of not only academic knowledge but also soft skills such as communication teamwork, leadership and critical thinking. This paper is devoted to the role of project activities in the formation of a soft skills multilingual educational environment. Analyze its historical roots of development and modern technology that make the learning process more effective and meaningful for students.

**History and roots of Project-Based Learning.** Although project-based learning methodology is considered a modern approach in education, its roots can be traced back to ancient times and have a long history. Its development dates back to antiquity, but it was in the form we now know and use in modern education that it was shaped by great and progressive educators of the 19th and 20th centuries. For instance, great thinkers like Socrates and Aristotle emphasized the importance of dialogue, communication, problem-solving approaches, and practical experience in learning in their works such as "The Republic," "Nicomachean Ethics," and "Politics."

Later, during the early years of the Industrial Revolution, the need for highly skilled labor became apparent, and traditional educational methods could not meet this demand. As a result, many craft-based education systems shifted towards more practical activities to prepare specialists for various fields, including multilingual education.

It was only in the 20th century that the first implementations of project-based learning in vocational education appeared, influenced by the ideas of John Dewey, an American philosopher and educator. His ideas were further developed by other scholars, such as William Kilpatrick, who created the project method for schools. However, his work is also significant for vocational education. According to his method, students focused on solving real-world problems, which were relevant at the time in various disciplines, including foreign language learning.

In the 2000s, project-based learning became an important part of education, especially with a focus on intercultural communication and the use of languages as tools for developing skills that would help students in real-life situations. An example of implementing project-based learning in political education can be seen in the emergence of multilingual journals and the creation of online resources in multiple languages for diverse audiences.

In the present days with the advent of digital technologies, the role and significance of project-based learning have become even broader, especially in the field of multilingual education. In the modern world, project-based learning also increases student engagement in education. For example, by working on a project, students see the practical value of their language skills, gain confidence in using them, and observe the results.

Project-based learning is an active group collaboration, both among students themselves and between teachers and students. It is aimed at acquiring skills through practical experience to achieve specific results that contribute to the development of cognitive interest, creativity, and key competencies of learners.

Differences from traditional systems by Shmoylov, S. A. [1]. It is no secret that project-based learning and traditional education systems differ in their approaches to teaching, organizing the educational process, and the goals that students should achieve during their education. For instance, in traditional education, the emphasis is placed more on mastering theory through lectures and individual assignments, and as a result, students are expected to achieve the highest grade. The educational process is linear in the traditional system, focusing on a single subject, and diverse sources of information are rarely used.

As for project-based learning, its goal is to actively engage students in the learning process through practical activities, which are generally centered on their personal interests and the practical significance of the knowledge gained. The focus is on how students will later be able to apply this knowledge. Project-based learning often involves more independent activity, including planning and completing projects on their own. This contributes to the development of research skills, communication abilities, and critical thinking in students. The educational process is more flexible, often combining group and pair work. Additionally, a wide range of sources from various fields of knowledge is used, including resources from different platforms, such as electronic ones.

In the context of foreign language learning, project-based learning performs the following **functions**:

Firstly, it is the development of **communication skills**. In a world where constant communication with people is necessary, this function plays an important role, as students, while working on a project, must actively use the foreign language to complete specific tasks. This contributes to the development of all aspects of the foreign language—speaking, writing, listening, and reading. This will help students not only develop communication skills but also assist them in their future professional activities as specialists. [2]

Secondly, it is the formation of **critical thinking**. Through project-based learning, students are constantly required to analyze situations and solve problems using unconventional thinking or finding solutions. In this way, they not only learn a foreign language but also develop their ability to approach any problem critically in their future careers. [3]

Finally, the third function is **motivation and engagement**. Working on projects stimulates students to actively use a foreign language, and as a result, students often see the progress of their skills. This, in turn, motivates them to continue developing and the very structure of project-based learning keeps students engaged in the educational process. This is especially important for students who see the immense practical significance of learning foreign languages. [4]

However, at its core, project-based learning is not just a set of specific active actions during lessons but also a whole system that helps categorize different types of projects depending on their goals, content, and methods of implementation. For example, let's take **Collins' classification** [5] of project-based learning, which proposes a method for systematizing project activities:

**Research projects.** These projects focus on researching a specific topic or problem. Students collect and analyze data, conduct experiments or literature reviews, and then present their findings. In this type of project, students concentrate on a specific topic or problem. They need to analyze data, collect information, conduct literature research and experiments, and only then, as a result, they present their research work.

**Creative projects.** This type of project is used to develop students' creative skills, primarily aimed at creating unconventional products, such as art projects, multimedia works, or literary works. In other words, students create their own utopia in various fields and areas. This project is focused on developing creativity and artistic expression.

**Practical projects.** These projects are focused on solving specific practical tasks. Students apply theoretical knowledge to develop solutions for real-life situations, such as creating models or solving societal or business problems. This type of project is mainly oriented towards solving

concrete practical tasks by applying theoretical knowledge in practice, for example, solving problems in society, environmental issues, or business.

**Experiential projects.** Projects based on experience help students participate in practical activities, allowing them to gain deeper knowledge through personal involvement. These could be university educational projects, volunteer work, or studying cultural aspects through direct interactions with foreigners.

**Socially-oriented projects.** These projects are aimed at solving social problems and tasks related to public interests. Students may work on projects focused on improving life in society or social justice. Projects of this type are directed towards solving public issues and addressing tasks related to social interests.

**The role of soft skills.** Our world is constantly changing at a rapid pace, and many educational institutions are paying more attention to the development of various skills that help students adapt to this pace and stay in sync with societal progress. One of these is soft skills.

Soft skills are a specific set of abilities that have a social and communicative nature, thus helping individuals interact effectively with others, solve problems, adapt to changes, and, of course, work in teams. These skills are especially important not only in our daily lives but also in professional activities. While we need hard skills to get hired for a job, soft skills are necessary to stay in that job, successfully integrate into a team, and effectively solve any tasks.

**In the works of S. Covey [6], there are seven skills that form the basis of soft skills:**

**Creativity and innovative thinking.** This skill is crucial in a rapidly changing world. It involves the generation of ideas, the ability to think outside the box, and the development of new approaches to problem-solving.

**Ethical and professional skills.** In the professional environment, the most important skill is, under any circumstances, to emphasize high standards of behavior and interaction. This is about honesty, responsibility, and adhering to ethical principles in the workplace.

**Time management and organizational skills.** In our modern world, we often face problems related to time management in our lives. Therefore, this skill is essential for setting goals correctly, working under deadlines, and organizing personal work processes, ensuring productivity and discipline.

**Emotional intelligence.** This skill is what makes soft skills "soft" because it focuses on developing emotions and empathy, helping us better understand our own emotions, analyze the emotions of others, and read them correctly.

**Adaptability and resilience.** This skill is characterized by the ability to stay calm under stress, be flexible in the face of change, and quickly recover from failure. It also involves being ready to constantly learn new things and learn from mistakes.

**Critical thinking and problem solving.** This skill involves the ability to think analytically and assess situations objectively, i.e., to approach problems with a clear mind, find unconventional solutions, and be able to predict the next steps.

**Leadership.** This skill is not only about managing a team but also about motivation and influence. It involves the ability to make decisions in stressful situations that determine the team's success, to be responsible, and to be psychologically stable and flexible.

The aforementioned skills further prove how prepared we must be for the rapidly changing pace of our world. Therefore, the development of these soft skills through various educational approaches in modern methodologies plays a significant role, and one such method is project-based learning.

**Connection between PBL and soft skills in a multilingual environment.** Now, let's consider the connection between project-based learning and the development of soft skills in a multilingual environment. Given the aforementioned characteristics of both project-based learning and soft skills, it is easy to see how they complement each other. For example, project-based learning naturally fosters development because it requires students to actively collaborate with each other and find solutions together, especially in a multilingual

environment. In this way, they improve their public speaking skills during presentations of their results, learn to divide tasks, and develop their ability to negotiate and collaborate with others. This is not only about enhancing language knowledge but also about mastering key communicative competencies.

In a multilingual environment, students may encounter various linguistic and cultural differences, and through project-based learning, they become accustomed to working in multilingual teams, which is a common situation in the era of globalization. As a result, they will develop their tolerance not only to different viewpoints but also to communication styles. They will learn to quickly adapt to changes such as learning new languages or working with international sources.

Leadership and organizational skills, acquired during project-based learning, also play an important role. For instance, one student may be assigned to coordinate the team's work, another to monitor deadlines and resources, while someone else might take on the creative part, and another could handle language editing. In this way, they learn to develop management, motivation, and responsibility skills.

Kunanbaeva S.S. in her work emphasized the need for preliminary analysis and coordination to adopt professional education standards and curricula, developing a unified system of professionally-based educational goals. According to her, this is important for the effective implementation of educational programs [7]. I believe this statement is highly relevant in the context of project-based learning as an approach to modern methodology and foreign language education. In other words, the alignment of educational goals and the process of development within project work contribute to a more mindful development of skills, which is particularly important in a multilingual environment. This is why project-based learning is one of the most effective tools in modern pedagogy for preparing students for real life and professional activity.

**Practical part.** Now, understanding the importance of these two concepts and their interaction, we can move on to specific techniques and methods that will help educators integrate soft skills through project-based learning in a multilingual environment.

**First, AI-Coach** is a technique for reflection and feedback. Often, we assign project tasks to students but pay little attention to reflection, which is an important part of project-based learning. Students need to identify areas where they need improvement, where they need to be more cohesive, and receive advice on communication, time management, work coordination, etc.

To facilitate this, AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Otter.ai can be used, as they provide automatic recording of dialogues for analysis. After completing a project task, each team can record key moments of their work (conflicts, ineffective communication, ideas) and receive recommendations from the AI on how to improve the process next time. Students can then discuss whether they agree or disagree with the analysis, thus developing skills such as teamwork, adaptability, reflection, and problem-solving.

**Another method is the multilingual flash mob**, which involves sudden social activities and engaging people outside the classroom. The essence of this technique is for each group to get a task, such as conducting interviews on the street with passersby. The group goes outside and asks people, "How do you say 'I love you' in different languages?" recording their reactions. Alternatively, to balance it out and help students practice speaking, they could write foreign phrases on cards, and passersby should try to translate or pronounce them. In response, students teach the correct pronunciation and ask the person to repeat it, or they can repeat the correct version off-camera. The goal of this technique is to remove the fear of communication, making the language a living tool rather than just an academic discipline.

**For developing emotional and empathy skills**, one can use the method of social manipulation. Students are given a task where they have to convince each other of something using only a foreign language. For example, one student tries to convince a friend to go to a concert in French, with one playing the "stubborn" role and the other finding arguments, or they might have to sell a strange item—like an umbrella without a handle, but in English. The goal is simply to learn how to persuade, argue, and influence others.

**Experience.** As part of my research, I conducted an activities aimed at developing soft skills in students through project-based learning. The purpose of the experiment was to organize and conduct group projects that allowed students not only to improve their foreign language knowledge but also to develop key skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving. Below, I present the lesson plan based on project-based learning.

The first experiment took place with third-year students in the course "Specialized Professional Second Foreign Language (French)." The objective was to develop skills for working with authentic materials and critical thinking when discussing the topic of immigration in France. Additionally, the goal was to develop skills in analysis and presentation of information and to foster critical thinking and argumentation through project work. Here's how the lesson was organized:

**Step 1 - Organizational moment (5 min.):** Greet students, announce the topic and goals of the lesson, which were to learn about the migration situation in France and its historical roots.

At this stage, students clearly understood the objective of the lesson. I asked a few questions about their knowledge of migration and what they thought about migration in Kazakhstan and France. Many students expressed their thoughts well in French.

**Step 2 - Introduction to the topic (15 min.):** Work with a text from the textbook "La France immigrée."

§ 1. "Fausses demandes d'asile, fraudes au regroupement familial, franchissement illégal de frontière communautaire... Le débat actuel sur l'immigration semble polarisé par les abus et les dangers créés par l'entrée des étrangers en France."

At this stage, students had some difficulty translating these texts, as they were excerpts from the French immigration laws, but with additional explanations, they managed to understand the essence of the texts and increased their vocabulary.

**Step 3 - Video material on migration in France (15 min.):** Show a video from the "Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration" (CNHI) museum and discuss key concepts. This part was very interesting for students, and they asked questions and actively participated in discussing the meaning of the video content.

**Step 4 - Group Work (30 min.):** Divide students into two groups and explain the task for each group:

- **Group 1:** Research the causes and consequences of immigration in France, covering economic (job search, standard of living), political (wars, persecutions), and social (family reunification) causes. Analyze the positive (cultural enrichment, economic contribution) and negative (integration problems, discrimination) consequences of immigration. Provide examples and statistics.
- **Group 2:** Research France's immigration policy, including key legislative laws and changes, immigration control measures, and current debates on migration policy. Analyze public opinion and stereotypes, including the role of the media in shaping opinions and combating stereotypes. Discuss examples of successful integration.

At first, students were a bit confused after receiving the task, as they had to quickly divide responsibilities. I noticed that each group had leaders who quickly assessed the situation, divided the tasks, and each team member knew their role and quickly got to work.

**Step 5 - Presentation of Group Results (15–20 min.):** Each group presented their findings, followed by a Q&A session from their peers. Groups created posters and presented them orally in French. For those who found it more challenging, they were allowed to read the text, but the key was to present their part of the task confidently. Students asked each other questions on the topic and gave feedback on the quality of the work.

**Step 6 - Conclusion (5 min.):** Summarize the material learned and reflect with the students.

At this stage, I, as the teacher, shared my opinion on their work, gave brief feedback on the project, and provided advice on improving their skills.

**Results:** The lesson was productive, and students showed a high level of interest and active participation. In the introductory part, students responded well to the video and text from the textbook, asking clarifying questions. During group work, students demonstrated their ability to analyze and structure information. Both groups completed their tasks successfully: the first group gave a thorough analysis of the causes and consequences of immigration, using real data and examples; the second group fully covered France's immigration policy and discussed the influence of stereotypes on public opinion. All participants were actively involved in preparing their presentations, demonstrating responsibility and teamwork. The presentations were logical and informative, and students confidently answered questions, showing their understanding of the topic. Overall, the lesson met its objectives: students successfully completed their group tasks, demonstrated teamwork skills, and critically evaluated information.

**Conclusion.** Thus, project-based learning as an approach in modern methodology of language education plays a crucial role in developing not only language skills but also soft skills and intercultural competencies in a multilingual environment. By integrating project-based learning into the educational process, students can easily adapt to the demands of modern society and the labor market, which expands their opportunities for career growth and personal development. The new methods and techniques mentioned in this article make learning more engaging and effective, helping students build confidence and acquire skills that will be valuable in their future professional careers.

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