PROJECT METHOD

V. S. Kurochkina, *SSU*

The project method originates from Pragmatism, the philosophical movement which appeared in the middle of the 19th century and promotes action and practical application of knowledge in everyday life. Major proponents of Pragmatism were J. Dewey (1935) and W. Kilpatrick (1935) in the USA and H. Gaudig in Germany.

The implementation of the project method was based on the following pedagogical principles, expressed by many progressive educators (Chrysafidis, 2005): a) promotion of manual activity instead of memorization and verbalism, b) learners' active participation in the learning process, c) exploitation of facts relating to the immediate reality as a source for learning.

To be a project, the learning activity must be: problematic in nature; aimed at a definite attainable goal; purposeful, natural and lifelike in its procedure to attain the goal; directed and planned by the students; practical in nature with emphasis on a single concrete achievement; it should be evaluated objectively.

Many benefits of incorporating project work in second and foreign language settings have been determined. Here are some of them: project work provides creative and constructive thinking; helps to know the individual differences; helps to think logically and scientifically both before starting the project and in the process of its implementation; develops the doing ability; contributes to personal growth through activity; teaches the student to evaluate the completed work; gives the whole-hearted purposeful activity; develops team spirit and cooperation; helps students to be patient.

The limitations of a project method can be as follows: misconceptions about the term "project"; wrong selection of the topic (without educational value), complexity, it may not be completed in time, there may be overdevelopment of individualism and underdevelopment of cooperation and group responsibility, etc.

As to the teacher's role, it is not dominant, but he/she acts as a guide, advisor, coordinator and facilitator. In implementing the project method, the focal point of the learning process moves from the teacher to the learners, from working alone to working in groups.

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