Interdisciplinary English Workshops: An Innovative Program for University Students.

Universidad de Guanajuato
Dra. Luz María Muñoz de Cote
MTESOL Luis Alberto González García.
The University of Guanajuato has mainly offered English for General Purposes (EGP) programs. Last year, for the first time, an alternative learning program was proposed.
The reasons for having an alternative learning program

- Based on the idea that traditional teaching methods ‘tend to separate language development from general cognitive development’ (Lyster, 2007, p1, referring to Snow, Met and Genesee, 1989), we started researching different learning and teaching approaches that would help us to reduce the schism between language development and general cognitive development.
The idea of our learning Model

• We created a learning model based on Vygotsky’s views of learning. These emphasize the importance of culture and the social context in the learning process.

• Our proposal partially coincides with approaches used in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Europe.
An important area of agreement between our proposal and CLIL refers to the cognitive dimension of “using the language to learn” (Barbero et al., 2009). This may enhance the level of engagement with the language as students develop linguistic knowledge: functions, structures, vocabulary and the use of social and cultural conventions of general English as well as the understanding and development of disciplinary discourses.
Correspondence

16 - Subida del C del Cuerdo
Gto.
México
October 15, 2002

25 Avenue Jerez
Illinois
U.S.A.

Dear Yareli, I wrote this letter with a lot of love and I would like to talk about me. I am studying the degree of Accounting. What about you? I need to tell you that in my family there are four members, two girls and two boys. I am number three. Here in Gto. it is very cold, I am frozen but it's great in the city. To me, I like dance and enjoy dance music in the clubs with my friends. I hope that you arrived early.

I can't wait for you.

Love, Giorgondo
Independence Day.

I think that the independence is important but I don't like this day because this day remember me the sues about the Mexican people fought but that's OK because they give us the liberty and I'm happy for this reason because I could travel, expired to me and be free. When I will be accounting I going to try change the government and disappear the corruption and I will be more honest.
Advantages of The Use of a Glossary in The Interdisciplinary Workshop

Nowadays having knowledge of a second language has become a priority. According to Evans (2005, p.1) the English language “is the language in which nations carry out their economic, political, technological, academic, and cultural transactions”. For this reason it is used in all activities of daily life. Consequently, learning English is very important and one method to learn it is throughout the interdisciplinary workshop. In this system students does different tasks, one of these is the creation of a glossary. With a glossary, students not only learn new words, but also and how to use them. Thus, a glossary is a learning tool that helps increasing the vocabulary and also helps improving students writing and reading skills.

According to SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc.) International (Online 2012, para.1) a glossary is an alphabetized collection about specific subject. The word glossary is derived from the Latin glossa, (wiseGEEK. Online, 2012, para.2), which means “foreign word”. In the interdisciplinary workshop, as mention in the class syllabus of English IV:

“...the glossary contains all the new words that the students have learned while developing each project. It is necessary to give an example of how each word is used correctly within a sentence.” (González, 2012, p.1)

The collection of words may be used by students in different academic activities, such as writing an essay, reading an academic text or while speaking about specific issue in front the group.

The glossary helps to increase the vocabulary and it is important at the moment of reading, because it is necessary to know the meaning of specific words in order to understand the text. Base on August, et. al. (2005, p. 1) a good vocabulary does a difference between having good or bad level of reading comprehension. In the glossary used in the interdisciplinary workshop, students write the new words they have learned and an example of how each word is used correctly within a sentence. In this way, students can use the new vocabulary in different tasks.
In the first draft I felt a little nervous because I had ideas but I didn’t know how to structure them. But I could write when I started the paragraph of introduction. I understood that in each paragraph is one idea. Then was easier to write the three paragraphs in the body and one in the conclusion.

In general in this draft I felt very good and I would want to write more. I need to improve my writing skill and with this essay I started. Now is necessary to understand how is an essay better.
The importance of independent work in the interdisciplinary workshops

The independent work helps students to develop skills during their English classes, resulting in the improvement of their educational process. By working independently, students have the opportunity to notice if their learning process is been improved by the methodology used in the interdisciplinary workshops.

The independent work has an important academic benefit when it is used with the interest to improve the teaching-learning process of a student working under an interdisciplinary workshop model.

According to Quiñones (2001, para. 7, translate by Robles Bábara) The independent work is a method of self-directed learning focused on the developing of skills for the cognitive independency inside and outside the classroom. The teacher directs the learning of students with the aim of developing skills and knowledge independently, that activities carried out inside and outside the classroom is a teaching-learning process, however learn more by what is done it says so.

The independent work is characterized as students the liberty if choice and what they are going during a determinate time. This means supervision of the teacher and big of learning and responsibility of the students, also they could choose their workings-materials to of support and that makes learning easier, the learning. In this way, students can do work by on
The Roles

- The Teacher becomes a companion, a facilitator, a guide and a counselor during the learning process.
- On the other hand, students become learners, and therefore, they become responsible of their own learning process.

*These roles problematize traditional classroom roles.*
The objective of this research was to understand the experience that teachers and university students, who have worked under a traditional teacher centered educational model, went through while facing our learning model proposal.
The Findings

• Students’ change of identity.
• An increased students’ level of engagement with the language.
• Teacher’s change of identity.
Student’s Change of Identity

- Students had to change their identity. From recipients of knowledge to people in charge of their own learning.
- From being teacher-dependent to becoming critical thinkers.
I discovered that I need to practice more the present progressive. Since I forgot the present progressive and I need practice more.

And with the vocabulary, I still learn more vocabulary with —
February 23 of 2011
I feel good because I know to do with my abstract.

Make a abstract in English is very different to translate into English the abstract.
Students modified their attitudes and ways of working as they understood what the workshops demand from them. After

- Before
  - “Today I felt a little weird because I was not used to my English class was in English”, [sic]
  - “Today in my English class I felt [felt] bad because the new form of work is”

- We learned a lot how to speak to people in English because at the very first class nobody wants to talk and the classmates ashamed of how they sound.” [sic]
An increased Students’ level of engagement with the language.

- Students’ view of language changes: from being a set of linguistic rules to a means to construct a social identity.

“The toppics are interesting and usefull for our carrier when we work all the English we learn use for communicateed with all that parters y personal.” [sic]
Teachers’ Change of Identity

- The model challenges the power position of a teacher.
- The assumption that the teacher is the source of knowledge becomes problematic.
- The model challenges teachers' educational background.
Some of the Teachers’ Quotes

- “I believe I’m not doing my job”

- “I felt that students thought my job was to be sitting in a chair”
The Future

- There is a need to continue with teachers’ development workshops.
- There’s a need to link with other disciplinary areas to develop collaborative work.
- Start a new research project, focusing on students' language development.
References:


Ibid., p.1