

Project-Based Language Learning Model in a College Chinese Language Program

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Project-based learning (PBL) is a pedagogical approach that can be traced back to Dewey's 'learning by doing' (Dewey and Dewey 1915), Kilpatrick's (1918) project method and subsequent approaches to progressive education. Researchers and theorists have begun to call for a more context-sensitive model of dynamic assessment that takes into account process as well as product (see Poehner & Lantolf, 2005; Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000). Meanwhile, there has been a growing interest in research and practice of telecollaborative practices in language teaching and learning (cf. Guth & Helm, 2012; Helm, Guth, & O'Dowd, 2012; Kessler, 2013; Schenker, 2012), especially as teachers and learners become more familiar with what Thorne (2012) calls "conventional Internet-mediated tools" (p. 19).

This study outlines research into innovative language teaching practices that make optimal use of technology and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) for an integrated approach to PBL. It is based on data compiled during a 10-week Chinese language project for college language learners. The research questions are:

1. How to design a telecollaborative Chinese language-learning project meaningfully and effectively?
2. How to focus on Chinese language acquisition while giving scant attention to developing students' ability to conduct research and write research papers?

PBL can be an effective way to engage and motivate learners (Yetkiner, Anderoglu, & Capraro, 2008), but PBL often fails when the emphasis falls too heavily on the "project" element of the title rather than on the "language learning." This study practices on how to systematically and effectively integrate technology into project-based language teaching (Egbert, Paulus, & Nakamichi, 2002; Hubbard, 2013) to meet "the need for grounding learning in context, and the greater efficacy with emergent and developmental rather than arbitrary or fixed and imposed learning objectives and processes" (C. Richards, 2005, p. 73).