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Backward-Design and Performance Assessment in Project Based Language Teaching and Learning for Diverse Classrooms – Report on Existing PBL Best Practices and Teachers' Training Needs Analysis

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WP 2

Activity 2

Road map to Backward-Design (BD) method in project-based language learning (PBL)

This document provides a detailed methodology framework for Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) that adopts a backward-design approach to meet the training needs of teachers in Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, and Türkiye. It aims to empower educators with the tools and strategies required to create inclusive, student-centered learning environments, particularly in multilingual and multicultural classrooms. The framework offers practical, research-based solutions to enhance teacher capacity and improve educational outcomes for diverse student populations, including marginalized groups such as Romani children and students facing language barriers.

The primary purpose is to guide the development of curricula and professional training programs tailored to primary educators. It seeks to facilitate the integration of PBL into the teaching process and improve teaching practices through structured, innovative methods. The framework focuses on equipping teachers with advanced pedagogical, organizational, and interpersonal skills essential for designing and implementing PBL curricula. These curricula balance language acquisition with project-based activities, creating authentic and meaningful learning experiences.

At its core, the framework is built on the backward design approach. This method starts by identifying desired learning outcomes and aligning them with assessment methods and instructional strategies. It ensures that teaching activities are purposefully designed to meet specific objectives and maintain a clear focus on student achievement, emphasizing both the process and the product in lesson planning.

The framework integrates cultural and linguistic responsiveness into its methodology, addressing the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students. It emphasizes culturally relevant pedagogy that connects classroom content with students' lived experiences and provides tools for bilingual and multilingual classrooms. Additionally, building on this framework, the project offers comprehensive teacher training that combines theoretical knowledge with practical applications. Training modules include topics such as differentiated instruction, classroom management, and reflective practices, equipping teachers with strategies to foster student engagement, critical thinking, and collaboration within the PBL classroom.

Innovative instructional practices are a central component of this framework. It advocates for interdisciplinary and participatory teaching methods that align with real-world applications and promotes the use of content, culture and language-integrated learning. Digital tools and technologies are integrated to enhance the learning experience and support both remote and hybrid classrooms.

Assessment and feedback are systematically incorporated into the framework, emphasizing formative and summative tools to monitor student progress. Performance-based assessments, such as portfolios, presentations, and collaborative projects, are encouraged to provide a

comprehensive evaluation of student learning. Reflective practices are also included to help teachers refine their methods and improve outcomes.

The document aligns with European Union goals for inclusive, competency-based education, equipping students with 21st-century skills such as collaboration, cultural understanding, and real-world problem-solving⁽¹⁾ It prepares students to thrive in a globalized world while emphasizing the importance of professional development and continuous learning for teachers. By remaining adaptable and responsive to evolving educational needs, the PBL framework built on Backward Design (BD) fosters a vision of classrooms where all learners, regardless of background, can engage meaningfully, achieve their potential, and develop the skills needed for lifelong success.



Introduction

Educational difficulties, low school performance, and even school dropouts remain persistent challenges in many educational systems ⁽²⁾. These issues often stem from a complex interplay of factors, including socioeconomic disparities, cultural differences, and inadequate support for diverse learning needs. One critical obstacle for many students, particularly those from minority, migrant, or refugee backgrounds, is the language barrier⁽³⁾. Language challenges can significantly impede learning, limit social integration, and contribute to feelings of frustration and alienation. How, then, can educators prevent or mitigate these barriers to foster a more equitable and inclusive learning environment?

Extensive research consistently underscores the pivotal role of school staff in fostering learner engagement. Teachers, administrators, and support personnel are uniquely positioned to influence students' social, emotional, and behavioral well-being, as well as their attitudes toward learning. For students from marginalized or vulnerable communities, the role of educators transcends academic instruction; it involves building trust, creating a sense of belonging, and cultivating an environment where every learner feels valued and capable.

As educators evolve into facilitators of learning, their ability to inspire, guide, and support students is paramount. Teachers' proficiency and competencies, developed through robust professional development programs, are essential in addressing the unique challenges faced by migrant, refugee, and minority students. These skills enable teachers to design culturally responsive lessons, implement inclusive practices, and provide meaningful feedback. Moreover, prioritizing teachers' well-being and sense of accomplishment fosters a positive educational atmosphere, benefiting both students and the broader school community.

Teachers' daily interactions with students place them at the frontline of identifying early signs of disengagement or learning difficulties. This proximity allows them to intervene promptly and effectively, tailoring strategies to meet the needs of individual students. Furthermore, teachers offer valuable insights into systemic challenges that may hinder student progress, highlighting areas where additional support, resources, or professional training are necessary.

While professional experience refines teachers' judgment and practices over time, continuous professional development is crucial for equipping educators with the tools and methodologies to address evolving educational needs. Initial teacher training programs must also adapt to include emerging pedagogical approaches that emphasize cultural responsiveness, inclusivity, and the development of 21st-century skills ⁽⁴⁾

(2) UNICEF's report, "The State of the Global Education Crisis" - <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-global-education-crisis>

(3) IAFOR Journal of Language Learning, Volume 4 – Issue 1 – Winter 2018, They Forget That I'm There: Migrant Students Traversing Language Barriers at School, Joanne Cassar University of Malta, Malta Michelle Attard Tonna University of Malta, Malta - <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1215648.pdf?utm>

(4) The Cambridge approach to 21st Century skills: definitions, development and dilemmas for assessment IAEA Conference, Singapore, 2014 Irenka Suto and Helen Eccles, Cambridge Assessment – <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/461811-the-cambridge-approach-to-21st-century-skills-definitions-development-and-dilemmas-for-assessment-.pdf>

transforming lesson design and assessment methods. The group's report, *“Assessing Learners’ Competences: Policies and Practices to Support Successful and Inclusive Education,”* advocates for a shift from traditional, content-focused models toward competency-based approaches. This shift necessitates innovative lesson designs, dynamic teaching methodologies, and comprehensive classroom-based assessments that capture a broad spectrum of learning objectives or outcomes and key competencies.

This methodology framework leverages the Backward-Design Approach in Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) environments to address these challenges. It offers a structure for designing lessons and curricular units that enhance teaching quality and foster meaningful, inclusive learning experiences. By integrating interdisciplinary and participatory strategies, this approach empowers teachers to align their instructional practices with desired learning outcomes.

The backward-design process begins with identifying clear student-learning objectives. These objectives guide the selection of appropriate assessment methods to measure learning outcomes and inform the design of classroom activities that actively support these goals. This approach ensures that teaching is both process- and product-oriented, allowing educators to maintain a clear focus on student achievement.

Through this methodology, teachers can develop the capacity to design student-centered, engaging, and structured lessons. By fostering active participation, critical thinking, autonomy, and teamwork, PBL environment creates opportunities for students to apply newly acquired language skills in real-life contexts. The adoption of this framework also enhances students' motivation to learn, supporting their academic journey and reducing the likelihood of disengagement or dropout. By equipping educators with practical tools and strategies, this methodology aims to create classrooms where all learners, regardless of their backgrounds, can thrive, succeed, and continue their education with confidence and enthusiasm.

Analyzing PBL implementation in Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, and Türkiye for Inclusive Education

To address the identified needs and gaps in fostering inclusive and effective learning environments, this methodology builds on a comprehensive analysis of Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) implementation and the training needs of teachers in Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, and Türkiye. As emphasized in the introduction, educators play a pivotal role in shaping the educational experiences of learners, particularly those from minority, migrant, or refugee backgrounds, and this methodology aims to enhance their capacity to create meaningful, engaging, and inclusive learning opportunities.

The Analysis explores the current state of PBL in the four project countries, identifying successful practices, persistent challenges, and areas where targeted interventions are needed, as reported by the interviewed primary school teachers. While PBL has demonstrated its potential to foster critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving skills, its implementation remains inconsistent across these contexts. This variability reflects differences in systemic support, teacher training, and resource availability, highlighting the need for a unified and adaptable framework.

The Analysis provides:

- an understanding of how PBL is currently practiced and perceived in Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, and Türkiye;
- insights to shape a methodology that is both contextually responsive and universally applicable.

The conclusions of the Analysis reinforces the importance of structured methodologies, comprehensive teacher training, and systemic support to ensure PBL's successful implementation and sustainability across educational systems. This approach aligns with the broader objectives of inclusive and competency-based education, ensuring that learning environments are accessible, equitable, and transformative for all learners.

Bulgaria

In **Bulgaria**, PBL is still in its early stages, with limited systematic implementation or training within the education system. Existing practices are often adaptations of international methodologies, predominantly applied in specific disciplines like STEM. Local organizations, such as the "Together in Class" Foundation, have been instrumental in promoting project-based learning, offering teachers guidance, resources, and practical

examples tailored to diverse classroom settings. Initiatives like the "Shkolo Academy" further support educators through short training programs focused on inquiry-based learning. However, frameworks specifically designed for PBL in language education remain underdeveloped. Efforts are largely concentrated on general project-based approaches, leaving a gap in tools and strategies tailored to the unique requirements of bilingual and multilingual classrooms. Bulgarian educators have expressed a clear need for structured methodologies that address these specific challenges, underscoring the importance of fostering language acquisition alongside project-based competencies.

In **Italy**, PBL is selectively implemented, primarily in experimental programs and private educational institutions. The Lepida School methodology, conceptualized by Professor Enzo Zecchi, exemplifies a structured approach to project-based learning, prioritizing the educational process over the final product. This method emphasizes thematic learning, group collaboration, and interdisciplinary integration, aligning closely with the principles of PBL. Despite the encouragement of innovative practices in national policy documents such as the *National Indications for Education*, a disconnect persists between these guidelines and their practical application in schools. Collaborative efforts, including the involvement of parents and local communities, are occasionally incorporated but lack a standardized framework for broader implementation. Italian educators highlight the need for more consistent support and integration of PBL within mainstream education to ensure its sustainability and effectiveness.

In **Romania**, PBL is applied sporadically, primarily within private schools or through international initiatives such as Erasmus+ programs. Institutions like Spectrum Secondary School and Avenor College have fully embraced PBL, incorporating interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary projects into their curricula. Spectrum Secondary School, for example, mandates project presentations that combine natural sciences with other disciplines, while Avenor College designs PBL programs spanning six to eight weeks, culminating in tangible outputs. Despite these localized successes, PBL lacks a national policy framework, leaving its adoption dependent on individual schools or teachers willing to innovate. Romanian educators acknowledge PBL's potential to enhance critical thinking, collaboration, and practical problem-solving skills but emphasize the urgent need for systemic support, resources, and professional development to facilitate its wider application.

In **Türkiye**, PBL enjoys broader recognition and implementation, particularly through large-scale initiatives supported by the Ministry of National Education. Programs like STEM+A integrate project-based methodologies across various subjects, emphasizing interdisciplinary connections and real-world applications. The English Together initiative represents a landmark achievement in PBL, particularly for language education. Targeting English teachers in public schools nationwide, the program emphasizes professional

development through Communities of Practice (CoPs), fostering collaboration and innovation in designing and implementing PBL tasks. While Türkiye has made significant progress in embedding PBL within its educational framework, its focus has primarily been on English language education, with limited expansion into other languages or disciplines. This highlights the need for broader application of PBL principles across diverse educational contexts.

This Analysis underscores the varied levels of PBL adoption and the distinct challenges faced by each country. It reinforces the importance of structured methodologies, comprehensive teacher training, and systemic support to ensure PBL's successful implementation and sustainability across educational systems.

Teachers' Training Needs

Across all four countries, teachers have consistently highlighted the pressing need for a structured, accessible, and practical methodology, supported by comprehensive training programs, to effectively implement Project-Based Language Learning (PBL). By aligning learning objectives, assessments, and classroom activities, backward design ensures that PBL is both intentional and impactful, providing educators with a clear roadmap to foster meaningful and inclusive learning experiences.

The Backward design method is largely unfamiliar in the educational systems of these countries, where traditional lesson planning is driven by content delivery and process rather than outcomes. This conventional approach tends to prioritize covering curriculum topics rather than aligning teaching with clear, measurable learning objectives. As a result, many educators lack exposure to methods that systematically align goals, assessments, and classroom activities—a cornerstone of both backward design and effective PBL practices.

In **Bulgaria**, teachers expressed a strong desire for training that combines theoretical foundations with hands-on application. They highlighted the need for guidance on project planning, resource management, and assessment techniques tailored to language learning. Many teachers struggle with the lack of ready-made materials and strategies for integrating PBL into their existing curricula. Moreover, Bulgarian educators emphasized the importance of training on engaging parents and other stakeholders to create a supportive environment for PBL.

In **Italy**, the primary challenge lies in the inconsistency of PBL practices across schools. Teachers often lack exposure to structured methodologies, leaving them to experiment independently or rely on informal networks for support. Training programs, such as those linked to the Lepida School approach, have shown promise but are not widely available.

Italian teachers have expressed the need for collaborative training opportunities that include mentorship, peer learning, and workshops focused on the practical aspects of PBL, such as designing interdisciplinary projects and managing group dynamics.

In **Romania**, the absence of a national framework for PBL poses a significant barrier. Teachers who have participated in international training programs, such as Erasmus+ workshops, report positive experiences and increased confidence in applying PBL methods. However, these opportunities are not universally accessible, and many educators are left without the tools or knowledge to implement PBL effectively. Romanian teachers have identified the need for comprehensive training that covers project design, interdisciplinary integration, and strategies for engaging students with diverse needs and backgrounds.

In **Türkiye**, the English Together initiative has set a high standard for PBL training in language education. Through Communities of Practice, English teachers gain valuable insights into planning, executing, and evaluating project-based activities. However, similar support is lacking for other languages and subjects. Teachers outside the English language education sphere have noted the absence of structured training programs, particularly those that address the unique challenges of PBL in multilingual or multicultural classrooms. They have also called for more resources, such as digital tools and sample lesson plans, to facilitate the integration of PBL into their teaching practices.

Conclusion

The efforts to implement Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) across Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, and Türkiye reveals a blend of innovative practices and systemic challenges. While some countries have made significant strides in integrating PBL into their educational systems, others remain in the early stages of adoption, constrained by limited resources, insufficient training, and a lack of institutional support. Despite these challenges, educators across all four contexts recognize PBL's transformative potential in fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world problem-solving among students.

Project-Based Learning (PBL), as a broader pedagogical approach, has proven to be both innovative and effective, offering numerous benefits. Teachers who implement it report its ability to bridge theory and real life, actively engage students, and cultivate essential skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and self-assessment. Furthermore, PBL encourages interdisciplinary learning, enhances students' contextual understanding of educational material, and motivates them through the hands-on, practical nature of project-driven tasks.

However, the adoption of PBL is not without its challenges. Educators frequently cite a lack of resources and professional training, difficulties in managing dynamic classroom

environments, and the significant time investment required for preparation as major obstacles. Additionally, some students face difficulties adapting to this method, particularly when transitioning from traditional, teacher-centered instructional models to a more student-centered, participatory approach.

To overcome these barriers, teachers emphasize the urgent need for systematic, practical, and accessible training programs. Such programs should blend theoretical foundations with hands-on practice, provide mentorship and feedback, and offer access to ready-made project plans, technological tools, and collaborative platforms. Special attention is needed for training that facilitates collaboration with parents and the broader community, as their involvement significantly enriches the learning experience and enhances student motivation.



Target Group

This methodology is aimed at primary school teachers in the partner countries who are directly responsible for teaching the official language to students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These educators play a pivotal role in addressing the challenges posed by language barriers, which often result in educational difficulties, low school performance, and even student dropout. The language underachievement of students, particularly those with a different mother tongue, not only leads to enduring learning gaps and general low school performance but also profoundly affects teachers' job satisfaction, sense of success, and overall well-being. The inequity in students' opportunities to learn, places an additional burden on teachers, who frequently feel unsupported and ill-equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students. This often results in frustration, and a reduced sense of professional accomplishment.

Despite their essential role, many teachers encounter significant gaps in preparation programs, curricula, and professional development opportunities, leaving them underprepared to navigate the complexities of multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

These challenges underscore the urgent need for teaching pathways that not only promote equitable and inclusive education but also foster a sense of success and satisfaction among teachers. By equipping educators with effective tools, innovative strategies, and sustained professional support, this methodology empowers them to address the needs of diverse classrooms. As teachers feel more capable and effective, their sense of efficacy, achievement, and well-being is enhanced, creating a positive and sustainable impact for both educators and students.

Aligned with the backward design in PBL, this methodology emphasizes inclusive, engaging, and effective language instruction. It promotes the development of personalized lessons that cater to the needs of linguistically diverse students, supported by validated instructional methods and smart assessment techniques. Teachers are encouraged to adopt a student-centered, participatory approach that fosters ownership of learning by tailoring instruction to individual student needs and interests. This approach is integrated into all phases of the teaching process—lesson planning, implementation, and assessment. Additionally, the methodology enhances teachers' assessment literacy, enabling them to apply formative assessment practices that capture a broad range of learning aims and key competences, moving beyond traditional content-based models.

In addition to primary school teachers, experts in teacher training are a crucial supplementary target group. These professionals design and implement training programs that bridge the gap between theory and practice, equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to address the challenges of multilingual and multicultural classrooms. By including experts in teacher training, the methodology ensures scalability and sustainability, providing a robust framework for professional development. This framework enables teachers to adopt competence-based, inclusive, and participatory practices effectively.

This dual focus on teachers and teacher trainers acknowledges the interconnected nature of classroom teaching and professional development. Together, these groups lay a solid foundation for advancing student participation and achievement in linguistically diverse classrooms. By addressing systemic inequities and empowering educators, this comprehensive approach reduces language barriers, closes learning gaps, and significantly improves outcomes for all students, particularly those from disadvantaged or multilingual backgrounds.

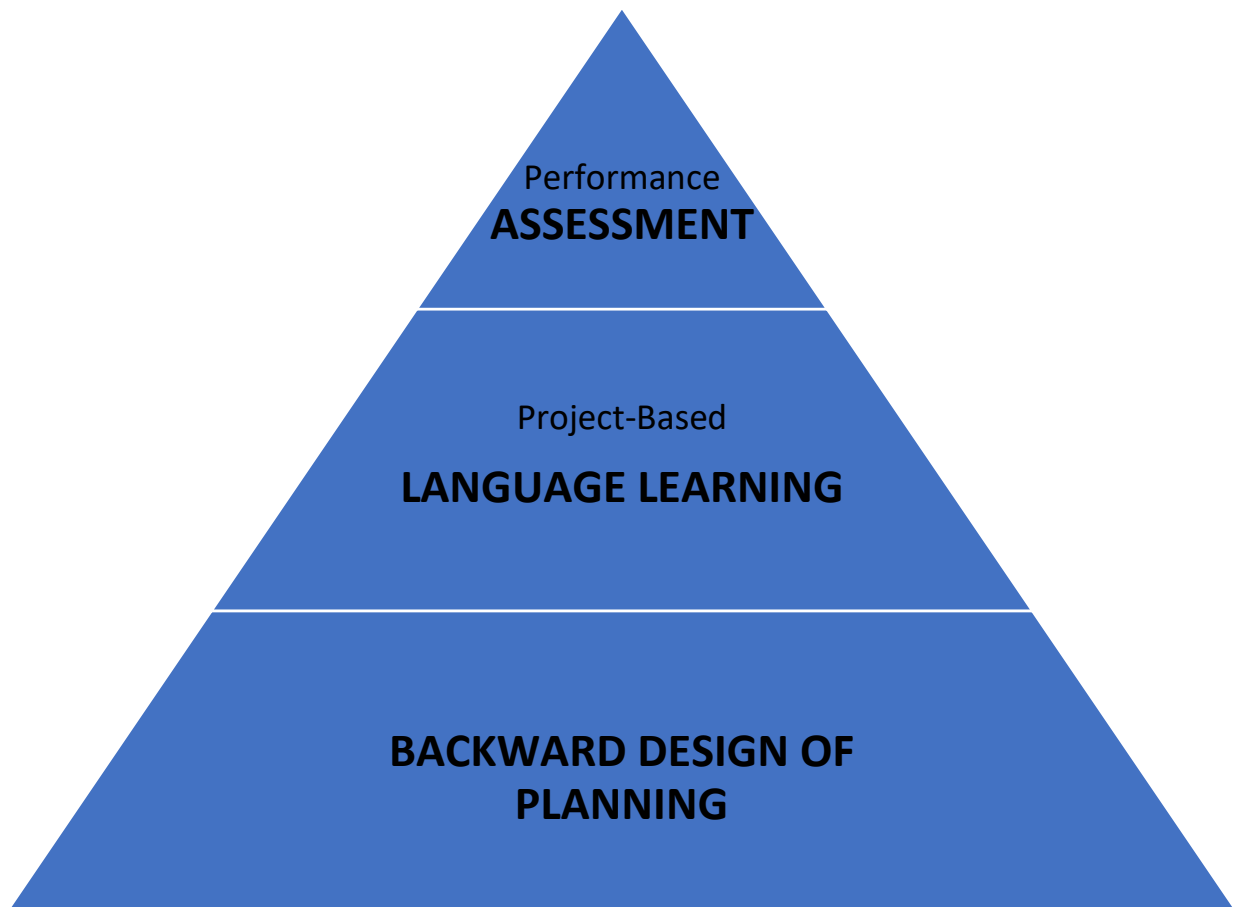
Project Statement:

The integration of the Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) framework, grounded in Backward Design (BD), directly addresses the needs of primary teachers by providing a clear, goal-oriented structure for language instruction. This methodology ensures that lessons are both engaging and purposeful, helping teachers navigate the challenges of diverse classrooms while fostering student success. By incorporating Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) within BD, teachers are equipped with tasks aligned to PBL themes or content areas that focus on real-world language use across the three modes of communication—Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational.

This approach supports primary teachers in creating meaningful learning experiences that go beyond rote memorization, helping students develop language skills through authentic communication and real-world tasks. It provides teachers with practical strategies to make language learning more relevant and engaging, enhancing their sense of accomplishment and reducing the frustration of working with outdated, ineffective methods.

The PBL framework also addresses teachers' needs for tools to promote critical skills, such as problem-solving, collaboration, and flexible thinking. By using hands-on projects that encourage students to explore their environment—be it their classroom, neighborhood, or natural surroundings—teachers can facilitate deeper understanding and higher-order thinking. These projects empower students to apply their learning in practical contexts, fostering curiosity, responsibility, and care for the world, while simultaneously making lessons more rewarding and effective for teachers.

Ultimately, this integrated methodology not only enhances student outcomes but also supports teachers' professional growth and job satisfaction by providing them with innovative, adaptable strategies that make language instruction more effective, inclusive, and aligned with their classroom realities.



Introduction to Backward Design

The method of backward design has its roots in the evolution of educational theory and curriculum development, emerging as a response to the need for more purposeful and outcome-oriented teaching. Its development spans much of the 20th century, with significant contributions from early curriculum theorists, instructional designers, and educational reformers.

The foundational ideas behind backward design can be traced back to Ralph Tyler in the 1940s. Tyler, in his influential work *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), emphasized the importance of beginning curriculum development by clearly defining educational objectives. His model, often referred to as the "Tyler Rationale," highlighted the need for aligning objectives, assessments, and instruction—a principle that became central to backward design. Tyler's focus on starting with the desired outcomes marked a significant shift from traditional teaching approaches, which often began with activities or content and worked forward.

In the 1950s, Benjamin Bloom expanded on these ideas with the publication of his *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Bloom provided a structured framework for categorizing learning goals, helping educators define the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills students should achieve. This taxonomy further reinforced the importance of clear and measurable outcomes, influencing later instructional design practices.

The 1960s to 1980s saw the growth of instructional design as a field, with systematic approaches gaining prominence. During this period, Robert Mager's *Preparing Instructional Objectives* (1962) stressed the value of writing precise, measurable objectives. Mager's work encouraged educators to focus on what students should be able to do after instruction, a concept foundational to backward design. The development of the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) in the 1970s also contributed to the systematic planning of instruction. Like backward design, ADDIE emphasized starting with an analysis of learning needs and goals before designing instructional activities.

The formal concept of backward design as it is understood today was introduced and popularized by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in their 1998 book *Understanding by Design (UbD)*. Wiggins and McTighe articulated a structured framework for planning instruction that begins with identifying desired learning outcomes, determining acceptable evidence of learning, and then designing instructional activities to achieve those outcomes. This approach addressed a common problem in traditional planning, where teachers often focused on selecting activities without ensuring they aligned with overarching goals. Wiggins and McTighe's backward design model emphasized creating coherent and meaningful learning experiences, prioritizing understanding over rote memorization.

The emergence of backward design coincided with broader educational reforms in the 1990s, particularly the rise of standards-based education (5Cs).

Standards-based education in language learning is structured around five key goal areas, commonly referred to as the 5 Cs:

1. **Communication:** Engaging in meaningful interactions in the target language, encompassing interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes.
2. **Cultures:** Gaining insights into the cultural contexts associated with the language, fostering an understanding of the relationship between practices, products, and perspectives.
3. **Connections:** Linking language study to other academic disciplines, enhancing learning across various fields through the target language.
4. **Comparisons:** Developing an awareness of linguistic and cultural differences and similarities, promoting a deeper understanding of one's own language and culture in relation to others.
5. **Communities:** Applying language skills beyond the classroom setting, participating in multilingual communities, and appreciating the lifelong benefits of language learning.

These goal areas are designed to provide a comprehensive framework for language education, ensuring that learners develop not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural competenc

and the ability to connect and compare knowledge across disciplines and communities. By focusing on the 5 Cs, educators aim to create a holistic language learning experience that prepares students to communicate effectively and interact thoughtfully within a diverse and interconnected world.

Source: [ResearchGate](#)

As some educational systems began adopting clear learning standards, backward design became an effective way for teachers to align their instruction with these goals. The method's emphasis on defining outcomes, crafting aligned assessments, and designing purposeful learning activities made it particularly well-suited to addressing the demands of accountability and standardization in education.

Wiggins and McTighe's framework also introduced practical tools and concepts such as essential questions, big ideas, and the distinction between knowledge, skills, and understanding. These elements helped educators focus on fostering deep, transferable understanding rather than merely covering content. This focus on enduring understandings aligned with contemporary constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize the active role of students in constructing knowledge.

Today, backward design is widely used at all educational levels, and in professional training. Its application is particularly evident in contexts like project-based learning, inquiry-based instruction, and interdisciplinary teaching. By starting with clear goals and ensuring alignment between outcomes, assessments, and instructional activities, backward design continues to provide a powerful framework for creating meaningful and effective learning experiences.

Methodology for Planning through Backward Design:

Backward design is a powerful tool for structuring language instruction, especially in a project-based language learning (PBL) classroom. Teachers identify the desired language and content learning objectives or outcomes, which include developing language skills such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading, performance in the three modes of communication, as well as understanding cultural perspectives and subject matter related to the project.

There are three main stages in the backward design which will be described in detail below:

Stage I. Identify Desired Results (Age and Proficiency Appropriate Objectives)

In backward design, the teacher first determines what students should know, understand, and be able to do in the language by the end of the project. The objectives defined in the beginning of a lesson plan represent the learning outcomes that teachers should be able to measure and assess at the end of the lesson.

In the methodology for planning lessons through backward design in Project-Based Language Learning (PBL), starting with the first step of identifying desired learning outcomes is crucial because it lays the foundation for purposeful and effective lesson planning. This initial step ensures that all subsequent elements of the lesson—assessments, instructional activities, and project tasks—are aligned with clear and meaningful goals. Without this clarity, lessons risk becoming a series of disconnected activities rather than a cohesive learning experience.

The objectives are articulated in CanDo statements. This is where the standards, competencies, or real-world skills relevant to language learning.

- a) Language Focus: What linguistic structures or functions will students master? (e.g., reflexive verbs in conversation, asking-answering questions)
- b) Content Focus: What cultural or content-specific knowledge should they acquire? (e.g., knowledge of local festivals, issues of health and environment)
- c) Project Goal: What real-world task will they complete in order to use the target language structures and acquire the knowledge of specific content and culture aspects? (e.g., creating a brochure about their city, conducting interviews)

Example: In an eco-lifestyles project where at one stage students interview speakers about their hometowns and local health-related lifestyles, the desired objectives can be formulated as follows:

By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

- identify conversational patterns and turn-taking.
- ask a variety of open-ended questions.
- summarize healthy lifestyles and related cultural practices in urban vs. rural areas.

Source: Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by Design*.

Example: In an eco-lifestyles project where at one stage students learn about pollution and its impact on health:

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

- recognize and explain three or more types of pollution (water, air, soil, noise)
- describe the connection between health and pollution
- list three or more solutions

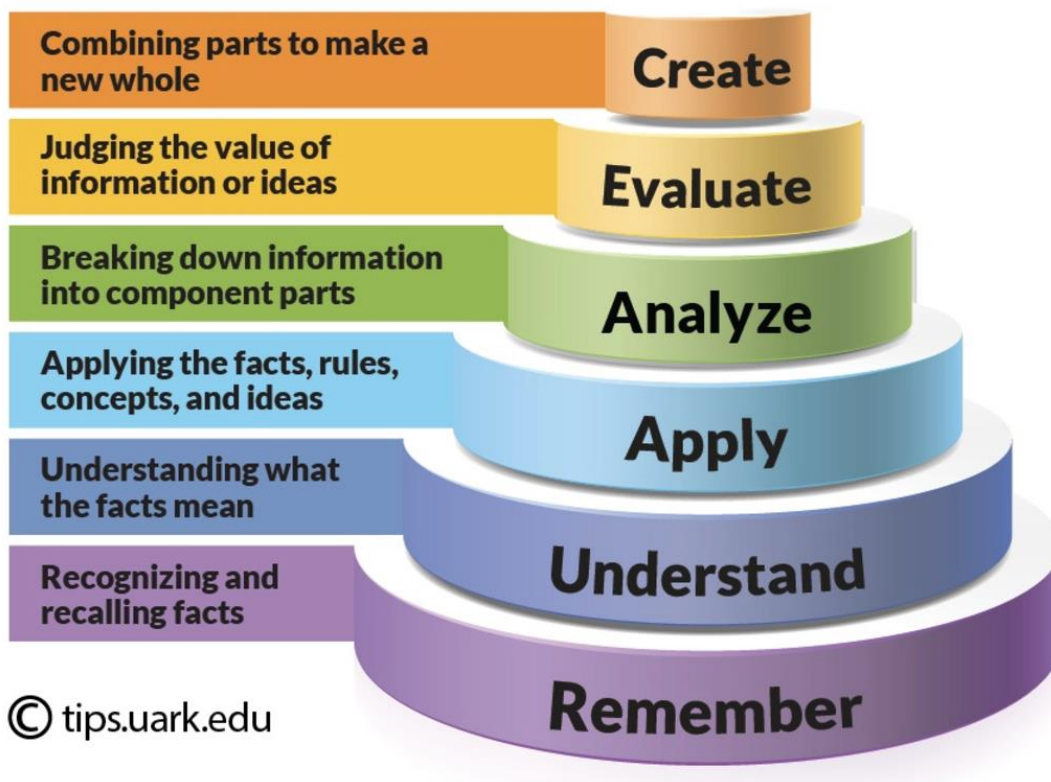
However, teachers often struggle articulating clear, measurable and assessable objectives in Stage I. Bloom's Taxonomy is extremely useful for that purpose. It is a classification of the different outcomes and skills that educators set for their students (learning outcomes). In 1956, Benjamin Bloom with collaborators Max Englehart, Edward Furst, Walter Hill, and David Krathwohl published a framework for categorizing educational goals: Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Familiarly known as Bloom's Taxonomy, this framework has been applied by generations of K-12 teachers and college instructors in their teaching.

The framework elaborated by Bloom and his collaborators consisted of six major categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. The categories after Knowledge were presented as "skills and abilities," with the understanding that knowledge was the necessary precondition for putting these skills and abilities into practice.

While each category contained subcategories, all lying along a continuum from simple to complex and concrete to abstract, the taxonomy is popularly remembered according to the six. The terminology has been recently updated to include the following six levels of learning. These 6 levels can be used to structure the learning outcomes, lessons, and assessments:

- **Remembering:** Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory.
- **Understanding:** Constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining.
- **Applying:** Carrying out or using a procedure for executing, or implementing.
- **Analyzing:** Breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing.
- **Evaluating:** Making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing.
- **Creating:** Putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing.

Like other taxonomies, Bloom's is hierarchical, meaning that learning at the higher levels is dependent on having attained prerequisite knowledge and skills at lower levels. You will see Bloom's Taxonomy often displayed as a pyramid graphic to help demonstrate this hierarchy.



It has been updated by the Teaching Innovation and Pedagogical Support (TIPS, University of Arkansas) into a “cake-style” hierarchy to emphasize that each level is built on a foundation of the previous levels.

Bloom’s Taxonomy is useful to make sure that the action verbs chosen for the formulation of the lesson objectives in CanDo statements build up to the next level of student proficiency. The following is a list of measurable action verbs that can be used when creating the lesson’s learning objectives. main categories.

Bloom’s level	Action Verb	Example Lesson Objective
Create	design, formulate, build, invent, create, compose, generate, derive, modify, develop.	<i>By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to design an original homework problem dealing with the issue of waste management.</i>

Evaluate	choose, support, relate, determine, defend, judge, grade, compare, contrast, argue, justify, support, convince, select, evaluate.	By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to determine how recycling will help with pollution.
Analyze	classify, break down, categorize, analyze, diagram, illustrate, criticize, simplify, associate.	<i>By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to differentiate between noise and water pollution.</i>
Apply	calculate, predict, apply, solve, illustrate, use, demonstrate, determine, model, perform, present.	<i>By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to model circularity.</i>
Understand	describe, explain, paraphrase, restate, give original examples of, summarize, contrast, interpret, discuss.	<i>By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to describe the health-related issues caused by pollution.</i>
Remember	list, recite, outline, define, name, match, quote, recall, identify, label, recognize.	<i>By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to name the different kinds of pollution.</i>

Learning objectives / outcome examples adapted from Nelson Baker at Georgia Tech: nelson.baker@pe.gatech.edu

When designing this Stage I in accordance with the Bloom's Taxonomy and in reference to knowledge, skills and language structures, teachers achieve the following benefits:

Clarity: Identifying desired outcomes provides a clear sense of direction for both teachers and students. In PBL, where the integration of language learning and project goals is central, this step ensures that every activity and project component serves a meaningful purpose. It allows teachers to define what students need to achieve in terms of language skills, knowledge, and project-related competencies. By doing so, lessons become intentional and focused, making learning more efficient and impactful.

Alignment: Another critical reason to start with outcomes is to ensure alignment. Defining the end goals at the beginning ensures that assessments, instructional strategies, and project tasks all work together to support the same objectives. For example, if the goal is for students

to develop persuasive writing skills as part of an environmental awareness campaign, the learning outcomes will shape the design of activities, such as brainstorming persuasive techniques, and assessments, like evaluating the effectiveness of their written arguments. This alignment is particularly important in PBL, where language learning and project-based tasks must integrate seamlessly.

Real-World Learning: Starting with desired outcomes also ensures that learning is authentic and relevant. PBL revolves around real-world problems or tasks that require students to use the target language in practical ways. By identifying outcomes early, teachers can design projects that resonate with students' interests and lives, making language learning more meaningful and engaging. For instance, a project to create a travel guide in the target language would not only teach vocabulary and grammar but also immerse students in a context that mirrors real-life communication.

Authenticity: Another advantage of beginning with the objectives or outcomes is that it fosters the development of transferable skills. In PBL, students are not just learning language for a specific task; they are also gaining skills they can apply in new contexts. Starting with outcomes ensures that the learning objectives emphasize these broader skills. For example, while creating a travel guide, students may also learn how to organize information clearly or address the needs of an audience—skills that are valuable in academic and real-world situations alike.

Measurability: Defining outcomes from the start also guides the design of assessments. In PBL, assessments must measure both language development and project success. Starting with outcomes allows teachers to create meaningful assessments that align with what students are expected to learn. For example, a project to create a public service announcement might include assessments of students' ability to use persuasive language, collaborate effectively in the target language, and present their ideas clearly. Without clear outcomes, assessments risk being disconnected from the project's goals.

Planning for Diverse Needs: This step is also essential for supporting differentiation and scaffolding. By defining outcomes, teachers can anticipate the specific skills and knowledge students need to develop and plan appropriate supports. For instance, if students need to conduct interviews, teachers can prepare lessons on question formation, active listening, and cultural etiquette. Starting with outcomes makes it easier to tailor instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners, ensuring that all students can succeed.

Purposeful Design: Additionally, starting with outcomes promotes teacher reflection and intentionality. By beginning with the end in mind, teachers are encouraged to think critically about the purpose of their lessons and make deliberate choices about activities and materials. This process helps avoid the common pitfall of selecting engaging activities that may not directly contribute to the project's or language-learning goals. It ensures that every part of the lesson is designed with a clear purpose, maximizing the effectiveness of instruction.

Motivation: Defining outcomes at the start enhances student motivation. When students understand what they are working toward and why it matters, they are more likely to be

engaged and committed. In PBL, where projects often involve real-world problems or creative tasks, having clear outcomes allows teachers to communicate the relevance of the project and its connection to the students' goals, fostering a sense of purpose and enthusiasm.

Stage II. Determine Acceptable Evidence (Performance Assessment)

The next step is to decide how teachers and students will know when the learning goals have been achieved. This is often referred to as performance-based assessment in the context of backward design.

In PBL, this usually involves the final project, such as a presentation (RAFT), portfolio, or performance that showcases language skills and content knowledge.

Summative Assessment: RAFT is an effective presentational strategy used to help students understand their perspective and purpose in a presentational assignment. It's particularly effective in engaging students creatively and helping them think critically about their task. Here's a breakdown of each element:

Role: Who is the writer or speaker? Students imagine themselves in a role of a specific character, such as a scientist, historian, green activist or journalist, to give them a unique perspective in terms of level of formality of context and content.

Audience: Who are they writing or speaking to? Identifying the audience, such as a famous figure, a representative of a governing structure or a specific community) helps students tailor their linguistic choices in terms of function (describing, debating, convincing, suggesting, arguing, expressing opinion, etc.) .

Format: In what form is the message presented? This could be a letter, diary entry, speech, or article. The format influences the style, length and structure of the presentation.

Topic: What is the subject or main idea? This is the focus of the writing, often connecting to a key theme or question being studied.

Formative Assessment: Ongoing feedback mechanisms that help students improve over time are peer reviews, journals or quizzes.

Example: For the interview project, acceptable evidence is:

- The students' ability to transcribe or summarize the interviews accurately.
- A reflection piece comparing cultural differences discussed in the interviews.
- Oral presentations of their findings in class.

Source: McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2004). *The Understanding by Design Professional Development Workbook*.

Determining acceptable evidence is a crucial step in the backward design methodology for PBL because it ensures alignment between learning outcomes and assessments, provides clarity and focus, supports authentic and holistic evaluation, and promotes student autonomy and reflection. By defining what success looks like, this step creates a framework for meaningful assessment, enabling both teachers and students to monitor progress and ensure that the project leads to deep and lasting learning.

When designing this Stage II in alignment with Stage I, teachers achieve the following benefits:

Definition of Success: In the methodology for planning lessons through backward design in Project-Based Language Learning (PBL), the second step, “Determine Acceptable Evidence,” is essential because it ensures that the learning objectives identified in the first step are measurable and that both teachers and students have a clear understanding of how success will be evaluated. This step connects the desired outcomes to meaningful assessments, creating a roadmap for gauging progress and ensuring that students are developing both language proficiency and project-based skills.

Alignment: Determining acceptable evidence means deciding how students will demonstrate that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. This step is critical because it shifts the focus from simply completing tasks to ensuring that those tasks lead to real learning. For example, if one of the outcomes is for students to use persuasive language effectively, acceptable evidence might include writing a persuasive essay or delivering a presentation as part of their project. By defining this evidence early, teachers can design assessments that are directly aligned with the desired results, ensuring that the project supports meaningful learning rather than just grammar and vocabulary activity for its own sake.

Focus: This step also provides clarity and focus for both teachers and students. When teachers determine what acceptable evidence looks like, they set clear expectations for what students need to accomplish. This clarity helps students understand not only what they are working toward but also how their progress will be measured. For instance, in a project where students create a travel brochure, knowing that they will be assessed on their ability to describe locations using specific vocabulary and grammatical structures gives students a concrete goal to strive for. Without this clarity, students may focus on the superficial aspects of the project (like the design of the brochure) rather than the language-learning goals.

Real-Life Tasks: Another reason this step is important is that it ensures assessments are authentic and aligned with real-world contexts. In PBL, assessments should mirror how language is used in real life. For example, instead of a traditional grammar test, students might be evaluated on their ability to use correct grammar in a blog post or video script related to their project. Determining acceptable evidence helps teachers design assessments that are meaningful and practical, reflecting the authentic use of language in the context of the project.

Process and Product: Determining acceptable evidence also allows teachers to design assessments that capture both the process and the product of learning. In PBL, the process of collaboration, research, and problem-solving is just as important as the final outcome. For instance, in a project where students create a community awareness campaign, acceptable evidence might include not only the final presentation but also participation in group discussions, drafts of campaign materials, and reflections on the learning process. By identifying these forms of evidence early, teachers ensure that assessments provide a holistic view of student learning.

Monitoring Progress: Moreover, this step enables formative assessment, which is vital in PBL. By planning how to gather evidence throughout the project, teachers can monitor student progress and provide timely feedback. For example, if students are working on a podcast, formative assessments might include evaluating their ability to outline their ideas, conduct interviews, or write scripts in the target language. These smaller checkpoints allow teachers to identify areas where students need additional support and make adjustments as needed, ensuring that all learners stay on track.

Independent Learning: Determining acceptable evidence is also essential for fostering student autonomy and self-reflection. When students know how their learning will be evaluated, they are better able to take ownership of their progress. For example, if part of the evidence includes peer evaluations of a group presentation, students can focus on improving their communication and teamwork skills. This step also encourages students to reflect on their performance, identifying their strengths and areas for improvement, which is a key component of both language acquisition and project-based learning.

Inclusivity: Finally, this step ensures that assessments are equitable and inclusive. By planning acceptable evidence in advance, teachers can ensure that assessments provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate their learning. For instance, students might show their understanding through written work, oral presentations, or visual projects, depending on their strengths and preferences. This flexibility ensures that all students, regardless of their background or abilities, have an opportunity to succeed.

Stage III. Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction (Project-Based Learning Activities)

After clarifying the end goals and assessment, teachers now design learning activities that will lead students to achieve the desired results. In the PBL context, these activities are scaffolded and focus on language acquisition through meaningful tasks and activities.

When designing this Stage III in alignment with Stage I and II, teachers achieve the following benefits:

Plan Learning Experiences and Instructional steps: This stage transforms the desired learning outcomes and assessment criteria into concrete, actionable activities that guide students through the project. This step ensures that the instructional process is carefully

aligned with the goals of the project and provides students with the tools, skills, and knowledge they need to successfully achieve the objectives while developing language proficiency.

Pathways to Success: Planning learning experiences and instructional activities is essential because it bridges the gap between what students are expected to learn (the desired outcomes) and how they will demonstrate their understanding (the acceptable evidence). Without well-structured and purposeful learning experiences, students may struggle to engage meaningfully with the project or develop the language skills necessary to meet the outcomes. This step ensures that each activity is intentional, scaffolded, and directly tied to both the project’s objectives and the language-learning goals.

Sequencing: One of the primary reasons this step is important is that it ensures alignment and coherence throughout the project. By carefully designing activities that build toward the project’s final product, teachers create a logical progression that guides students through the learning process. For example, if the project involves creating a documentary about local cultural traditions, the learning experiences might include activities like conducting interviews, learning vocabulary related to culture and traditions, practicing question formation, and writing scripts. Each of these activities is strategically planned to support both the project and the language-learning goals.

Meaningful Communication: Planning learning experiences also ensures that students engage with the language in authentic and meaningful ways. In PBL, language is not taught in isolation but is embedded in the context of the project. This step allows teachers to design activities that mirror real-world language use, such as writing a persuasive email, presenting research findings, or collaborating on a group proposal. These authentic activities not only make language learning more relevant but also help students see the practical value of their developing skills.



Methodology for Project-Based Language Learning (PBL)

Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) is a highly effective instructional framework that integrates language learning with real-world tasks as stages to project-oriented outcomes, fostering active engagement, critical thinking, content and culture learning. This methodology enables teachers to align all the components of a lesson unit to a long-term project with focus on multidisciplinary, multi-stage, long-term exploration process, teamwork and shared large product.

Effective PBL implementation relies on a well-structured yet flexible framework, underpinned by the commitment of all stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, and community members. Teachers underscore the importance of integrating interactive and game-based methods and leveraging technology to spark interest, sustain engagement, and promote student development.

Ultimately, the success of PBL depends on a comprehensive approach that addresses both its challenges and opportunities. By providing educators with the necessary resources, training, and institutional support, PBL can unlock its full potential, empowering students to thrive academically and socially in an interconnected, globalized world.

The following are the three stages of PBL from the teacher’s perspective: design and planning, instruction and assessment, based on which the teacher training modules will be created:

1. Designing PBL Activities

1.1. Setting clear objectives by:

- Aligning projects with curriculum standards and language proficiency goals.
- Integrating Can-Do statements to measure progress in communication, intercultural competence, and collaboration.

1.2. Planning real-world tasks by:

- Creating authentic, meaningful projects relevant to students' lives or global issues (e.g., eco-awareness campaigns, cultural exchange programs).
- Ensuring tasks require the use of target language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

1.3. Incorporating Scaffolding techniques by:

- Breaking projects into manageable stages.
- Providing resources, language frames, and templates to guide students.

Note: Task vs. Activity: In a Project-Based Language Learning (PBL) environment, understanding the distinction between "task" and "activity" is essential, as both terms refer to different components of the learning process. While both tasks and activities play crucial roles in the learning process within PBL, they serve different purposes and functions. Tasks involve comprehensive, meaningful work that culminates in a significant outcome, whereas activities are smaller, focused exercises that build the necessary skills and knowledge for those tasks.

A task in a PBL context generally refers to a substantial, goal-oriented piece of work that students undertake to create a final product or solve a problem. Tasks are often overarching, integrating multiple language skills and requiring critical thinking, collaboration, and application of knowledge. Broader in scope; encompasses several language skills and often leads to a significant final product. Tasks typically align with real-world challenges or projects that have a clear outcome or deliverable. They aim to engage students in authentic, meaningful work that underscores their learning objectives and outcomes. They often involve higher-order thinking skills, collaboration, and a degree of autonomy in the decision-making process. The task outcome is usually a tangible product or solution to a problem, which can be presented or shared with an audience.

An activity, on the other hand, is usually a smaller, narrower in scope, more focused exercise or practice that helps build specific language skills, concepts or learning objectives. Activities are often designed to enhance student engagement and reinforce learning in a controlled or guided manner. They aim at skill-building, reinforcement, and practice of language structures or concepts. They typically follow a set structure and may not require the same level of critical thinking or decision-making. The activity outcome is typically the acquisition of knowledge or skill reinforcement, with less emphasis on producing a final deliverable

Example in a PBL Environment:

Task: For example, planning a community service project, creating a documentary on a cultural topic, or developing a marketing plan for a hypothetical product. Students work in groups to design a campaign for a social issue relevant to their community. This involves researching the issue, planning their campaign, creating promotional materials (like flyers or videos), and presenting their work to the class.

Activity: For instance, an activity might involve vocabulary drills, role-playing, or group discussions that serve as preparatory steps for a larger task. Before they embark on the campaign project, students might engage in an activity where they practice persuasive

language and vocabulary by discussing past campaigns, analyzing their effectiveness, and role-playing as campaign managers.

2. Facilitating PBL in the Classroom

2.1. Guiding inquiry and collaboration by:

- Teaching students how to ask questions, conduct research, and work collaboratively.
- Monitoring and mediating group dynamics to ensure all voices are heard.

2.2. Modeling target language use by:

- Demonstrating how to use language appropriately for different purposes (e.g., formal emails, presentations).
- Encouraging students to take risks in their language use and develop fluency.

2.3. Adapt to differentiated needs by:

- Providing individualized support to students with varying proficiency levels.
- Using differentiated materials and tasks to ensure inclusivity.

3. Assessing PBL

3.1. Using formative and summative assessments by:

- Evaluating students continuously during the project process.
- Including self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment to measure performance holistically.

3.2. Focusing on language, culture and content by:

- Assessing both linguistic skills (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) and project outcomes (e.g., clarity of ideas, creativity).
- Evaluating the 21st-century skills students demonstrate, such as critical thinking and collaboration.

4. PBL Task Design:

There are three approaches that are related to the larger PBL framework and they inform its methodology. These approaches are Problem-Based (PmBLL), Place-Based (PCBLL) and Action-Based (ABLL). They are viewed in this project as supporting, facilitating and

integrable into the PBL framework rather than as parallel or alternative. They are usually less structured with a specific narrower scope, especially when compared to the main features of PBL. They can be used for specific tasks or stage design within a larger project. Hence, being familiar with the main principles of these approaches is necessary, in order to clarify the project terminology and to compartmentalize the various procedures and types of tasks in the successful PBL classroom.

4.1. Problem-based: find solutions to real-world challenges

Problem-Based Language Learning (PmBLL) is a student-centered approach to language acquisition that integrates the principles of problem-based learning with the unique needs of language learners. It focuses on using real-world problems as a catalyst for language development, encouraging students to engage in critical thinking, collaboration, and authentic communication in the target language. PmBLL builds on the idea that language is best learned when it is used for meaningful purposes, such as solving problems relevant to the learners' lives or communities.

The origins of PBL are closely tied to Problem-Based Learning (PmBL), which was first developed in the 1960s in medical education at McMaster University in Canada. PBL was designed to help students apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems through collaborative, inquiry-driven learning. PmBLL adapts this framework for language learning, grounding it in key theories such as Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Learning, and Constructivist Learning Theory. These approaches emphasize the importance of active engagement, collaboration, and the use of language for real-world communication.

At its core, PmBLL is built around the use of authentic, open-ended problems that require students to communicate and collaborate to find solutions. This method shifts the focus from rote memorization and drills to meaningful language use in context. Students take an active role in their learning, with teachers acting as facilitators who guide the process rather than delivering content directly. In PBL, language is not treated as an isolated subject to be studied; instead, it becomes a tool for solving problems, making learning practical and purposeful.

The process of PmBLL typically begins with the presentation of a real-world problem that is relevant to the students' interests or communities. For example, students might be asked to create a tourist guide for their city in English or propose a solution to a local environmental issue. They then analyze the problem, identify what they already know, and determine what they need to learn. This leads to a phase of research and inquiry, during which students gather information, often through activities such as reading, conducting interviews, or watching videos. The language skills they need—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—are developed naturally as they work through these tasks.

Once students have gathered sufficient information, they collaborate to propose solutions or create products, such as reports, presentations, or brochures. This process often culminates in

a presentation, where students share their solutions with peers, teachers, or a broader audience. Feedback is provided not only on the problem-solving process but also on the students' use of language. Finally, students reflect on their experience, considering what they have learned, how they used the target language, and how they might improve in the future.

PmBLL offers numerous benefits to language learners. By engaging with authentic problems, students use the target language in meaningful and practical ways, increasing motivation and engagement. The collaborative nature of PmBLL enhances communication skills, as students must speak, listen, and negotiate in the target language to solve problems. It also helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as intercultural competence, as they often engage with problems that require understanding different perspectives. Additionally, PmBLL naturally integrates multiple language skills, mirroring real-world communication, and encourages students to take ownership of their learning, fostering independence and lifelong learning habits.

However, PmBLL requires training of teachers because it requires them to adopt a facilitative role, which may be unfamiliar or difficult. The approach is time-intensive, both in terms of planning and implementation, which can be challenging in rigid curricula. Assessing student progress can also be complex, as PmBLL focuses on both language development and problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, not all students are immediately comfortable with the open-ended nature of PmBLL, particularly if they are used to more structured learning environments. Limited access to resources, such as technology or authentic materials, can also pose obstacles.

Despite these challenges, PmBLL has proven to be a transformative method for language teaching. It is particularly effective in contexts such as community-based projects, professional settings, and global or cultural problem-solving tasks. For instance, students might design a campaign to promote recycling, draft a business proposal in a professional English class, or explore solutions to cultural misunderstandings in an international context. These tasks provide opportunities for authentic, meaningful language use that prepares students for real-world communication.

Problem-Based Language Learning is a powerful approach that combines the problem-solving focus of PmBL with the goals of language acquisition. By immersing students in authentic, collaborative, and inquiry-driven tasks, PmBLL not only fosters language development but also equips learners with critical thinking, communication, and cultural competence. While it requires careful planning and adaptability, the benefits of PmBLL make it an effective and innovative method for teaching languages in a way that is engaging, meaningful, and practical.

Example: Environmental Sustainability in the Classroom

Project-Based Language Learning (PBL):

- Scenario: "Design a school-wide campaign to reduce plastic waste."

- Process: Students collaborate to research plastic pollution, design posters and educational materials, create a social media campaign, and organize a presentation.
- Outcome: A completed campaign with tangible deliverables such as posters, videos, and presentations.

Problem-Based Language Learning task in the multi-stage project:

- Scenario: "Your city is facing a severe waste management crisis. What solutions can you propose to address this issue?"
- Process: Students research waste management systems, brainstorm solutions, evaluate feasibility, and propose actionable recommendations.
- Outcome: A detailed report or presentation explaining the problem, proposed solutions, and their potential impact.

4.2. Place-based: complete project within a target language speaking community

Place-Based Language Learning (PcBLL) is another innovative approach to language education that emphasizes the connection between language learning and the local context or environment where the learning takes place. Rooted in the principles of place-based education, PcBLL encourages learners to engage with their surroundings, community, and culture as a central part of the language-learning process. By integrating local settings, issues, and experiences into the curriculum, PBL creates meaningful opportunities for learners to use the target language in authentic and relevant contexts.

At its core, PcBLL is grounded in the idea that learning is most effective when it is connected to the learners' immediate environment. Unlike traditional language learning, which often focuses on abstract or decontextualized content, PcBLL uses the physical, cultural, and social aspects of a place as a foundation for language instruction. This approach is informed by educational theories such as experiential learning and constructivism, which emphasize active, hands-on engagement and the construction of knowledge through real-world experiences.

The process of PcBLL typically begins with identifying a local "place" that serves as the focal point for language learning. This could be a physical location, such as a park, museum, or historical site, or a cultural element, such as a local tradition, festival, or community issue. Teachers design activities and tasks that require students to interact with this place, often through exploration, research, and engagement with the local community. For example, students might conduct interviews with community members, create guides or brochures about a local landmark, or document cultural practices through videos or photo essays.

One of the key strengths of PcBLL is its emphasis on authentic language use. By engaging with real-world contexts, learners are exposed to the language as it is naturally used in everyday life. This includes learning vocabulary and expressions that are specific to the local culture, as well as practicing communication skills in real-world situations. For instance,

learners might practice asking for directions at a local market, describing landmarks to tourists, or discussing environmental issues affecting their community. These experiences make the language more meaningful and memorable, as learners see its immediate relevance to their lives.

PcBLL also fosters a deeper understanding of cultural and social dynamics, as it encourages learners to explore and reflect on the connections between language and culture. Through interactions with the local community, students gain insights into cultural norms, values, and traditions, which enhances their intercultural competence. This cultural immersion is particularly valuable in promoting not only language proficiency but also an appreciation for the diversity and complexity of human experiences.

Another important aspect of PcBLL is its potential to build a strong sense of place and belonging. By integrating language learning with the local environment, students develop a deeper connection to their community and surroundings. This can be especially empowering for learners from marginalized or underrepresented communities, as it validates their cultural and linguistic heritage while fostering pride in their identity. For example, PcBLL might involve documenting oral histories or local traditions, helping students connect with their roots while developing language skills.

PcBLL is also highly adaptable to a variety of contexts and learning levels. In rural areas, it might involve exploring natural landscapes and discussing environmental conservation in the target language. In urban settings, it could include analyzing graffiti art as a form of cultural expression or mapping the linguistic diversity of a neighborhood. These flexible applications make PcBLL a versatile tool for educators seeking to create meaningful and engaging language-learning experiences.

Despite its many advantages, PcBLL does come with challenges. It requires careful planning and coordination, as teachers must design activities that align with both language-learning goals and the local context. Engaging with the community can also be logistically complex, requiring collaboration with local organizations or stakeholders. Additionally, some learners may initially feel uncomfortable using the target language in public or unfamiliar settings, making scaffolding and support essential.

The benefits of PcBLL, however, far outweigh these challenges. By grounding language learning in the local context, PcBLL fosters not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, creativity, and a sense of civic responsibility. Students become active participants in their learning, using the language to explore, understand, and contribute to the world around them. This holistic approach helps bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world, preparing learners for authentic communication and lifelong learning.

Place-Based Language Learning is a transformative approach that connects language acquisition to the local environment, culture, and community. By emphasizing authentic language use and cultural immersion, PcBLL creates meaningful opportunities for learners to engage with the target language in relevant and impactful ways. Its focus on place and

community fosters not only language proficiency but also a deeper connection to the world around them, making it an effective and enriching method for language education.

Example: Environmental Sustainability in the Classroom

Project-Based Language Learning (PBL):

- Scenario: "Design a school-wide campaign to reduce plastic waste."
- Process: Students collaborate to research plastic pollution, design posters and educational materials, create a social media campaign, and organize a presentation.
- Outcome: A completed campaign with tangible deliverables such as posters, videos, and presentations.

Place-Based Language Learning task: To make the issue of waste management tangible and personally relevant students explore their school and neighborhood by:

I. Analyzing how plastic waste is generated and managed in their immediate surroundings.

- Students visit different areas of the school (e.g., cafeteria, classrooms, playground) to document the types and quantities of plastic waste.
- Students categorize plastics (e.g., single-use vs. reusable, recyclable vs. non-recyclable).
- They record their findings and identify key sources of plastic waste (e.g., packaging from snacks, water bottles).
- Optionally, extend the task to include waste hotspots in their neighborhood or community.

II. Engaging with local experts and stakeholders to understand current waste management practices and challenges.

- Invite a local waste management official, recycling center representative, or environmental NGO worker to speak with students.
- Conduct interviews with custodial staff or cafeteria workers about waste disposal practices.
- Explore how community members are impacted by or contribute to plastic waste (e.g., speaking to shopkeepers about packaging or observing littering patterns).

III. Mapping the impact to visualize the local environmental impact of plastic waste.

- Using school or community maps, students mark areas where plastic waste is frequently found (e.g., playground, canteen, streets near shops).
- Identify key areas to target in their campaign.
- Discuss environmental consequences (e.g., clogged drains, harm to wildlife, pollution)

IV. Reflecting on the findings: How they can effectively connect their findings to their campaign messaging and what possible local solutions can be suggested to tackle the plastic problem.

4.3. Activity-based: explore local culture topic through hands-on project

Activity-Based Language Learning (ABLL)⁽⁶⁾ is closely related to PBL. PBL extends it by integrating its tasks into a larger project framework, encouraging interdisciplinary learning, creativity, and collaboration. Together, PBL and ABLL foster a dynamic, student-centered classroom that prepares learners for real-world communication. It is rooted in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Action-Oriented Learning (as proposed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR). It views learners as social agents who use the language to perform real-life actions in specific contexts. Its focus is on tasks (practical, goal-oriented activities) that mimic real-world situations and require the integration of language skills.

ABLL is a dynamic and hands-on approach to language education that centers on the use of activities as the primary means of teaching and learning a language. This method prioritizes engagement, interaction, and practical application, enabling students to acquire language skills through meaningful and purposeful tasks. By integrating activities into the language-learning process, ABLL fosters active participation, enhances motivation, and provides opportunities for learners to practice the target language in realistic contexts.

The foundation of ABLL lies in the idea that language is best learned through doing. This approach draws on principles from experiential learning, which emphasizes the importance of active, real-world engagement in the learning process, and from communicative language teaching, which prioritizes using language for authentic communication. In ABLL, activities are designed not only to teach linguistic structures but also to develop learners' ability to use the language in practical, everyday situations.

Activities in ABLL are typically task-based and interactive, requiring learners to engage with peers, materials, or their environment. These activities can range from simple classroom exercises, such as role-playing or solving puzzles, to more complex, project-based tasks, like organizing events, creating multimedia content, or conducting interviews. The primary goal of these activities is to provide learners with opportunities to use the target language in meaningful ways, allowing them to develop both fluency and accuracy.

One of the defining features of ABLL is its learner-centered nature. Activities are designed to be engaging, collaborative, and relevant to the learners' needs and interests. This approach shifts the focus from traditional teacher-led instruction to active participation by the students. For example, instead of passively listening to grammar explanations, learners might work together to create a dialogue using a specific grammatical structure, or they might engage in a group discussion to solve a problem or complete a challenge. This active involvement not

only enhances language acquisition but also helps students build confidence in their ability to communicate. ABLL is particularly effective because it integrates language learning with authentic contexts. The activities are often based on real-world scenarios, making the language immediately relevant and applicable. For instance, students might simulate ordering food in a restaurant, planning a trip, or discussing current events. These scenarios help learners understand how to use the language in practical ways, preparing them for real-life communication outside the classroom.

The approach also promotes the integration of language skills. Many activities require learners to use multiple skills simultaneously, such as reading instructions, listening to peers, speaking during group discussions, and writing down ideas. This holistic approach mirrors the way language is used in real life, ensuring that learners develop well-rounded proficiency.

Another strength of ABLL is its ability to foster motivation and engagement. By participating in enjoyable and interactive activities, learners are more likely to feel enthusiastic about the learning process. This is especially important for younger learners or those who may struggle with traditional methods of language instruction. The variety of activities also caters to different learning styles, ensuring that visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners all have opportunities to thrive.

ABLL can be adapted for a wide range of learners and settings. For beginners, simple activities like matching vocabulary words with pictures or playing language-based games can build foundational skills. For more advanced learners, activities can involve complex tasks like debating a topic, writing a collaborative story, or producing a video in the target language. Teachers can also tailor activities to suit specific learning objectives, such as improving pronunciation, mastering grammar, or expanding vocabulary.

Despite its many advantages, ABLL does come with some challenges. Designing effective activities requires careful planning and creativity on the part of the teacher. Activities must be well-structured to ensure they meet language-learning goals while remaining engaging and manageable for learners. Additionally, some students may initially feel hesitant to participate in group-based or interactive tasks, especially if they lack confidence in their language abilities. Teachers must provide appropriate scaffolding and support to help all learners succeed.

Assessment in ABLL can also be complex, as it often focuses on both the process and the product of the activity. Teachers may need to evaluate not only linguistic accuracy but also learners' ability to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and complete the task. This may require a shift from traditional assessment methods to more holistic approaches, such as observation, peer feedback, or reflective journals.

Example: Environmental Sustainability in the Classroom

Project-Based Language Learning (PBL):

- Scenario: "Design a school-wide campaign to reduce plastic waste."
- Process: Students collaborate to research plastic pollution, design posters and educational materials, create a social media campaign, and organize a presentation.

- Outcome: A completed campaign with tangible deliverables such as posters, videos, and presentations.

Action-Based Language Learning task: "Organize a One-Day Plastic-Free Challenge in the School"

1. Develop a practical event to test strategies for reducing plastic usage.

- Students brainstorm ways to reduce plastic for a single day (e.g., reusable containers, alternative materials).
- Students test their ideas and raise awareness among peers and staff on the designated day, they implement the plastic-free measures.
- Students distribute reusable items (e.g., cloth bags or bottles if feasible).
- Students and staff to share feedback during the day.
- Students interview participants about their experience: What worked well? What was difficult?

2. Reflect and analyze results: Students evaluate the success of the challenge and its implications for the larger campaign.

- Students develop solutions based on feedback (e.g., making reusable alternatives available for purchase) and
- Students highlight success stories from the challenge in campaign materials (e.g., "Our school reduced 50% of its daily plastic waste in one day!")

5. Challenges and Strategies for an Effective PBL Environment (from teachers' perspective):

Challenge	Teacher's Role/Strategy
Students lack motivation or engagement.	Choose projects aligned with students' interests, such as music, sports, or social justice, to make tasks relevant and meaningful.
Balancing language and project focus.	Design tasks where language is both the means and the goal, ensuring students practice linguistic skills while completing project milestones.

Group collaboration issues.	Teach teamwork strategies and assign clear roles (e.g., researcher, writer, presenter).
Limited classroom time.	Plan concise projects with achievable goals, and consider cross-disciplinary integration to maximize learning opportunities.

6. Essential Skills for PBL Teachers and Considerations for Training

Skill Area	Description	Examples
Language Proficiency	Advanced fluency in the target language for modeling and scaffolding.	Modeling role-plays, facilitating debates, and providing corrective feedback.
Project Management	Planning timelines, managing resources, and organizing collaborative activities.	Designing a project roadmap, allocating team roles, and monitoring deadlines.
Classroom Management	Language Classroom Management refers to the strategies, techniques, and methods used by teachers to create and maintain a productive, respectful, and supportive learning environment in a language	Establish rules like "Respect others" and "Raise your hand to speak," display behavior charts, and create a welcoming classroom with posters and student work. Foster a positive environment through games or introductions, manage behavior with proximity control and redirection, and organize time using timers,

	classroom.	schedules, and detailed lesson plans for smooth transitions and effective learning.
Intercultural Competence	Guiding students in exploring cultural topics and fostering global awareness.	Facilitating projects on global issues like environmental sustainability or cultural diversity.
Technological Skills	Integrating digital tools for research, collaboration, and presentation.	Using tools like Google Docs, Canva, or Padlet for collaborative tasks and project outputs.
Differentiation Expertise	Adapting tasks and providing support based on students' diverse needs.	Offering sentence starters for beginners, while challenging advanced learners with more complex tasks.
Reflective Practice	Continuously evaluating the effectiveness of PBL implementation and refining strategies.	Reviewing student feedback and analyzing project outcomes to improve future implementations.

7. Advantages of Backward Design Lesson Planning in PBL Over Traditional Lesson Planning in PBL

Backward design lesson planning provides a structured and outcome-oriented framework that enhances the effectiveness of Project-Based Language Learning (PBL). Compared to traditional lesson planning, backward design offers significant advantages by ensuring that the goals of both the language-learning process and the project itself are clearly defined and effectively aligned with instructional activities and assessments. For example, in the traditional classroom, individual students complete workbook activities to practice the imperative mood & food vocabulary. In the PBL-based classroom, groups of students produce a video with running captions of how to make their favorite dish for their online pen pal.

There are several advantages of using backward design in PBL over traditional lesson planning.

Backward design begins with identifying the desired outcomes—what students should know, understand, and be able to do by the end of the project. This clarity ensures that every element of the project is purposefully aligned with these objectives. In PBL, where the integration of language learning with project goals is central, backward design guarantees that both linguistic development and project-based outcomes are addressed simultaneously. In contrast, traditional lesson planning often starts by selecting activities or materials, which can lead to a disconnect between the project's objectives and the learning tasks.

One of the most significant advantages of backward design in PBL is its focus on creating coherence and alignment. By starting with clearly defined goals, teachers can design a sequence of learning activities that logically build toward the successful completion of the project. For instance, in a PBL project where students are creating a tourism guide, for instance, backward design ensures that activities like researching local landmarks, practicing descriptive language, and drafting written guides are directly tied to both language objectives and the project's end product. Traditional planning, which tends to prioritize engaging activities first, may include tasks that are enjoyable but not necessarily aligned with the project's goals, potentially leading to fragmented or unfocused learning experiences.

Backward design also prioritizes assessment as an integral part of the planning process. In PBL, where the quality of the project and the language learning it facilitates are equally important, backward design ensures that assessments measure both the language skills and the project outcomes. For example, students working on a project to create a community service campaign might be assessed on their ability to use persuasive language, organize ideas effectively, and collaborate in the target language. Traditional planning often treats assessment as an afterthought, leading to evaluations that may not fully capture the integration of language and project skills. Backward design avoids this by ensuring that assessment criteria are established from the outset and aligned with both learning and project goals.

Another critical advantage of backward design in PBL is its support for differentiation and scaffolding. By defining outcomes at the beginning, teachers can identify the specific skills and knowledge students need to develop and plan activities that provide appropriate support. For example, beginners might receive sentence starters or vocabulary lists to help them draft their contributions, while advanced learners are challenged to use more complex sentence structures or persuasive techniques. Traditional planning, which often focuses on selecting activities first, may not offer the same level of adaptability to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Backward design also fosters deep and transferable learning. In PBL, where the ultimate goal is to equip students with skills they can apply in new contexts, backward design emphasizes the enduring understandings that students gain through the project. For instance, in a project focused on creating a podcast about cultural traditions, backward design ensures that students not only learn how to use the target language to describe cultural practices but

also develop a broader understanding of how language can be used to share and preserve cultural knowledge. Traditional planning, which may focus more on completing the project, often emphasizes immediate outcomes rather than cultivating deeper, transferable skills.

Step-by-Step Methodology: how to create an efficient PBLL environment with BD

Step 1. Teachers identify learning outcomes:

- Focus on language skills: Start by identifying the specific language skills and competencies you want students to develop through the project. These could include speaking, listening, writing, or socio-cultural knowledge.
- Clear goals: Define the academic and linguistic outcomes, aligning them with the curriculum and standards such as Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)⁽⁷⁾. Consider proficiency-level targets and ensure they are measurable. Make a list of the basic and relevant language functions, grammar structures and vocabulary.

Example: For an intermediate class, the main goal is to improve the productive skills (speaking and writing) related to the topic of environmental conservation.

Step 2. Teachers choose a meaningful real-world theme or question:

- Authenticity: teachers select a project theme that is meaningful, relevant, and connected to students' lives or the real world. Authentic topics motivate students and make language learning more practical.
- Essential question: teachers pose an essential question that drives inquiry and reflection. The question should provoke discussion and exploration, helping students focus their research.

Example: For a PBLL project, the essential question is: "How can we reduce waste in our local community?"

Step 3. Teachers plan the project timeline and stages

- Break down: Teachers divide the project into manageable stages, including research, planning, drafting, and presentation.
- Milestones: Teachers establish clear milestones for each stage so students know what is expected and when. They allow for reflection and revision at each stage.
- Integrated language skills: At each stage, teachers plan tasks that incorporate listening, speaking, reading, and writing, ensuring students practice a range of language skills.
- Sequencing: Teachers design interpretive, interpersonal and small presentational tasks to ensure all modes of communication are practiced.

Example: Students first research pollution in cities by their choice, then draft reports, and finally present solutions in a recorded video.

Step 4. Teachers design engaging and relevant tasks

- Task authenticity: Teachers take sure the tasks are contextually relevant and mirror real-world activities. They focus on collaborative tasks, research, presentations, or creating tangible products (e.g., posters, videos, interviews).
- Scaffolded activities: Teachers build in scaffolding through mini-lessons, vocabulary practice, or language frames to support learners at various proficiency levels.
- Use of technology: Teachers incorporate digital tools like collaborative platforms (e.g., Google Docs), video creation (e.g., Flipgrid), or virtual exchange platforms to facilitate collaboration and interaction.

Example: For an advanced class (4th grade), students create a blog on sustainable travel, researching destinations and writing travel posts.

Step 5. Teachers facilitate collaboration and interaction

- Collaborative learning: Teachers encourage students to work in pairs or small groups to practice language in a social context. Collaboration enhances communicative competence and negotiation skills.
- Role allocation: teachers assign roles (e.g., researcher, presenter, editor) to ensure each student contributes and practices various language skills.
- Peer feedback: Teachers integrate peer review sessions based on rubrics or checklists where students can provide feedback to each other, further fostering speaking and listening practice.

Example: Students collaborate to produce a travel guide for visitors to a chosen city, assigning each member a section to write (food, entertainment, parks and recreation, historical sites, etc.) and then reviewing each other's work.

Step 6. Teachers incorporating formative and summative assessments

- Ongoing feedback: Use formative assessments to monitor progress throughout the project. Offer regular feedback on language use, project content, and collaboration.
- Summative assessment: The final project product serves as the summative assessment. The format should be based on "Role, Audience, Format, Topic" (RAFT) performance assessment.

Example 1:

Role: A forest ranger

Audience: The local community

Format: A public service announcement

Topic: The importance of protecting local wildlife habitats

Students would then prepare a short announcement and / or a blog from the perspective of a forest ranger, explaining to the community several reasons why preserving wildlife habitats is essential. This activity could help students think critically about environmental conservation and communicate those ideas effectively to a specific audience.

- This should include both content, culture and language-focused evaluation, based on rubrics (Note: Rubrics are the set of standards and criteria used to assess performance by a student on a project, paper, or essay.).
- Peer- and Self-assessment: Encourage students to reflect on their peers' and their own language use and project outcomes, fostering metacognitive awareness.

Example 2: After completing a project about local cuisine and healthy lifestyle, students present their findings in class, followed by peer and instructor feedback based on a rubric for (a) presentation skills, (b) vocabulary richness, (c) content and (d) cultural content.

Step 7. Teachers run a session for reflecting on the process and language learning

- Post-project reflection: Once the project is completed, guide students in reflecting on what they learned about both the language and the content. This reflection can be written or spoken and provides an opportunity for self-assessment.
- Cultural insights: Have students reflect on cultural differences and how their understanding of the target culture has deepened through the project.

Example: After completing a project on renewable energy, students write a reflection on how the project improved their language skills and cultural understanding.

Step 8. Students present and share of the final product

- Public sharing: Have students present their final products to an audience, whether it's the class, other students, or even community members. Presenting reinforces the practical use of the language.
- Real-world application: Whenever possible, connect the project to real-world applications or audiences (e.g., submitting to a local publication, sharing with native speakers online).

Example: For a class project on climate change, students record a video explaining their findings and share it on social media.

Effective Instructional Strategies and Practices in a PBL classroom

1. Encouraging active and student-centered learning and collaboration: The instructional activities in PBL are designed to place students at the center of the learning process, engaging them in exploration, inquiry, and problem-solving. By planning collaborative and

hands-on experiences, teachers create opportunities for students to use the target language to communicate, negotiate, and co-create knowledge. For example, a project to design a sustainable community garden might involve group brainstorming sessions, research in the target language, and discussions with local experts. These activities engage students in meaningful tasks that develop both their language skills and their ability to work collaboratively.

Learners benefit from an environment in which teachers and learners collaborate as partners in the learning process. Teachers make instructional decisions based on learners' ages, interests, abilities, and needs. Teachers create multiple opportunities for learners to engage in real-world tasks in the target language that spark curiosity and invite inquiry. Teachers plan multiple opportunities for learner-to-learner interaction, enabling learners to collaborate and communicate about topics that are meaningful to them. The identified learner experiences are possible because of the work done by the teacher.

Teachers share learning targets in student-friendly language. Learners use the lesson can-do statements to identify what they will be able to do at the end of each learning episode. Teachers plan lessons that address the unique needs and interests of the students. Learners engage in activities within the range of their abilities and have some choice in how they learn and demonstrate their learning. Teachers plan activities designed to keep all students engaged all the time. Learners collaborate using language to accomplish cognitively engaging tasks that are meaningful and interesting to them. Teachers consciously monitor teacher talk in order to maximize student opportunities to produce language. Learners interact with other learners and speakers of the language, creating a balance between learner-to-learner communication and teacher talk. Teachers plan activities for students to produce language within the range of their proficiency targets. Learners engage in activities that gradually enable them to individually meet the lesson can-do statements.

Collaboration at an early age in PBL classrooms strengthens language acquisition while fostering social, cognitive, and emotional growth. It ensures students become active participants in their learning and equips them with the skills to engage meaningfully with peers, both in the classroom and beyond. Young learners often feel more comfortable practicing language with peers, which helps reduce anxiety and improves fluency.

Example in PBL: During a group project on designing a school garden, students discuss plant types and work together to label their parts in the target language.

Collaborating also helps children learn to share ideas, respect diverse opinions, and resolve conflicts. Each member contributes to the group, fostering a sense of belonging and accountability.

Example in PBL: While working on a recycling campaign, students delegate tasks like making posters, creating slogans, and collecting data, learning to appreciate each other's contributions.

Collaboration mirrors real-life situations where teamwork is necessary to achieve common goals.

Young learners bring varied perspectives, leading to richer and more innovative outcomes.

Example in PBL: For a project on reducing water usage, students collaboratively design a poster with tips, combining their knowledge and creativity.

Stronger students model language use for peers, while others provide alternative explanations, reinforcing their own understanding. Collaboration ensures students rely on each other's strengths, creating a supportive learning environment.

Example in PBL: When preparing a class presentation on healthy eating, one student focuses on pronunciation, while another organizes the visuals, helping each other succeed.

Students brainstorm, evaluate options, and make decisions together, enhancing cognitive skills.

Example in PBL: In a project on reducing classroom waste, students analyze their classroom's trash, discuss patterns, and decide on actionable steps.

Collaboration develops critical skills like communication, adaptability, and leadership, which are vital for future success. Group projects often require cultural awareness, empathy, and working with diverse perspectives, even at a young age.

Example in PBL: In a project to learn about global celebrations, students collaborate on researching and presenting festivals from various countries, practicing cultural appreciation and teamwork.

Students learn to take ownership of their roles in collaborative projects, a skill that becomes more essential as projects grow complex. Early collaborative experiences create a classroom culture of trust, respect, and mutual support.

References:

- Beckett, G. H., & Slater, T. (2020). Project-Based Second and Foreign Language Education: Past, Present, and Future. Information Age Publishing.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners. ASCD.
(source: <https://www.startalk.info/educators-principles-facilitating/>)

STARTALK

Facilitating a Learner-Centered Classroom

In a Learner-Centered Classroom...

- ...Learners have voice and choice appropriate for their needs, age, and abilities.
- ...Learners have opportunities for collaboration, hands-on tasks, and movement while using language to accomplish meaningful tasks.
- ...Learners are engaged in cognitively challenging, real-world tasks.
- ...Learners exhibit confidence in their ability to successfully complete tasks.
- ...Learners know what is expected of them.
- ...Learners and teachers are partners in the learning process.
- ...Learners receive feedback from multiple sources in order to improve their performance.
- ...Learners have multiple opportunities to interpret and express ideas about topics of interest to them.

GRR Gradual Release of Responsibility
In a learner-centered classroom, a teacher gradually releases control of the learning to the learners.

YOU DO together

Learner Centered

The teacher monitors collaborative learning experiences and provides minimal support. Learners collaborate with peers to accomplish a task, allowing them to demonstrate what they can do with what they know.

YOU DO alone

Learner Centered

The teacher identifies student successes as students apply learning in independent learning experiences. Learners work independently to demonstrate their ability to complete a check for learning or accomplish a meaningful task.

DO

Teacher Centered

The teacher focuses learning experiences on providing input for new content and language. Learners listen and/or read, actively responding to frequent checks for comprehension to demonstrate understanding.

WE DO

Teacher & Learner Centered

The teacher guides learning experiences and provides support and help as needed. Learners work collaboratively with the teacher and peers to process and/or produce language.

PRIMACY REGENCY EFFECT

Degree of Retention during a 20-Minute Learning Episode

Students remember best what comes first, second best what comes at the end, and least what comes in the middle.

NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

Explore the STARTALK Principles in action: startalk.umd.edu/public/principles

2. Continuous Assessment and Feedback are integral to PBL and inform adjustments of project tasks and stages. By planning activities that include formative assessment opportunities, teachers can monitor student progress and provide timely feedback. Feedback: The following best practices for providing constructive feedback using rubrics will be used to enhance the effectiveness of feedback and foster a more supportive learning environment that encourages growth in content knowledge, cultural understanding, and language proficiency. Teachers:

- Align feedback with rubric criteria and use clear language: Ensure that the feedback directly references the language used in the rubric. This helps students understand how their work aligns with expectations and where they need to improve. For example, if a student scored low in "Cultural Understanding," specify which aspects of their work did not meet the rubric's criteria.

- Are specific: Instead of vague comments, provide specific examples from the student's work that illustrate your points. This clarity helps students see exactly what they did well and what needs improvement.
- Prioritize key areas for improvement and focus on two to three key points: Identify the most significant areas where the student can improve based on their rubric scores. Concentrating on a few critical aspects prevents overwhelming students with too much information and allows them to focus on actionable changes.
- Highlight strengths and areas for improvement: Balance their feedback by acknowledging what the student did well alongside areas for growth. This encourages a positive learning environment and motivates students to build on their strengths.
- Make feedback actionable and provide clear next steps: Use the rubric to guide your comments towards actionable suggestions. For instance, if a student's writing lacks coherence, suggest specific strategies they can use to improve organization in future assignments.
- Encourage Reflection by asking probing questions: This strategy will prompt students to think critically about their work and how they can apply your feedback in future tasks. For example, "How could you incorporate more cultural references in your next presentation?"
- Provide timely and prompt feedback after the submission of work or completion of an activity. Timely feedback is more relevant and allows students to apply it to subsequent tasks effectively.
- Facilitate student engagement, in order to allow students to respond to the feedback or ask questions about it. This dialogue can clarify misunderstandings and reinforce learning objectives.
- Use student journals to encourage them to reflect on the feedback received and how they plan to implement it in future assignments.
- Incorporate self-assessment by using the rubric before submission. This practice fosters self-reflection and helps them understand expectations better.
- Provide peer review opportunities using the rubric to evaluate each other's work, promoting collaborative learning and deeper understanding of assessment criteria.
- Gather student input after using rubrics by asking for feedback on their clarity and effectiveness. Understanding whether students find the rubrics helpful or if any criteria are unclear can guide future improvements.

Reference: Marc Learning (2023). Use Rubrics to Give Better Feedback: 3 Strategies For Success.

For instance, during a project to create a tourist guide, teachers might assess students' draft descriptions of landmarks or their ability to present their ideas in a group discussion and provide them with a checklist to include content, culture and language components. These checkpoints allow both students and teachers to track progress and make adjustments as needed, ensuring that the final product reflects the desired outcomes.

3. Language, Culture and Content Integration:

A holistic instructional approach like the Integration of Content, Culture and Language (ICCL) allows for curricular diversification and comprehensiveness as well as instructional flexibility and differentiation. Its key advantage is that it enables a type of learning that reflects how languages are actually used in real-world contexts. This approach is not new. Towards the end of the first decade of the 20th century, an initiative, called STARTALK, was conceptualized by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland and funded through the Educational Program of the National Security Agency of the United States. This integration approach was defined by the STRATALK Task Force, and for more than twelve years now, it has been applied and taught as an essential pedagogical principle in the many summer student language programs and language teacher trainings across the U.S.

This approach includes three components: content, culture and language. According to this approach, **content** is selected from various disciplines (other than linguistics) and is the key to promote the learners' building, reinforcing, and expanding of their knowledge in other disciplines while using the target language. For instance, language textbooks often include topics related to geography, history, literature or architecture. Next is **culture** which entails the relationship among the products, practices and perspectives of the cultures the learners study while they use the language to identify, discuss, explain, compare, investigate and reflect on. For example, the textbooks offer lessons on festivals, including the objects used, i.e. the products, the practices performed with them and some of the related tales popular among the communities. The third component is language, which enforces the learners' effective use of the target language in the three modes of communication to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes. Textbooks do provide exercises or describe activities mostly in the interpretive and presentational modes of communication, and trained teachers supplement the interpersonal mode. Yet, these components are sequenced, they are taught one at a time almost exclusively and rarely come into play together. It is challenging to keep the students motivated, they need to be reminded of what the theme is or why they are focusing on a specific component. Therefore, the requisite is designing a performance task for meaningful real-world communication which allows these three components to be integrated and when the learners are informed about it at the onset of the unit they are more aware of the step by step preparation they go through. This purposeful communication is conceptualized through the performance task planned for the end of the unit as evidence for student learning. It is formulated in a backward design lesson format along with the relevant language functions, appropriate vocabulary and specific structures, which the students will learn and be able to use to accomplish that task.

Rather than teaching language in isolation, this approach embeds language instruction within meaningful content and cultural frameworks (STARATALK, Carreira, 2016). This instructional approach entails engaging learners in appropriately tailored and cognitively challenging activities in real-life contexts. This is an especially effective approach for students whose linguistic or socio-cultural competence varies because of their family background. Therefore, situating language learning within authentic contexts mirroring real life helps expand students' skills in a meaningful way. This approach with its three

components is beneficial for the development of more comprehensive curricular units, for designing of more holistic instruction and organically integrated assessment.

Teachers use units and design lessons that are culturally rich and cognitively engaging, creating a context in which learners use their language skills to learn more about the target culture(s) and the world they live in. Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines and the world while using the target language. Learners interact frequently with authentic resources, exploring the products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture(s). They have opportunities to communicate and interact appropriately with others who speak the target language.

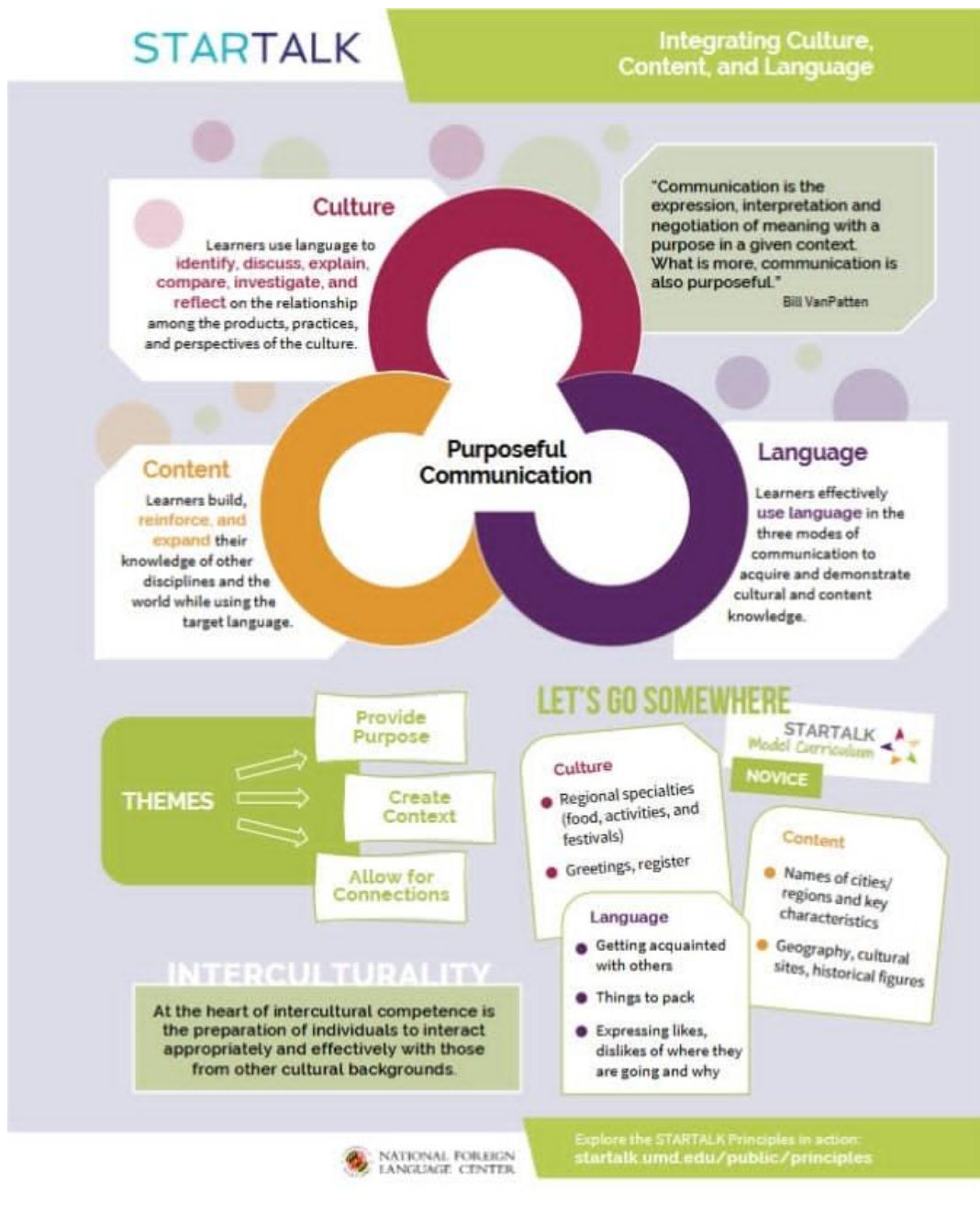
The identified learner experiences are possible because of the work done by the teacher. The teacher creates a learning environment that promotes intercultural thinking. Learners experience an environment that accurately reflects the target language and culture in ways that support the program can-do statements.

The teachers plan opportunities for students to investigate cultural products, practices, and perspectives in order to interact appropriately with others. Learners engage in activities that prepare them to use their language skills and cultural understanding in order to interact appropriately in a cultural context other than their own.

The teacher facilitates activities that allow students to produce language in order to interact with language learners or other speakers of the language. Learners engage in activities that prepare them to investigate the products and practices of a culture, gaining an understanding of perspectives while using the target language. Learners engage in activities that prepare them to explore other disciplines and make real-world connections while using the target language. The teacher uses units that allow students to build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines.

It is apparent that in terms of curricular considerations, this integrated approach yields diversity and inclusivity by expanding the content and culture representation through newly designed instructional materials in an effort to achieve a non-biased and balanced approach.

(Source: <https://www.startalk.info/educators-principles-integrating/>)



4. Scaffolding and Differentiation are essential in PBL. Students often come to projects with varying levels of language proficiency and background knowledge. Well-planned learning experiences allow teachers to break down complex tasks into manageable steps and provide the necessary support to help all learners succeed. For instance, students who are less confident in their speaking skills might start with guided role-plays before conducting interviews, while more advanced students might be challenged to refine their questioning techniques or add follow-up questions. This scaffolding ensures that every student can actively participate and make meaningful progress.

4.1 Instructional Component-Based Differentiation:

Given the varied needs of students, especially in a PBL classroom, differentiation is key to ensuring all learners can access the content and demonstrate their abilities. Carol Ann Tomlinson (2006?) defines differentiation as a way of teaching that adapts to the diverse needs of students by modifying three main instructional components. The first one is differentiation by content, which entails what students learn. It requires teachers to adjust the source or material content wise as well as its genre or format, often based on learners' interests, their areas of improvement or strengths, or simply on the pre-existing curricular plans. Students can learn new concepts, facts or skills. The second differentiation is by process, i.e. how they learn, which is often related to the interpretive mode of communication and the various tasks engaging the students to support diverse learning styles, e.g. some students create a mind map, others classify lexical items and place them in pre-designed or created by them tables, or draw what they hear/read. Students also can participate in tiered discussions which involves the interpersonal mode of communication. The last one is differentiation by product, in other words how they demonstrate learning. Differentiation ensures that all learners, regardless of their readiness, interests, or learning profiles, achieve the same essential learning goals in ways tailored to their specific needs. Differentiation allows for a variety of assessment methods to showcase learning, e.g. podcasts, posters, infomercials, letters, articles, how-to-videos, etc. For better manageability, especially for teachers who do not have extensive experience in the project-based classroom, differentiation is conducted by one component at a time.

4.2. Interest-Based Differentiation:

The interest-based differentiation is conducted by incorporating a range of content areas and cultural topics, teachers can appeal to students' varied interests and motivations for studying the heritage language. Some learners may be drawn to physical games, others to the arts, current events or scientific topics. Offering choice in content allows students to pursue personally relevant material while still developing language skills. Carreira and Kagan (2011) suggest project-based learning as an effective way to differentiate by interest in language classes. For example, in a unit on community issues, students could choose to research topics like local green spaces, environmental concerns, or cultural events. They would use the target language to collect information from community members, and present their findings - all while pursuing individual interests. This interest-based approach is particularly motivating for students, who may have complex and sometimes ambivalent relationships with the local and/or home culture and language (Carreira, 2004). Connecting language learning to topics they care about can increase engagement and investment in the learning progress.

4.3. Proficiency-Based Differentiation

The integrated approach also facilitates differentiation based on language proficiency levels. Within a single content-based unit, teachers can provide scaffolded materials and tasks to support learners at different levels. For instance, in a history unit, some students might read primary source documents while others work with adapted texts or visual materials. All engage with the same content and cultural concepts, but at an appropriate linguistic level.

Potowski and Carreira (2004) describe how this might work in a language class studying the civil rights movement: Lower proficiency learners might read simplified biographies of key figures and complete guided comprehension activities. Intermediate learners could analyze speeches, identify rhetorical devices and discuss their impact. Advanced learners might compare primary sources from different perspectives, synthesizing information in essays.

All students engage with the historical content and cultural implications, but tasks are differentiated based on language proficiency. This allows HLLs at various levels to develop their skills without feeling overwhelmed or unchallenged.

4.4. Strengths-Based Differentiation

Finally, teachers can differentiate based on learners' individual strengths. Some students may have strong oral skills but limited literacy, while others may read well but lack confidence in speaking. The multifaceted nature of PBL provides opportunities to leverage strengths while developing weaker areas. For example, in a unit on culinary traditions:

Students with strong oral skills might conduct and record interviews with family members about traditional recipes.

Those with developed literacy could research the history and cultural significance of certain dishes.

Visually-oriented learners might create infographics explaining the nutritional value of traditional foods.

All of these tasks involve language use, content learning, and cultural exploration, but allow students to approach the material through their preferred modalities. This strengths-based approach is particularly important for HLLs, who may have internalized feelings of linguistic inadequacy (Leeman, 2015). Highlighting what they can do, rather than focusing on deficits, can boost confidence and motivation.

Teachers spiral up based on proficiency in the linguistic functions, in order to further challenge the students who show higher degree of readiness. When the content is familiar, the task can be modified with higher linguistic difficulty. For example, explicative function can be spiraled with an argumentative or descriptive with convincing. Also straight-forward scenarios can be complicated with unexpected or unplanned elements and/or require details. In addition the tasks are more structured for lower proficiency levels and less structured for

higher. The context moves up from self or community which allows for personalization expressed through the colloquial register to discipline-based and higher formal register.

4.5. Examples of Differentiated Activities Related to Eco-Life (3rd grade)

Theme: Eco-Life

Grade Level: 3rd Grade

Language Proficiency: Intermediate

4.5.1. Differentiation by Content (What students learn)

Here, students receive materials at varying levels of complexity based on readiness.

Activity Example: Learning about recycling and eco-terms

Advanced Learners: Read a short article about recycling (with more complex vocabulary like "sustainability" and "waste management").

On-Level Learners: Read a simplified story about children recycling at home or school.

Emerging Learners: Use labeled pictures or flashcards to learn eco-terms like "paper," "plastic," "recycle," and "reduce."

4.5.2. Differentiation by Process (How students engage with material) Here, activities cater to students' learning styles.

Activity Example: Sorting and group discussions

Kinesthetic Learners: Physically sort items (cut-out pictures of paper, plastic, or trash) into recycling bins.

Visual Learners: Examine a poster showing "What can be recycled?" with drawings and labels.

Auditory Learners: Listen to a teacher's description or a short song about recycling and discuss what they heard in small groups.

4.5.3. Differentiation by Product (How students demonstrate learning)

Students show their understanding through different forms of output.

Activity Example: Eco-Friendly Actions Project

Advanced Learners: Write a paragraph about three ways to make their classroom more eco-friendly.

On-Level Learners: Create a recycling plan with pictures and short sentences (e.g., "We will recycle bottles").

Emerging Learners: Draw a picture of a recycling activity and verbally describe it (e.g., "I recycle cans").

4.5.4. Integration of Grammar and Vocabulary:

Vocabulary Focus: Words like recycle, reduce, reuse, environment, plastic, paper.

Grammar Focus: Present tense for descriptions (e.g., "We recycle paper.") and modal verbs for suggestions (e.g., "We should reuse bottles").

Example Sentence Activity:

Students use eco-words to make sentences based on their level:

Emerging: "I recycle paper."

On-Level: "We should recycle paper and plastic."

Advanced: "Recycling helps reduce waste and protect the environment."

For learners with extensive background in the language, teachers focus on higher-order thinking and project creation but provide support with formal grammar or academic register.

For learners with limited background in the language, teachers scaffold language input through visual aids, sentence starters, and more structured opportunities to practice.

Example: Higher proficiency level learners are asked to design more complex interview questions or reflect more deeply on cultural norms.

Learners with lower proficiency receive templates or models to structure their interviews.

Source: Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*.

Example: Differentiated Feedback and Revision

Throughout the project, teachers encourage a differentiated feedback loop where students can revise their work based on peer/group, self, and teacher feedback. This reflective process helps deepen learning.

Teacher Feedback: It is focused on providing ongoing guidance related to both language use and project quality according to the readiness and needs of the learners.

Peer Feedback: It aims to facilitate peer reviews focusing on clarity of language and the effectiveness of communication.

Example: After mock interviews, students provide feedback on (a) how many new words were used, (b) what kind and how many questions were asked, and (c) if new information is offered and if it is clear, leading to revisions before the final interview.

Source: Andrade, H. L., & Valtcheva, A. (2009). Promoting Learning and Achievement Through Self-Assessment.

Example: Reflection on Presentation: The last step of the project unit involves students presenting their completed projects and reflecting on their learning journey.

Presentation: Students showcase their projects, which may include presenting their interviews, video recordings, or a written report.

Reflection: Students are asked to reflect on what they learned about the language, culture, and content through the project. They may also discuss the skills they developed (e.g., research, interviewing).

The final presentation involves students sharing the interviews they conducted with the class, along with a reflective essay about cultural insights they gained.

Source: Darling-Hammond, L., & Adamson, F. (2010). Beyond Basic Skills: The Role of Performance Assessment in Achieving 21st Century Standards of Learning.

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PBLL with BD - Lesson Outcomes

Interdisciplinarity: Planning learning experiences allows teachers to address interdisciplinary connections and integrate broader skills into the project. PBLL often combines language learning with skills like critical thinking, research, collaboration, and creativity. For example, a project to raise awareness about climate change might involve researching scientific data, creating visual infographics, and delivering persuasive presentations. These activities not only develop language proficiency but also equip students with transferable skills they can apply in other contexts.

Motivation: This type of lesson design enhances student engagement and motivation. By designing activities that are hands-on, collaborative, and connected to real-world issues, teachers create a learning environment that is both challenging and rewarding. When students are actively involved in meaningful tasks, they are more likely to feel invested in the project and take ownership of their learning. This sense of engagement is especially important in PBLL, where motivation often drives the success of both the language-learning process and the project itself.

Student Collaboration: Peer discussions and group work to develop and refine ideas and outputs. Collaboration encourages natural, meaningful communication. Students use the target language to express ideas, ask questions, and negotiate meaning.

Improved Collaborative Problem-Solving Skills:

Students will actively collaborate in small groups to identify, discuss, and propose solutions to a real-world problem connected to the project theme. They will use the target language to communicate their ideas, negotiate roles, and create a joint plan of action, showcasing their ability to engage in meaningful peer-to-peer interactions.

Enhanced Intercultural Competence:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to analyze and compare cultural practices and traditions related to the project theme. They will demonstrate the ability to describe these practices using appropriate vocabulary and expressions in the target language, fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity and their role as global citizens.

Development of Authentic Written and Oral Communication:

At the conclusion of the project, students will be able to create a written document (e.g., a brochure, report, or blog post) and deliver an oral presentation (e.g., a speech or video) that integrates language structures and vocabulary learned during the lesson. Their work will address the project topic and be tailored to a specific audience, demonstrating real-world application of their language skills.

Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to evaluate multiple sources of information related to the project theme, distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant data. Using the

target language, they will summarize their findings and justify their conclusions with clear arguments and evidence, enhancing their analytical capabilities.

Creative Expression in the Target Language:

Students will produce a creative output (e.g., a poster, infographic, short story, or video) that integrates project-specific vocabulary, grammatical structures, and cultural elements. This outcome emphasizes their ability to apply linguistic knowledge innovatively, fostering both language mastery and creative skills.

Examples:

Traditional vs PBL Unit

Unit Plan Sample for a 2nd Grade Language Classroom

Proficiency Level: Intermediate

Theme: Eco-Friendly Living – “Taking Care of Our Earth”

Target Language: English as a Foreign/Second Language (can be adapted to other languages)

Unit Overview

Students will explore the importance of caring for the Earth through vocabulary, activities, and stories related to recycling, pollution, and nature. The unit encourages communication skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing while fostering eco-awareness

Unit Objectives (Can-Do Statements): at the end of the unit students will

1. Interpretive (Listening/Reading)

- I can understand simple sentences about nature and recycling when read aloud.
- I can follow directions for a class recycling activity (e.g., sorting trash).
- I can read short stories or picture books about Earth Day or pollution.

2. Interpersonal (Speaking/Listening)

- I can ask and answer simple questions about keeping the Earth clean (e.g., “Why should we recycle?”).
- I can talk with classmates about what we do at home to care for nature (e.g., “I plant trees!”).
-

3. Presentational (Speaking/Writing)

- I can describe actions to protect the Earth using simple sentences (e.g., “We save water when we turn off the tap”).
 - I can write short sentences about what I can do to help the Earth.
-

Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA)

1. Interpretive Task

Students will listen to a story (e.g., “The Earth Book” by Todd Parr) or watch a short video on recycling. They will answer comprehension questions, such as:

- What can we recycle?
- How does recycling help the Earth?

2. Interpersonal Task

Students work in pairs to ask and answer questions using a picture prompt. For example:

- **Picture of litter in the park:** “What is happening here?” → “The park is dirty.”
- “What can we do?” → “We can pick up the trash.”

3. Presentational Task

Students create a mini-poster or oral presentation titled “**How I Can Help the Earth**”. They will include at least three simple sentences and a drawing, e.g.:

- “I recycle paper.”
 - “I plant flowers.”
 - “I walk to school.”
-

Learning Episodes

Episode 1: Vocabulary Introduction (Listening & Speaking)

- Introduce key vocabulary using visuals: recycle, trash, nature, clean, dirty, trees, water, Earth, plastic, paper.

- Play a game: “I Spy” using classroom objects to practice words (e.g., “I spy something you can recycle”).

Episode 2: Story Time (Reading & Listening)

- Read aloud “*The Earth Book*” by Todd Parr (or a similar eco-themed book).
- Discuss the story: “What can we do to help the Earth?”
- Activity: Students match eco-friendly actions (e.g., turning off the lights) with corresponding pictures.

Episode 3: Sorting Activity (Listening & Speaking)

- Introduce “recyclable” vs. “non-recyclable” items.
- Hands-on activity: Students sort real or picture-based items into “recycle” or “trash” bins.
- Practice sentences: “This is plastic. It can be recycled.”

Episode 4: Mini-Project: My Eco-Friendly Poster (Writing & Speaking)

- Students draw and write short sentences about eco-friendly actions.
- Students present their poster to the class, e.g., “This is my poster. I plant trees.”

Episode 5: Eco-Song and Reflection (Listening & Writing)

- Learn and sing a simple eco-themed song (e.g., “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle”).
- Reflection: Students write 2 sentences about what they learned (e.g., “I can save water.”).

Materials and Resources

- *The Earth Book* by Todd Parr or other picture books
- Recyclable objects for sorting
- Visual aids and flashcards
- Videos (e.g., Earth Day or recycling for kids)
- Art supplies for poster-making

Assessment

- **Formative:** Observations during activities, sorting tasks, and class discussions.
 - **Summative:** Mini-poster presentations and written reflection.
-

References (APA Format)

- Parr, T. (2010). *The Earth Book*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.
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This unit integrates language skills, environmental themes, and creative expression to engage students in meaningful communication.

You said:

Include a checklist that students need to follow for the poster preparation in terms of content and grammar points, and rubrics for the poster presentation

ChatGPT said:

ChatGPT

Student Checklist for Poster Preparation

Content Checklist

1. **Title:** My poster has a clear title: “*How I Can Help the Earth*”.
2. **Sentences:** I wrote at least **3 sentences** about eco-friendly actions.
 - Sentence 1: What I can do (e.g., “I recycle paper.”).
 - Sentence 2: Another action (e.g., “I turn off the lights.”).
 - Sentence 3: A nature-friendly habit (e.g., “I plant flowers.”).
3. **Grammar:**
 - I started each sentence with a **capital letter**.
 - I used the correct punctuation (**period .** at the end of each sentence).

- I used the correct verb tense (present simple) to describe actions (e.g., “I recycle,” not “I recycled”).
- 4. **Vocabulary:** I included at least **3 words** from the eco-theme vocabulary: recycle, nature, water, Earth, clean, etc.
- 5. **Illustrations:** I drew or added **colorful pictures** to match my sentences.

Rubric for Poster Presentation

Criteria	4 – Excellent	3 – Good	2 – Needs Improvement	1 – Beginning
Content	All sentences are clear, complete, and describe eco-friendly actions.	Most sentences are clear and relevant to the eco-theme.	Sentences are incomplete or missing details.	Sentences do not relate to the theme.
Grammar and Mechanics	Correct use of capital letters, punctuation, and present simple tense.	Minor mistakes but do not affect understanding.	Several errors in grammar and punctuation.	Frequent grammar errors that confuse meaning.
Vocabulary	Includes at least 3 eco-theme words used correctly.	Includes 2 eco-theme words; mostly correct usage.	Includes 1 eco-theme word but may be used incorrectly.	No relevant eco-theme vocabulary.
Presentation and Speaking	Speaks clearly and confidently; sentences are easy to understand.	Speaks clearly with some hesitation; sentences are mostly understandable.	Speaking is unclear or difficult to follow.	Needs significant help speaking or does not present.
Visual Appeal	Poster is colorful, neat, and has matching illustrations.	Poster is neat with some effort in illustrations.	Poster lacks color or illustrations.	Poster is incomplete or messy.

Scoring Guide

- **20-18 points:** Excellent – You did an amazing job!
- **17-14 points:** Good – Great effort, just a few small mistakes.
- **13-10 points:** Needs Improvement – You’re on your way! Let’s focus on grammar or content next time.
- **9 or below:** Beginning – Let’s work together to improve the sentences and poster.

Instructions for Students

- Use the checklist to review your poster before presenting.
- Use the rubric to understand how your work will be assessed.
- Practice speaking your sentences at home or with a partner before presenting to the class.

This ensures that the students have a clear roadmap for content creation, grammar accuracy, and presentation quality. It also allows teachers to provide feedback effectively.

Updated rubric that includes **teamwork evaluation** for the poster project.



Rubric for Poster Presentation (Including Teamwork)

Criteria	4 – Excellent	3 – Good	2 – Needs Improvement	1 – Beginning
Content	All sentences are clear, complete, and describe eco-friendly actions.	Most sentences are clear and relevant to the eco-theme.	Sentences are incomplete or missing details.	Sentences do not relate to the theme.
Grammar and Mechanics	Correct use of capital letters, punctuation, and present simple tense.	Minor mistakes but do not affect understanding.	Several errors in grammar and punctuation.	Frequent grammar errors that confuse meaning.
Vocabulary	Includes at least 3 eco-theme words used correctly.	Includes 2 eco-theme words; mostly correct usage.	Includes 1 eco-theme word but may be used incorrectly.	No relevant eco-theme vocabulary.
Presentation and Speaking	Speaks clearly and confidently; sentences are easy to understand.	Speaks clearly with some hesitation; sentences are mostly understandable.	Speaking is unclear or difficult to follow.	Needs significant help speaking or does not present.
Visual Appeal	Poster is colorful, neat, and has matching illustrations.	Poster is neat with some effort in illustrations.	Poster lacks color or illustrations.	Poster is incomplete or messy.
Teamwork and Collaboration	Team members worked equally, shared responsibilities, and supported one another.	Most team members contributed and worked together well.	Unequal participation; some team members did not contribute fully.	Teamwork was disorganized or one person did all the work.

Scoring Guide

- **24-22 points:** Excellent – Your team worked together perfectly and created an outstanding poster!
 - **21-18 points:** Good – Great teamwork and effort with only a few minor issues.
 - **17-14 points:** Needs Improvement – Some teamwork challenges or missing content; room for improvement.
 - **13 or below:** Beginning – Let’s focus on teamwork and content for next time.
-

Teamwork Self-Assessment Questions

1. Did everyone in the group contribute equally?
2. How did you decide who would do each task?
3. How did you help your teammates during the project?
4. What did you learn from working with your team?
5. If you could improve one thing about teamwork, what would it be?

This rubric and self-assessment encourage students to reflect on their collaboration while ensuring fairness in grading team efforts.

Intermediate proficiency level language classroom, transformed into a **Project-Based Language Learning (PBL)** unit with an **eco-theme**.

Unit Title:

“Caring for Our Earth: Eco-Projects in Our Community” This PBL-based unit plan ensures meaningful language learning by engaging students in a real-world project while fostering collaborative skills and creativity.

Essential Question:

- How can we work together to take care of the Earth and share eco-friendly actions with our community?

Unit Objectives (Can-Do Statements):

- I can describe ways to help the environment using simple sentences (e.g., “We save water by...”, “We plant trees to...”).
 - I can work in a group to create a poster about eco-friendly actions.
 - I can present my poster clearly to my classmates.
 - I can ask and answer questions about eco-friendly habits (e.g., “Why should we recycle?”, “What can we do to save energy?”).
-

Project Overview (PBL):

Final Product: Students will design a **poster campaign** to promote eco-friendly actions (e.g., recycling, saving water) and share it with the school or local community.

Driving Question:

- How can we encourage others to protect the Earth?

Project Steps:

1. **Introduction:** Discuss eco-friendly habits through visuals, videos, and examples.
2. **Inquiry:** Students brainstorm actions they and their families can take to care for the environment.
3. **Team Work:** Students form small groups, choose an eco-topic (e.g., recycling, water conservation, planting trees), and research simple phrases and vocabulary in the target language.
4. **Poster Creation:** Groups design their posters with eco-friendly actions using visuals and simple sentences.
5. **Presentation:** Each group presents their poster to the class and answers questions.
6. **Reflection:** Students reflect on their learning and how their posters can inspire others to help the environment.

Learning Episodes:

Learning Episode	Description	Skills Focus
1. Exploring Eco-Friendly Habits	Use images, stories, and videos to introduce vocabulary and examples (e.g., recycle, save, reuse).	Listening, vocabulary building
2. Group Inquiry	Students brainstorm and share eco-actions they know. Teacher guides sentence structure (“We can...”).	Speaking, sentence formation
3. Language Practice	Mini-lessons on grammar points (e.g., present simple tense , verbs like “save,” “reuse,” “recycle”).	Grammar, sentence building
4. Poster Planning	Students work in teams to design their poster layout, deciding roles (writing, drawing, designing).	Teamwork, writing, creativity
5. Poster Creation	Groups create their posters, focusing on visuals, vocabulary, and correct grammar.	Writing, grammar, teamwork
6. Presentation Rehearsal	Groups practice presenting their posters using clear sentences and pronunciation.	Speaking, pronunciation, teamwork
7. Final Presentations	Groups present posters to the class and answer classmates’ questions about their eco-friendly actions.	Speaking, listening, questioning
8. Reflection and Feedback	Students reflect on teamwork, what they learned, and how their project will help the environment.	Reflection, collaboration

Grammar and Vocabulary Focus:

- **Grammar:**
 - Present Simple Tense: “*We plant trees.*” “*We save water.*”
 - Action Verbs: save, plant, recycle, clean, reduce, reuse
 - Adverbs of frequency: often, always, sometimes
 - **Vocabulary:**
 - Eco-words: recycle, reuse, plant, save, water, trees, clean, nature, Earth
 - Simple phrases: “Turn off the water,” “Reuse bags,” “Save energy,” “Recycle paper.”
-

Checklist for Poster Preparation:

- **Content:**
 - Include 3 eco-friendly actions.
 - Use simple sentences with action verbs.
 - Include at least 3 eco-vocabulary words.
- **Grammar and vocabulary:**
 - Use correct present simple tense in active and passive voice.
 - Use *in order to* clause and relative-correlative sentences.
 - Use new environment-specific vocabulary.
 - Check spelling and punctuation.
- **Visuals:**
 - Add clear and colorful illustrations.
 - Make the poster neat and easy to read.

Rubrics for Poster Presentation:

Criteria	4 – Excellent	3 – Good	2 – Needs Improvement	1 – Beginning
Content	Includes 3+ eco-friendly actions with clear sentences.	Includes 2 eco-actions and mostly clear sentences.	Includes 1 eco-action; sentences are incomplete.	No eco-actions or sentences are unclear.
Grammar	Uses correct grammar and spelling.	Minor grammar or spelling errors.	Frequent grammar or spelling errors.	Grammar errors make sentences hard to understand.
Vocabulary	Includes 3+ eco-vocabulary words correctly.	Includes 2 eco-words with minor errors.	Includes 1 eco-word; some incorrect usage.	No relevant eco-vocabulary words.
Visual Appeal	Poster is neat, colorful, and creative.	Poster is neat and colorful but lacks creativity.	Poster is incomplete or lacks visuals.	Poster is messy or hard to read.
Presentation	Speaks clearly and answers questions confidently.	Speaks clearly but struggles with some questions.	Speaking is unclear or incomplete.	Does not speak clearly or needs help presenting.
Teamwork and Collaboration	All team members contributed equally.	Most team members contributed.	Uneven participation.	Teamwork was disorganized.

Teamwork Reflection Questions:

1. What was your role in creating the poster?
 2. How did you help your team?
 3. What was the most fun part of the project?
 4. What was the hardest part?
 5. How can teamwork help us in real life?
-

Integration of Eco-Theme and PBL:

- Students connect **language learning** with a real-world issue (eco-friendliness).
- The **poster project** fosters teamwork, inquiry, and creativity while practicing key vocabulary and grammar.
- Final presentations help develop confidence in speaking and listening.
- The project encourages students to reflect on their actions to care for the environment.

The **difference between the two unit plans** lies in their **approach** to teaching and learning:

1. Initial Unit Plan

- **Traditional Approach with Integration of Activities:**
 - The unit was organized around **episodic learning** where lessons focused on grammar, vocabulary, content, and skill-building (e.g., listening, writing, speaking).
 - Activities were pre-determined by the teacher and structured into sequential learning episodes.
 - The focus was on students completing discrete **tasks** (e.g., practicing grammar or presenting posters).
 - Assessment focused on individual **content knowledge** and grammar accuracy.
 - Teamwork was included but **not explicitly emphasized** or assessed.

Key Features:

- Structured and teacher-centered.
- Integration of eco-theme was content-based (posters).
- Focus on language production, grammar, and vocabulary.

2. PBL-Based Unit Plan

- **Project-Based Language Learning (PBL):**
 - This plan shifts the focus from traditional teaching to **student-driven inquiry** and collaborative work.
 - Learning is organized around a **project** (eco-poster campaign) that addresses a **real-world problem** (environmental protection).
 - Students actively **engage in teamwork** to research, create, and present posters.
 - Lessons (called **learning episodes**) are designed to build skills **while working on the project**.
 - Students learn grammar, vocabulary, and content **in context** through authentic tasks.
 - Assessment focuses not only on content accuracy but also on **teamwork, collaboration, and project outcomes**.
 - Students reflect on their teamwork, learning process, and impact on their community.

Key Features:

- Student-centered and inquiry-driven.
- Real-world **projects** connect learning with meaningful action.
- Focus on **collaborative learning, problem-solving, and creativity**.
- Language skills (grammar/vocabulary) are taught and applied **in context**.
- Includes rubrics for evaluating **teamwork and collaboration**.



Summary of Key Differences:

Aspect	Initial Plan	PBLL-Based Plan
Approach	Structured, teacher-driven	Student-centered, inquiry-based
Learning Focus	Discrete tasks and content knowledge	Integrated learning through a real-world project
Teamwork	Minimal emphasis, no formal evaluation	Explicit teamwork focus, with rubrics
Grammar/Vocabulary	Taught in isolated lessons	Taught and applied in authentic contexts
Assessment	Individual work, grammar, and vocabulary	Project outcomes, teamwork, and reflection
Final Product	Presentation of posters	Posters as part of a real-world project
Student Role	Passive learners completing tasks	Active participants, creators, and presenters

The **PBLL-based unit** transforms the lesson into an **authentic, real-world learning experience**, where students develop **collaboration, inquiry, and problem-solving skills** while improving their language abilities. The initial unit focused on discrete skill-building, whereas the PBLL unit integrates these skills seamlessly into a meaningful project.

Sample Unit Plan: Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) unit with an eco-theme for an Intermediate proficiency level language classroom (2nd grade)

Unit Title: “Caring for Our Earth: Eco-Projects in Our Community” This PBLL-based unit plan ensures meaningful language learning by engaging students in a real-world project while fostering collaborative skills and creativity.

Essential Question:

- How can we work together to take care of the Earth and share eco-friendly actions with our community?

Unit Objectives (Can-Do Statements): At the end of the unit students can:

- describe ways to help the environment using simple sentences (e.g., “We save water by...”, “We plant trees to...”).
- work in a group to create a poster about eco-friendly actions.
- present my poster clearly to their classmates.
- ask and answer questions about eco-friendly habits (e.g., “Why should we recycle?”, “What can we do to save energy?”).

Project Overview (PBL):

IPA: Students will design a **poster campaign** to promote eco-friendly actions (e.g., recycling, saving water) and share it with the school or local community.

Driving Question:

- How can we encourage others to protect the Earth?

Project Steps:

1. **Introduction:** Discuss eco-friendly habits through visuals, videos, and examples.
2. **Inquiry:** Students brainstorm actions they and their families can take to care for the environment.
3. **Team Work:** Students form small groups, choose an eco-topic (e.g., recycling, water conservation, planting trees), and research simple phrases and vocabulary in the target language.
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8. Reflection and Feedback	Students reflect on teamwork, what they learned, and how their project will help the environment.	Reflection, collaboration

Grammar and Vocabulary Focus:

- **Grammar:**
 - Present Simple Tense: “*We plant trees.*” “*We save water.*”
 - Action Verbs: save, plant, recycle, clean, reduce, reuse
 - Adverbs of frequency: often, always, sometimes
 - **Vocabulary:**
 - Eco-words: recycle, reuse, plant, save, water, trees, clean, nature, Earth
 - Simple phrases: “Turn off the water,” “Reuse bags,” “Save energy,” “Recycle paper.”
-

Checklist for Poster Preparation:

- **Content:**
 - Include 3 eco-friendly actions.
 - Use simple sentences with action verbs.
 - Include at least 3 eco-vocabulary words.
- **Grammar:**
 - Use correct present simple tense.
 - Check spelling and punctuation.
- **Visuals:**
 - Add clear and colorful illustrations.
 - Make the poster neat and easy to read.

Rubrics for Poster Presentation:

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