Proceedings. APAC-ELT Conference 2018

METHODOLOGY
PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
IMPLEMENTING NEW IDEAS

EXPERIENCES
BEING AN EXCHANGE TEACHER

APAC ELT JOURNAL

Be inspired!

Our annual ELT Convention is upon us again, and we're all looking forward to getting back together again and catching up on each other's lives, both our professional ones and our personal ones. The motto of this year's convention is very uplifting. We can often feel cooped up, by content we have to teach, materials we have to use, exams we have to prepare our studtents for. The Convention comes at a good time and with a good focus to help us break out of our constraints and implement practices that will let creative juices flow, both our own and our students'.

It's really amazing how many excellent ideas and fantastic projects are presented every year. Some of us even wish we had more contact hours with our students so that we could implement all of the ones that appealed to us the most. And, over time, we do so. We re-organize our way of teaching from one year to the next and incorporate the ideas that struck a chord with us.

Your life begins to end the moment you start being silent about the things that matter.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sometimes, however, we forget about some of the inspiring talks and workshops we attended. And then, as we're sifting through the accumulation of papers piling up in our bookshelves, deciding what to keep and what to get rid of in order to make room for new sets of leftover, recyclable photocopies, we stumble upon the notes we took from a previous APAC ELT Convention and it all comes back to us. We remember that we were going to try out this person's ideas, or we were going to introduce students to that app, or we were going to work more on this skill, or on that intelligence, or on this area of knowledge. And we finally do start incorporating that into our teaching.

Another tool that you can use to remember what inspired you from previous conventions is the APAC ELT Journal! All of the back issues are available online in PDF format through the APAC webpage. You might have fun checking them out, and you might run across an idea that will set your teaching world on fire. So, maybe put that on your list of things to do.

And, also consider setting someone else's teaching world on fire: write an article about something that works well for you or something that has taken your teaching to a whole new level. Even if it may seem like a small deal to you, it could be quite an eye-opener to someone else. Your little spark could set off someone else's explosion of inspiration and creativity.

In this issue of the journal, we only have a couple of articles, but they will hopefully kindle quite a few fires. The first one, by **Lola Garay Abad**, discusses how to implement Project-Based Learning (PBL) in one's classes and gives a lot of useful advice and ideas. It provides a solid theoretical foundation for determining what constitutes a project, and it gives a clear, thorough outline of one. The hands-on nature of PBL makes it very attractive and motivating for a wide range of students.

The other article, by **Antònia Cladera Bohigas**, describes her experience as an exchange teacher in the US through the Spanish government's *Profesores Visitantes en USA y Canadá* program. She calls it a life-changing experience and encourages all teachers to try it. Her article also dovetails with Lola Garay's in that the methodology she employed was eminently hands-on. She also talks about changes she made in her classroom management style and gives references to resources that helped her quite a bit in making improvements in this area. We hope that all of you will enjoy her article and will look into venturing far from your current home to try out new ways of working and living. But, please come back!!!

We can't wait to see you all at the Convention. We hope that you will be inspired! And we hope that you will release your inspiration both in your classrooms and in the pages of our Journal!

EDITORIAL AND COMMUNICATION TEAM

APAC JOURNAL

Editorial team

- James McCullough
- Edward Lockhart

APAC WEBPAGE

Webweaver: The APAC Board

APAC MONOGRAPHS

Editor: The APAC Board

APAC BOARD

President: Àngels Oliva
Vice-President: Usoa Sol
Secretary: Mireia Raymi
Secretary: Esther Martin
Treasurer: Miquel Breton
Contributors:
· Carme Rodríguez
· Carme Roig
· Cèlia Guerra
· Edward Lockhart
· James McCullough
· Laura Soria
· Mireia Xortó
· Montse Irún
· Raquel Joaquin

APAC ADMINISTRATION

Manager: Paqui Lorite

Fiscal/Postal address:

APAC
C/ Girona, 53, baixos
08009 Barcelona
Tel. 646 267 456
e-mail: info@apac365.org
https://www.apac365.org

Journal no. 88
January 2019
D.L. B-41180 - 1998
ISSN 1137 - 1528

Contents

Editor's Note 1

2019 APAC-ELT Convention: *Release Your Inspiration!* 4

APAC'S First Flash Training Session: "Communicate, Innovate & Create" 6

Articles:

An Example of How PBL Enhances Linguistic and Cognitive Skills in the EFL and CLIL Classroom, by **Lola Garay Abad** 9

Teaching in Miami: The Experience of an Exchange Science Teacher, by **Antònia Cladera Bohigas** 16

2019 APAC-ELT Convention

Release Your Inspiration

DATES: January 31st, February 1st and 2nd, 2019

Teaching is a creative field, there's no denying it. We have to meet the needs of many learners with a wide diversity of interests, learning styles, levels of attainment and degrees of motivation. We also have to avoid falling into a rut, teaching "the same old same-old" using the same old photocopies, flashcards, powerpoints and Kahoots as in previous years.

However, creativity has its limits. If we rely solely on our own wits, we may not realize that there are even better ways than our own to ratchet up our teaching and take it to a new level. We need to see what others are doing, and we need to tell them about our innovations as well. Out of this synergy can come big things.

So, this year, we have given our ELT Convention the motto "Release Your Inspiration". We want attendees and presenters to let their imaginations fly free and talk about interesting ways to reach students and make our teaching more effective. Originally, in the previous sentence we had written "ingenious ways", but we toned it down to "interesting", because "ingenious" stems from putting together many instances of "interesting". In other words, it's similar to Thomas Edison's statement that "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration."

We hope you will all come to the convention, starting on January 31st, breathe deeply of the creativity around you, and then go back to your classroom and release your inspiration!

Registration

Back to the table of contents

BRITISH COUNCIL
The power to decide
WHERE TO GO NEXT
Welcome to our
WORLD OF ENGLISH
www.britishcouncil.es

APAC's first flash training session: "Communicate, Innovate & Create"

As scientific research piles on the evidence for the need to include creativity and emotional engagement in our educational design, here at APAC HQ we decided to create a flash training session in which teachers of different levels would share their expertise and ideas on tools and methodologies to develop students' creative skills.

With the collaboration of the **Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona**, **Trinity College London** and the **Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat**, we designed a one-morning training session aimed at 1) facilitating the exchange of good practices and useful concepts among practising teachers in primary and secondary education; 2) offering talks and practical workshops that introduced up-to-date trends, tools and methods in ELT; and, 3) providing teachers with a space in which to reflect on the theoretical grounds that support a more creative, innovative and competence-based approach to ELT.

We decided to call this session "Communicate, Innovate & Create", as we wanted it to have some continuity and increase the learning opportunities we already offer to APAC's associates and beyond. In this respect, we greatly value the collaboration of the Consorci d'Educació de Barcelona, which enabled us to reach out to many more teachers and to use the fantastic premises of Rosa Sensat.

For this first edition, we started off with the plenary talk "Neuroscience and the brain", by **Dr David Bueno**. In his talk, addressed to both primary and secondary school teachers, Dr Bueno argued that our brain is capable of learning languages in an absolutely natural way, but that the concrete way of how languages should be taught depends on children's current developmental stage. With many examples to illustrate this, Dr Bueno also argued that without emotions the brain cannot incorporate new learning so well. And creativity is key in turning our classrooms into positive emotional spaces in which students can connect the language that they're learning to meaningful memories that will help them incorporate new skills and knowledge.

After the break, primary and secondary teachers had three separate workshops in which to work on materials and methods that specifically addressed their students' developmental stages. In both age groups, the first workshop addressed specific ways in which to promote creativity through tasks and

projects; the second workshop provided an overview of ICT tools that can be used; and the third workshop delved into the need to include competence-based assessment to scaffold students' communicative progress in connection to their cognitive development.

For the primary workshops, **Maria Mont** and **Alexandra Bonet** started off with the session "Promoting creativity in Primary education", in which they shared (and practically demonstrated) their tips to revamp their teaching styles to make them more appealing to students and more fitting for the new skill-based curriculum. For these two primary school teachers and teacher-trainers, "collaboration, excitement and acquisition go hand in hand when an enthusiastic teacher stands before receptive students". The second primary workshop was "Using ICT tools to promote creativity in Primary", led by **Òscar del Estal.** In his workshop, Òscar presented ICT activities that he uses in his own classes (Blogs, Quizlet, Educaplay, Google Classroom) to make students the eager protagonists and curators of their own oral and written productions. In Òscar's words, "students' interest in sharing their progress in English with their families makes them give the best of themselves and strengthens the bond between teachers and family".

The workshops for secondary school teachers opened with a session by **Àngels Bosacoma** and **Marta Rius**, with the title "Promoting creativity in Secondary education". In this session, Àngels and Marta argued that by encouraging students to be creative we can help them learn a foreign language better. As in the other workshops, Àngels and Marta shared some of the activities they use with their students and discussed details of their implementation with the participant teachers. This was followed by a workshop on using ICT tools in secondary school contexts, by **Mireia Xortó** and **Mar Rosso**, who stressed the need to provide students with real-life communicative contexts, as students feel more motivated when their language production is aimed at a real audience and carried out in realistic formats. Mireia and Mar shared apps and websites that they use in their own sessions to promote the digital inclusion of students within the linguistic field while increasing their personal interest in learning a foreign language.

Finally, both primary and secondary school teachers enjoyed a practical session on competence-based assessment with **Shaun Sweeney**, a guest speaker provided by APAC's long-time partner **Trinity College London**. In Shaun's sessions, the teachers discussed how a holistic view of students' ability best suits the needs of children, teachers, parents and schools. As the participants analysed the connections between tasks, communicative needs and competence descriptors through practical examples adapted to each level, Shaun argued for the need to adopt this 'can do' communicative achievement approach, as it is motivating for pupils and informs teachers as to how to tailor courses to fit the needs of specific classroom contexts.

As usual in our sessions, we asked the participants to give us some feedback on this first ever APAC Flash Training Session: Communicate, Innovate & Create. As the morning was quite packed, we chose a rather simple format in which teachers could tick a smiley and write some brief comments to sum up their views. Most of the teachers' answers showed they were very satisfied (47) or satisfied (45) with the quality of the workshops, and they wrote comments along these lines: "Amazing and really engaging talk!", "Nice resources and very inspiring. They were saying interesting things, some of them I knew would make me reflect upon learning", although there were some comments on the level of intensity "Useful, but stressful" and the need to spend more time on these issues "In general, the 3 workshops were fantastic, but of course…We need more time, it's just a glimpse of the possibilities they can show us", "We would have needed more time!! Too much information, too fast. Not time enough!". The ICT and the assessment workshops proved to be more divisive than the other sessions, as their usefulness depended greatly on teachers' previous knowledge and degree of expertise. Some teachers complained that the contents were far too removed from their everyday practice, others said they were too familiar with them.

All in all, it was a great experience for the organisers, the trainers and the attendees, and we hope to be offering a second helping of this next autumn. Meanwhile, keep your eyes peeled for news about more training opportunities this spring!

Àngels Oliva and **Usoa Sol**, on behalf of APAC's board

An Example of How PBL Enhances Linguistic and Cognitive Skills in the EFL and CLIL Classroom

Lola Garay Abad

A second/foreign language and content are best acquired when students use them in real-life situations. As such, how can we make the learning of a second/foreign language and content more project-oriented to make learning more meaningful? Working with the project-based approach brings reality into the classroom. In the present learning and teaching context, there is still a slight misconception of the idea of a project. For instance: a presentation delivered by students that shows understanding of a topic would still be considered a project (e.g. a poster presentation about the functions of the organs of the digestive system), among others.

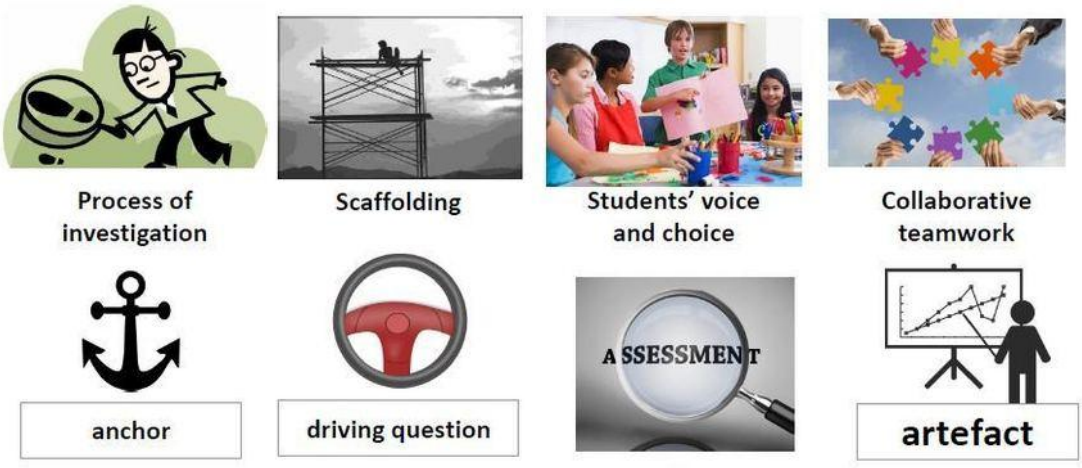
What is a project (or PBL, Project-Based Learning)?

A project has three main elements: an anchor, a driving question and an artefact. A project is based on ***a real-life situation (an anchor)*** which serves as the motivation behind the creation of the project, ***the setting of an objective (driving question),*** and the ***creation of an artefact (final product)*** that meets the need of the anchor.

For example, students are presented with an anchor: ***Do you think everything has been invented? There are many problems in our school, neighbourhood, classroom, etc. Think about a problem in your school, neighbourhood, at home, etc. that needs a solution***. Then, they are presented with a driving question: ***How can we create something to solve a real-world problem?*** For the elaboration of the artefact, students choose a real-life, day-to-day problem (an anchor) and ***create an invention to solve the problem***. The latter represents how, by working through projects, "reality" is brought into the classroom, and, therefore, the use of resources (linguistic and content-based) becomes more meaningful.

Apart from the three main elements that constitute a project, there are others that should be considered and that are equally as important.

Elements of PBL:



- **Process of investigation**: Students generate additional questions focused more specifically on project tasks and find information in many sources to complete the creation of the artefact. These can be set as homework or can be part of a classroom activity.

- **Scaffolding:** It is everything that helps students towards building the final artefact (project) and can be within the classroom (e.g. teacher resources, instructions, games, web quests, textbook units, vocabulary exercises, etc.) or outside of it (e.g. family, community, etc.).

- **Students' voice and choice:** Having brief discussions on the new topic with learners and letting them vote/decide on the theme of the project and the rest of the stages. Asking questions and using visuals to find out what the learners already know about the topic, e.g. creating a mind map eliciting ideas related to the new topic.

- **Collaborative teamwork:** Students practice negotiation skills, decision-making, and turn-taking, among others; it helps to make learning more authentic, and it develops social skills.

- **Assessment:** Reflecting on the results/outcome (content and/or language) and evaluating the experience.

How does second language acquisition relate to working with projects?

Attention is given to the function of structures, as students must be able to use certain grammar structures and the related lexis to be able to publish and/or present their artefact to an audience. Another basic feature of project-based learning (PBL) is the fact that the students' artefact goes beyond the classroom walls, which makes its creation even more real.

Working with communicative projects entails designing units that cater to all the students' needs, be it at a linguistic level or at a cognitive level (ability and capacity of the students to intake content and language). In the current teaching context, we have large-sized classes (25 to 32 students per group), therefore, we as teachers feel like we should be able to find ways to manage the constraints of limited time, classroom management, syllabus design, and the writing and adapting of materials, among others.

Also, there is the misconception that working with projects would change all the techniques we employ in our day-to-day teaching. In fact, PBL, being a holistic approach, does not change our techniques, but unifies them and allows us teachers, and therefore our students, to "see" the bigger picture of why we are learning specific language and/or specific content.

A PBL unit outline:

The following is an outline of a PBL cross-curricular unit (Science and EFL) for which students create an invention to solve a real-world problem. The artefact is a PowerPoint screencast presentation of their invention.

Unit name: Inventions, Inventors, and you!

Time scale: 1 term/ approx. 24 hours – twice a week (2 hours a week of class)

Elements	Stage
1. Anchor	Do you think everything has been invented? There are many problems in our school, neighbourhood, classroom, etc. Think about a problem in your school, neighbourhood, at home, etc. that needs a solution. Don't tell your classmates.
2. Driving question	Learners create the question: How can we build/create/make an invention to solve a real-world problem in our _____?
3. Scaffolding	**Audio-visual, written texts, and online input materials:** • Chindogu (Japanese crazy inventions): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smPxlkUeo4A • Children's inventions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSvMbK0x6cA • Vocabulary flashcards: https://quizlet.com/29140842/inventors-inventions-dates-quiz-flash-cards/ • *Now & Ben: The Modern Inventions of Benjamin Franklin*, by Gene Barretta (2008). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJS29nhoV_Y • Worksheets • Graphic organizers
	Functional language: • Giving instructions: imperatives and ordinal numbers • Structures used to describe products and materials: *It's used for*…, I*t is made of* …; and people (biography): *he was born*___, etc. • Comparatives and superlatives (consolidation) **Vocabulary related to inventions and inventors:** • Adjectives to describe materials and products • Products and materials • Verbs related to giving instructions, e.g. switch off, plug in, etc.
	Games and other communicative activities: • Placemat • Top trumps • Shouting dictations • Snap dragon • Back-to-back criss-cross guessing game
4. Artefact	In groups, learners create an invention to solve a real-world problem. They use graphic organizers to outline their ideas and create a PowerPoint presentation.

	To present their project, learners record their voice and create a tutorial about their invention. **Link to an example of one of the artefacts:** **https://drive.google.com/open?id=1nLOdQhT3m5otjdBtQou9XPE0tFPe-w5b**
5.Feedback/assessment	Learners play the video (screencast) to other classes, and answer questions. The audience votes for the project that was: • The most environmentally friendly • The easiest to build • The cheapest to make • The most useful

Eight steps to successful PBL

1. Get learners involved and present an anchor to set the stage for the project.
2. Involve learners in the creation of the driving question to set the objective of the project.
3. Break down the topic (inventions) into specific tasks and use different ways to present related content, e.g. videos, songs, graphic organizers, communicative games, stories, etc.
4. Divide your class into project groups.
5. Set roles and tasks for each of the members of the groups.
6. Facilitate scaffolding and monitor the creation of the artefact.
7. Help learners choose effective ways to present their artefact.
8. Facilitate different ways in which learners can reflect on the project.

Classroom management techniques

During the time I have delivered teacher training workshops on PBL in Spain, teachers have expressed concerns about the three main skills practiced in PBL: ***critical thinking, communication*** and ***collaboration.*** Some of the questions asked by teachers (and by myself as a teacher) include queries such as: "How can my 10-year-old students with a very low level of English express critical thinking?" "When my 25 students are working on a project, the communication is mainly in their native language. How can this help in the acquisition of the foreign language?" "During the creation of a project, students have to work collaboratively. This creates a very "active classroom", which leads to behaviour issues. How can I finish a project if I have to concentrate on classroom management?"

Here are some techniques that may facilitate the implementation of PBL units across the curriculum:

- **Formatively assess on a regular basis.** In order to make sure learners are getting the content and skills they need, they need to be assessed on a regular basis. Use online quizzes, communicative games (trivia), wall readings, running dictations, etc.

- **Use team performance and behaviour contracts.** Students are more likely to follow the norms of the classroom when they set them themselves, especially in their groups. Use templates, give samples and other resources to have students create effective contracts through which to manage themselves.

- **Differentiate instruction through grouping.** When doing PBL projects that demand a lot of reading and writing, it is recommended to create teams with varying reading and writing ability, for example. However, students appreciate you taking into account their preferences when forming a group, and it helps negotiation. Create activities in which students can choose their own members of the group, too.

- **Jigsaw expert groups.** Give each student different information, so that they can complement each other and become an expert on their topic within the group.

- **Functional language frames** should be provided to the students on the board and on pieces of paper, so that the learners have them available when trying to communicate.

- **Have learners actively reflect** on the different steps of their project: ideas, organization, and implementation, among others.

- **Make a timetable for the project with the learners**, so that they are aware of deadlines and time frames.

Instructional procedures involved in PBL

Project-based learning uses a wide variety of instructional procedures that involve individual work, group work, and the involvement of the community. Some of the instructional procedures involve the following:

- Lab demonstrations, and experiments.
- Conceptual mind mapping, and brainstorming methods.
- Journaling or recording the students' construction of knowledge through the process of creating the project, e.g. wall displays (see image), diaries, portfolios.
- Student-driven presentations.
- Instructional videos.
- Manipulating content.
- Online resources.

Conclusion

Project-based learning is relevant to our students' needs and therefore motivating. It not only helps students acquire a language more effectively and enables them to consolidate specific content, but it also encourages them to be aware of the way they learn (metacognitive awareness). It encourages an inclusive way of learning, in which social and cognitive skills are practiced. The benefits of PBL go beyond the classroom walls and put the students on a path to lifelong learning.

Biodata

Lola Garay Abad is a teacher, a teacher trainer and a specialist in SLA, SLDs and CLIL. She has been in education for the last 17 years. She has managed academic programs, published classroom material and created and delivered teaching development programs, conferences and workshops for educators in mainstream education and language teaching in Spain, Portugal, the UK, the US, and Latin America, among others. She works in public education, teaching Science, English, and other subjects in Primary and Secondary. She is also involved in research and works as an educational consultant in various public and private schools across the country.
https://www.linkedin.com/in/lolagarayabad/

Back to the table of contents

Sabadell Professional

APAC

Una cosa és dir que treballem en PRO dels professionals.
Una altra és fer-ho:

Compte
Expansió PRO

Bonifiquem la teva quota d'associat

1/6
Aquest nombre és indicatiu del risc del producte. Així, 1/6 és indicatiu de menys risc i 6/6 és indicatiu de més risc.

Banco de Sabadell, S.A. es troba adherit al Fons Espanyol de Garantia de Dipòsits d'Entitats de Crèdit. La quantitat màxima garantida actualment pel fons esmentat és de 100.000 euros per dipositant.

10% de la teva quota d'associat màxim 50 euros* primer any.
+ 0 comissions d'administració i manteniment.[1]
+ 1% de devolució dels teus principals rebuts domèstics[2] fins a 20€ bruts/mes.
+ Gratuïtes targetes de crèdit i de dèbit.[3]

Truca'ns al 900 500 170, identifica't com a membre del teu col·lectiu, organitzem una reunió i comencem a treballar.

* Bonificació del 10% de la quota d'associat amb un màxim de 50 euros per compte amb la quota domiciliada, per a nous clients de captació. La bonificació es realitzarà un únic any per a les quotes domiciliades durant els 12 primers mesos, comptant com a primer mes, el de l'obertura del compte. El pagament es realitzarà en compte el mes següent dels 12 primers mesos.
1. TAE 0%
2. Et tornem, cada mes, l'1% dels teus rebuts domiciliats de llum, gas, telèfon fix, mòbil i Internet (fins a 20 euros bruts al mes, sempre que l'import de la devolució sigui igual o superior a 1 euro). Per això, durant el mes has de fer un mínim de cinc compres amb la targeta de dèbit o crèdit del teu Compte Expansió PRO. I, evidentment, hi pots domiciliar tots els rebuts que vulguis. Nosaltres ens encarreguem de totes les gestions.
3. Targetes de crèdit i dèbit gratuïtes, sense quota d'emissió ni manteniment, amb el servei Protecció Targetes associat i amb una assegurança d'accidents en viatge de fins a 120.000 euros. Tot, gratuïtament amb el teu Compte Expansió PRO.
Oferta vàlida per a nous comptes oberts des del 08/10/2018 fins al 30/06/2019 amb la domiciliació d'una nova nòmina, pensió o ingrés regular mensual per un import mínim de 700 euros en el Compte Expansió PRO. Se n'exclouen els ingressos procedents de comptes oberts en el grup Banc Sabadell a nom del mateix titular. Si tens entre 18 i 29 anys, no cal domiciliar cap ingrés periòdic. Els titulars d'un Compte Expansió PRO en podran disposar d'un altre d'addicional sense requisits de domiciliació de nòmina, pensió o ingressos mensuals recurrents. I, a més a més, tots els Comptes Professional que vulguis, sense comissió d'administració i de manteniment (rendibilitat Compte Professional: 0% TAE).

Pot fer extensiva aquesta oferta als seus empleats i familiars de primer grau.

sabadellprofessional.com

Captura el codi QR i coneix la nostra news 'Professional Informa'

Banco de Sabadell, S.A. av. Óscar Esplà, 37, 03007 Alacant. Inscrit en el Registre Mercantil d'Alacant, tom 4070, foli 1, full A 156980. NIF A-08000143 Condicions revisables en funció de l'evolució del mercat. S'aplicaran les que estiguin en vigor al banc en el moment de la formalització. Document publicitari. Feche de emisión: Desembre 2018.

Teaching in Miami: The Experience of an Exchange Science Teacher

Antònia Cladera Bohigas
Institut Eugeni d'Ors. Badalona.
Mater Academy East. Miami

Abstract

For two years, I have worked as an exchange Science teacher in Miami, U.S.A. This was after being selected in the *Profesores Visitantes en USA y Canadá* Program offered by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science. In this article, I will recount my professional adventure in this city. I will explain my motivations for working abroad and how I adapted to a new way to teach. I will describe the organization of a charter school in Miami, detailing the structure of a classroom and class schedules. I will share my experience in classroom management, an aspect of teaching that made it easier to get incredible results in the subjects I taught, controlling my students from the moment they entered the class until they left it. Finally, I will list some of the resources that I used in my classes to boost my students' creativity.

Image 1. Miami

Introduction. Why move to the USA? Fears and expectations.

I applied for the program in the fall of 2015, aiming for an international opportunity to experience with my family. We expected to improve our linguistic skills, but also to open our minds to other ways of working and living.

We knew that the beginning wouldn't be easy. Until that moment I had always worked as a Vocational Learning teacher, and most of my students had been adults. I didn´t know what kind of students or subjects I would have to deal with in the United States.

Regarding my family, our teenage sons would have to adapt to a completely different environment, far away from their relatives, and to attend a new school, with new subjects, organization and approaches.

In this article I will go into the professional aspects of my stay in depth, but readers must understand that moving to another country is a challenge in many aspects, especially if you go with your family.

The days before students start school. A classroom tour.

I was sent to a small, charter, middle/high school in a neighborhood called Little Havana. Charter schools are public schools of choice; they are owned by individuals or organizations but are controlled by public district school boards. Tuition, books and materials are totally free for the families.

Little Havana (*Pequeña Habana*) is a neighborhood whose population mainly comes from Central America. I was told that most of my students would be Nicaraguan, Honduran and Guatemalan, with a few from Cuba as well. They use English as their preferred language for social and school relations, although Spanish was their native language.

I was assigned to teach two subjects in English: Chemistry and Anatomy & Physiology. Before classes started, the teachers had to prepare the course: we attended meetings, read manuals, and carried out team-building activities, among other tasks. Everything was absolutely new to me, and therefore on many occasions I needed further explanations. Fortunately, I found good colleagues who helped me. It was shocking for them that I didn't understand words related to the school organization that they had used all their life: periods, homeroom, syllabus, rosters, EOCs. Little by little, I learned a different way to work. I think it took me nine weeks (a grading period) to fully understand the foundations of the system.

One of the most surprising aspects I encountered was the fact that teachers had their own classroom (it was used for the classes and as an office, as well). I was supposed to organize dozens (and by the end of the year, thousands) of documents and decorate the room before the arrival of my students. On the walls I had to hang posters, rules, slogans, differentiated instruction teams (lists of students for each group), word walls (spaces designed for vocabulary words)…

One peculiar characteristic of the classroom was a specific board configuration; a way to divide your board following certain standard directions. The information in these squares had to be updated every day before the students entered the class. To be honest, once I had put aside the space for the bell ringer, homework, class objectives and standards, there was little space left for my notes and explanations. As a Chemistry teacher, I had to explain to the students how to solve problems, and because I needed space to make layouts and drawings, I opted for a reduced version of the board configuration. Before the school year started, somebody from the managing board would have a look at my classroom to check that it was ready to receive my students.

In conclusion, the aim of this work is to organize the class, establish daily class routines and rules, and motivate the students

On the last page of this article you will find a reference to a video, "*A classroom tour*". I found it very inspiring, as this way of organizing the space is much more than decoration: it is the beginning of real classroom management, which I will develop further on.

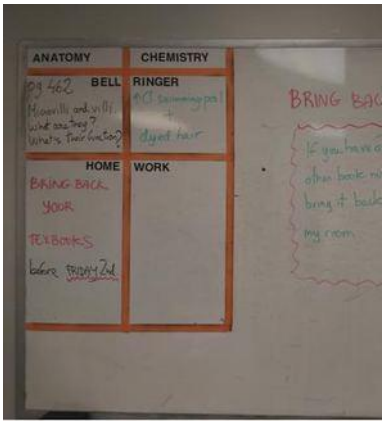


Image 2: Schedule board

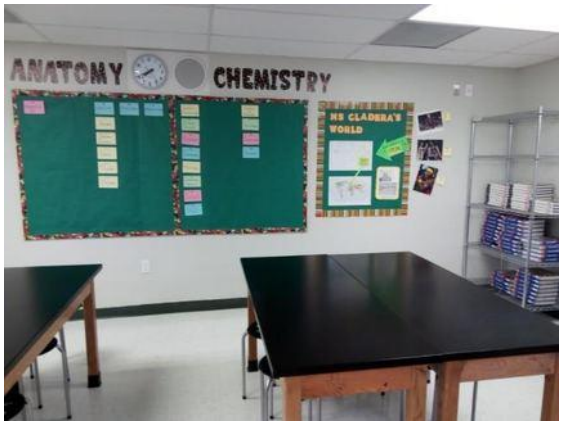


Image 3. Decorations: Word wall

Organization of a charter school in Miami

To start with, it is important to know that in the United States, education is mandatory until the age of 18. The "No Child Left Behind Act", passed in 2001, supports the use of standards to improve individuals' results. It also includes provisions applying to disadvantaged students. Both the Federal and the State government set annual tests to assess the progress of the students of all levels.

An essential characteristic of this system is that every student has a unique class schedule. There are some subject requirements for graduation: the school counselor recommends to the students the subjects they should take every year, and each student can choose some elective ones. For this reason, there isn't a "class group," as happens in Catalonia.

A subject can be taken in different ways, depending on the level of difficulty: regular (lower difficulty), honor (higher than regular) and AP (Advanced Placement; subjects supervised and graded by a university). This leads to a wide range of diversity in the final achievements of the students in a school.

The day is organized into several periods, or frames of time, for each subject. Teachers tend to work 8 hours every day, in which they teach students for 5 or 6 hours. As teachers must grade each student 2 or 3 times every week, teaching and grading is a tough job. This was my daily schedule for the entire year:

Time	**Period**	**Monday to Friday**
8:00 - 9:15	1	Chemistry
9:15 - 10:15	2	Chemistry
10:15 - 12:00 (includes a 35' lunch break)	3	Chemistry
12:00 - 1:00	4	Anatomy and Physiology
1:00 - 2:00	5	Planning Period (free time to grade or plan the following week)
2:00 - 3:00	6	Chemistry

The schools are very well organized, and everything is under control. Not only are the students' grades shared on a platform named Gradebook (to which students, teachers, principals and authorities have access), but the teacher must write a Lesson Plan for each subject every week, which is reviewed by other teachers and managers. The Lesson Plan must fulfill the requirements of the district (contents, standards, procedures, …).

As I said, high school tuition and materials are completely free, although charter schools are constantly organizing fundraising activities to collect money for trips, activities and programs. From selling doughnuts and cookies in the class to organizing festivals and contests, any idea was welcome to get some money.

First days of school to set the classroom management

The first days of school are a mix of fretful feelings and positive expectations. I worked 2 years as an exchange teacher in Miami**,** and if I had to assess my performance during my first year, I wouldn't be very enthusiastic. I think my students learnt quite a lot, but I struggled so much! Some of the activities and lab practices I prepared proved to be too complicated, or not useful for my objectives, or too long for one period (in my school, they were around one hour long). In addition to this, I found it hard to control misbehavior: some of my students seemed to be in my class just to relax and chat with others. Therefore, I would summarize my first year as a period of adaptation; some days I was happy just to survive. Maybe I am too hard on myself (my bosses qualified my work as being highly effective both years), but that's how I felt.

So, in the second year, I decided to improve my teaching experience, be less stressed, and assess higher goals. Did I succeed? Yes, through classroom management. One of my colleagues, Lourdes Puente, a Science teacher who helped me so much, lent me a book that changed my way of teaching. It is called *The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher* (by Harry K. Wong and Rose Mary T. Wong). I studied it the summer before my second year; I took notes and I decided to implement many of its ideas.

I don´t have enough space in this article to explain all of the actions I took to improve my classroom management, but I will point out some of them:

1. **Prepare the classroom** as I explained in the section "The days before students start. A classroom tour".

2. **Seating arrangements and seat assignments:** Arrangement refers to how to place the desks. For instance, for lectures in which the teacher gives oral explanations, the students must sit looking at the teacher; for cooperative work and labs, they must be seated in groups. Furthermore, an effective teacher must assign the seat to each student and it should not be a topic of discussion. Also, the teacher can change the seating chart when necessary: many times it is advisable to separate two students due to behavior problems, or it is necessary to place certain students near the teacher because they get distracted easily. For me, the assigning of seats has at least two advantages. It's a tool for controlling misbehavior; and you save time when taking attendance, as you do not have to call students' names aloud. You can tell who is absent by simply looking at the seats.

3. **Teach the students how to enter the class and get them to do the lesson's bell ringer activity:** *Enter in silence*. *Start doing the bell ringer activity* (work assigned for the first 5 minutes of class). It is always stated in the same place on the board, so the students do not

have to ask what to do, and it always has to be done on the same support (in my case, a bell ringer paper handed out to them on Monday and collected on Friday). In my opinion, the bell ringer activity has three advantages:

- Most students immediately sit down to work, and the teacher does not have to struggle to start the class.
- It is a useful tool for remembering the content studied the day before.
- Punctuality in entering the class is improved. Students that arrive late won't have time to finish the task.

4. **Be consistent.** I think that most of the actions in a class must follow this core idea. Classroom practices and procedures should be easy to predict and in harmony with your rules and expectations. The first days of class are essential for the students to learn what to expect in the class. For this reason, during the first two weeks of my class, I devoted most of my time to explaining my rules and describing the positive or negative consequences of following them or failing to do so. I also told them that my classes would be very well organized, and I set the procedures for working, turning in the tasks, and methodizing the daily assignments.

Some useful resources and activities

If you are supposed to teach in an American high school, forget long explanations, dozens of vocabulary words to memorize at home, and pages and pages of content to remember and then forget right after the test. These methods have long been banished from the schools. Instead: let them do, do, do... Students are doers, they want to be active, they need to feel they are the center of their learning process. The teacher must provide activities to promote learning in class and shouldn't expect the students to memorize and study hard for an exam, as they aren't used to it.

Here I will summarize some of the methodologies I applied and activities I carried out in my classes:

- **Short labs and hands-on activities**, every week! In Science, it is fundamental to learn and understand concepts by trying and comparing scientific phenomena with everyday facts. Many of these activities require very simple materials (for example, using colored paper clips to represent molecules).

- **Gizmos**, a fantastic application to simulate labs on your cell phone or computer. It powers inquiry and understanding and is available at https://www.explorelearning.com/

- **Edmodo (https://www.edmodo.com/)** is a platform for connecting students, teachers and parents. I used it in a similar way to Moodle, although it is simpler.

- **Anatomical dissections.** My students used a pig's heart and a sheep's brain to perform excellent dissections and were able to explain the function of each part of the organs.

- **Use flash-cards** to learn vocabulary (on paper or using applications like quizlet.com).

- In general, **boost the creativity of the students**: let them work on a wide range of projects using powerpoints, Kahoot (another fun app), posters, oral presentations… Also, let them carry out and present their own projects and labs. After a few weeks working in an American high school, anyone would be able to appreciate that students are much better at projects than at tests.

Personal and social aspects of the exchange

Working in a high school has been an unforgettable experience, but the greatest achievement, for me and my family, has been in the personal and social matters. The Spanish exchange teachers sent to Miami became much more than colleagues, and we also established a wonderful friendship with neighbors, coworkers and people we found along our way. People living in Miami make up an incredible cultural kaleidoscope: Europe, Latin America, Canada and Asia are represented in this colorful and musical city. Very often, the lives of these people and their families could be the write-up for a movie or a book. In fact, one of the teachers on the program got the inspiration to write a novel (*La boca de los cien besos*, by Tula Fernandez, available through Amazon).

Integrating into a different way of life without judging it is an important learning experience. We got used to having lunch before noon, to following certain dress codes at work and to commuting by Uber (as public transportation barely exists). We learned how to prepare for a hurricane, and, sadly, teachers had to get instructed on how to prevent harm in case of a school shooting.

But we also enjoyed happy hour encounters in the bars (sometimes with Catalan entrepreneurs, sometimes promoted by the school), we had barbecues on the beach in winter and danced salsa at so many parties!

Most exchange teachers take the chance to travel to other states and American countries. During the first 6 months we drove all over Florida, then we started to explore a lot of states in the U.S.A, and then also Cuba and Colombia. Therefore, I can't say Miami was just a professional experience; it was a vital opportunity that changed our minds.

Conclusion

I must say that participating in an Exchange Teacher program is a wonderful opportunity to grow both as a professional and as a person. In my case, I learnt how to be an efficient teacher, I improved my English level, and, although working in that country is extenuating, I had time to make friends and to explore the city and part of the country.

In my opinion, the American education system has some advantages: the curriculum is variable and students can choose the subjects that best fit their needs. Also, most students succeed in high school and have opportunities in their lives. The biggest drawback is that there isn't a group-class and an assigned tutor; the education is more "academic" and less personal and social than in our system.

The experience was positive for my family, too. My husband found a job and learned to work in an English-speaking environment. My sons got good grades at school and didn't have problems entering the university in Catalonia or continuing their studies in "Batxillerat". They appreciated the opportunity to get to know a country so different from ours, with some strong points and others that they didn`t like so much.

For these reasons, I would encourage teachers to participate in any of the work abroad programs that are offered. It changes you forever!

References

Agape Management. A classroom tour. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7z0495hJXk
Florida Department of Education. http://www.fldoe.org/

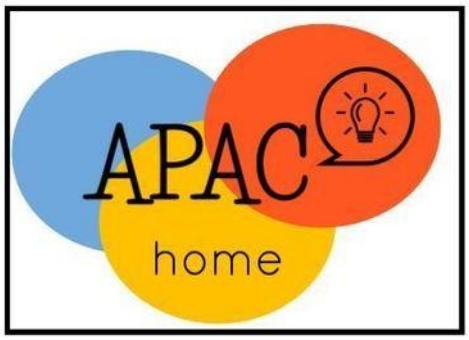
Gizmo (online science simulations). https://www.explorelearning.com/
US Government. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 https://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.pdf
Wong, H. K., and Wong, R. M. T. *The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher. (book and DVD).* Mountain View, CA, USA: Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc.

Biodata

Antònia Cladera Bohigas holds a degree in Pharmacy from the Universitat de Barcelona and is a Vocational Education and Training teacher in the field of the Healthcare. She worked for seven years as a regulatory affairs technician for BioSystems, a multinational pharmaceutical company. In 2005 she started to work as a VET/Teacher in Escola *Solc Nou* (Barcelona) and since 2011 she is a teacher at *Institut Eugeni d'Ors* (Badalona). In 2016 she was selected for the program "*Profesores Visitantes en USA y Canadá"* and served as a high school Science teacher for two years, using the English language. In addition, she has collaborated with the *Departament d'Ensenyament,* coordinating courses related to CLIL in Vocational Learning.

She loves teaching because she can help young people to develop personally and professionally, and she thinks this task is extremely rewarding. She is also committed to innovating in her classroom and has two goals: to motivate students by using practical methodologies and to include the English language in their learning process.

Back to the table of contents


APAC
home