

EIL based on research creation-projects that facilitate English learning and intercultural revitalization for Ecuadorian communities through the arts: the story of UAProyectkids

- (es) EIL basado en proyectos de investigación-creación que faciliten el aprendizaje del inglés y la revitalización intercultural entre comunidades ecuatorianas a través de las artes: la historia de UAProyectkids
- (Port) EIL baseado em projetos de criação de pesquisa que facilitam o aprendizado de inglês e a revitalização intercultural para comunidades equatorianas por meio das artes: a história da UAProyectkids

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Abstract (en)

UAProyectKids is an EFL **community outreach action research** project based on the creation of artistic and pedagogical material for learning the English language from Ecuador's local intercultural experiences. It was implemented at an art's public university in Guayaquil, Ecuador, where students from different artistic careers take English classes in order to graduate with a B1 level, but also to engage in transdisciplinary practice and creation with this foreign language. A collaborative methodological approach was used to determine how students should create these pedagogical resources while practicing their English in the process of creation throughout the semester. Results were measured by formative examinations and other instruments to record students' perceptions on project based learning and collaborative sessions from the pedagogical innovation strategy.

Furthermore, inter institutional cooperation and feedback enabled students to improve the quality of their projects, which included final products such as vocabulary flashcards, illustrated tales, audio books, and animated short films. Moreover, organized field trips to different communities and schools in the coastal and highland regions of Ecuador were able to guarantee the replication of the creative model for practicing English from relevant intercultural contexts that were worked with community members and children. This article is a must-read for any teacher or researcher interested in knowing about project-based learning experiences and its applications in the EFL field. It is also intended for institutions seeking to implement pedagogical innovations that help students awaken their collaborative learning by paying it forward to other learning communities.

Keywords: EFL, project-based learning, collaborative environments, community outreach, action research.

Resumen

UAProyectKids es un proyecto de investigación-acción de extensión comunitaria EFL basado en la creación de material artístico y pedagógico para el aprendizaje del idioma inglés a partir de las experiencias interculturales locales de Ecuador. Se implementó una universidad pública de artes en Guayaquil, Ecuador, donde estudiantes de diferentes carreras artísticas toman clases de inglés para graduarse con un nivel B1, pero también para dedicarse a la práctica y creación transdisciplinaria con esta lengua extranjera. Se utilizó un enfoque metodológico colaborativo para determinar cómo los estudiantes deben crear estos recursos pedagógicos mientras practican su inglés en el proceso de creación a lo largo del semestre. Los resultados se midieron mediante exámenes formativos y otros instrumentos para registrar las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el aprendizaje basado en proyectos y las sesiones colaborativas de la estrategia de innovación pedagógica.

Además, la cooperación interinstitucional y la retroalimentación permitieron a los estudiantes mejorar la calidad de sus proyectos, que incluyeron productos finales como tarjetas de vocabulario, cuentos ilustrados, audiolibros y cortometrajes animados. Además, las visitas de campo organizadas a diferentes comunidades y escuelas en las regiones de la costa y la sierra de Ecuador pudieron garantizar que el modelo creativo se replicara con el fin de practicar inglés desde contextos interculturales relevantes trabajados con niños, niñas y miembros de su comunidad. Cualquier profesor o investigador interesado en conocer la experiencia del aprendizaje basado en proyectos aplicado al campo de EFL debería leer este artículo. También está destinado a instituciones que buscan implementar innovaciones pedagógicas que ayuden a los estudiantes a despertar su aprendizaje colaborativo al devolverlo a otras comunidades de aprendizaje.

Palabras claves: EFL, aprendizaje basado en proyectos, entornos colaborativos, alcance comunitario, investigación-acción.

Summary

UAProyectKids é um projeto de pesquisa-ação de alcance comunitário de EFL baseado na criação de material artístico e pedagógico para aprender a língua inglesa a partir de experiências interculturais locais do Equador. Foi implementado em uma universidade pública de arte em Guayaquil, Equador, onde alunos de diferentes carreiras artísticas fazem aulas de inglês para se formar com o nível B1, mas também para se engajar na prática transdisciplinar e na criação com esta língua estrangeira. Uma abordagem metodológica colaborativa foi usada para determinar como os alunos devem criar esses recursos pedagógicos enquanto praticam seu inglês no processo de criação ao longo do semestre. Os resultados foram medidos por exames formativos e outros instrumentos para registrar as percepções dos alunos sobre a aprendizagem baseada em projetos e sessões colaborativas da estratégia de inovação pedagógica.

Além disso, a cooperação interinstitucional e o feedback permitiram aos alunos melhorar a qualidade de seus projetos, que incluíam produtos finais como flashcards de vocabulário, contos ilustrados, livros de áudio e curtas-metragens de animação. Além disso, viagens de campo organizadas a diferentes comunidades e escolas nas regiões costeiras e serranas do Equador foram capazes de garantir a replicação do modelo criativo para praticar o inglês a partir de contextos interculturais relevantes que foram trabalhados com membros da comunidade e crianças. Este artigo é uma leitura obrigatória para qualquer professor ou pesquisador interessado em conhecer experiências de aprendizagem baseadas em projetos e suas aplicações no campo de EFL. Destina-se também a instituições que buscam implementar inovações pedagógicas que ajudem os alunos a despertar sua aprendizagem colaborativa, repassando-a para outras comunidades de aprendizagem.

Palavras-chave: EFL, aprendizagem baseada em projetos, ambientes colaborativos, alcance da comunidade, pesquisa-ação.

Introduction

English as a Foreign Language has remained a relevant field of study for pedagogues and teachers around the world, considering that the English language remains a coveted globalizing means for international academic programs and professional markets (BGU, 2016); besides, it has exacerbated use in online interaction, tourism, and even intercultural encounters. From this need to develop English as a Foreign Language programs, many pedagogical and methodological proposals have emerged in the field of TEFL, to teach people from differing continents and cultures about ways to acquire, learn and use English for their livelihood.

In the context of Ecuador, English skills are taught and measured in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001), and have placed students from this country 65 in the ranking out of 80 Latin American countries in terms on English knowledge and use. The test from this council situated Ecuador at an even lower level for the writing skill.

The low ranking comes to no surprise given the lack of English programs in the nation. Furthermore, English programs that do exist seldom provide the adequate learning experiences for students, mainly by not ensuring environments and meaningful contexts for language learners to remain engaged and strive for intermediate and high English levels (Tsui & Ng, 2000). Ecuador has a considerable population living in remote areas of the countryside without access to Internet and bilingual education programs on site. This reality affects short and long-term opportunities for the Ecuadorian academic and professional population, regardless of their field or background. Therefore, how bilingual education programs can operate in Ecuadorian territory, facilitating English practice and learning, must be rethought to bring about meaningful lenses and projects for acquiring this foreign language while also improving values like interculturality, environmental care, artistic education, and community building.

The following article summarizes the story of UAProyectKids, a project-based initiative addressing the need for better bilingual education in remote learning communities through artistic and relevant content creation. This class project is born inside the Foreign Language Department of Universidad de las Artes of Ecuador (UArtes), the only national public Arts university located in the city of Guayaquil, on the Ecuadorian coast. From 2021 to 2023, it has developed into an exemplary community outreach project, which is set to conduct action research on pedagogical strategies that can be implemented in higher education academic programs to: 1) make EFL a more meaningful endeavor within students' pre professional interests and skills; 2) augment the number of English users in academic and professional communities through local intercultural and artistic education, innovating how we think about academic programs in the country.

During the initial unfolding of this project, in which art students from different careers were encouraged to create pedagogical products and contents that could help teach basic English to Ecuadorian kids from their own intercultural experiences in the country's remote and diverse territory, these research questions persisted:

- To what extent do students find relevance in acquiring a foreign language through their artistic creation and intercultural awareness?
- What are the advantages of implementing an EFL program that prioritizes learning by collaborative creation of artistic pedagogical ludic material based on Ecuador's local intercultural experiences?

Theory

The field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) has promoted English learning programs in various continents for decades now. However, approaches from before were setting up the language as a means for perpetuating neocolonial and culturally irrelevant education to native communities (Alsagoff et al, 2012). Consequently, there has been a wide call among researchers and pedagogues from the field to teach English as an International Language (EIL); the supporters of this shift argue that English has features which influence the relationship between language and culture, and these should be carefully examined when developing curriculum for communities that have not been exposed to English before. Another important consideration brought upon in recent years is the need for TEFL to acknowledge the importance of intercultural awareness, given that students are "intercultural" speakers and must be made aware about the negotiations between their own culture and the target culture to overcome (Boss & Krauss, 2007., p. 82).

A notable effort to combat inefficient TEFL approaches to learning English has been Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), an approach known for incorporating meaningful knowledge from other subjects to stimulate language learning in classrooms. This integrated content has included intercultural and relevant contexts for strengthening the engagement of English users in their environments, whether it be online, semi presential or remote. For CLIL to be effective, Mehisto et al. (2008) assert that language and content must become integrated, accommodating states of meaningful communication among teachers and students, improving the comprehension of English in the process.

This approach also determines Collaborative Learning as a crucial element in community outreach because it emphasizes a sense of community for learning. As Brown (2014) mentioned, a classroom environment that allows for interdependence stimulates the atmosphere of cooperative responsibility, mutual respect, and a sense of group identity; lesson plans based on these values promote academic progress and learning motivation by having more opportunities to practice their problem-solving, communication and social skills. Collaborative activities in any form of classroom help student academically, socially, and psychologically as it improves critical thinking and develops social support for students and teachers (Roberts, 2005).

UAProyectKids' story began when members from the foreign language department at UArtes opted for meaningful collaborative environments for their art students, whose English lessons have been inspiring them to learn by creating for communities in their country. The methodology and four phases of this project are explained in the following sections, later discussing the possibilities of this proposal to undergo quantitative - qualitative research in the upcoming semesters of 2023 here in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Methodology

UAProyectKids (UAPK) aims to be implemented as an action research project with community outreach opportunities nationwide. For this project to last, teachers and project managers must "make student participants play a decisive part in conceiving and setting up the purpose of their learning in order to serve others" (Papadopoulos & Kosma, 2018: 4). The following section describes the participants and four important phases that had to be progressively activated to meet the aims for the UAPK project and brand:

- The academic phase (January, 2018 - ongoing):
- The pre professional intra institutional phase (January, 2021 - ongoing)
- The community outreach inter institutional phase (November, 2021 - March, 2023)
- The final inter institutional phase for community learning (March, 2023 - ongoing)

These phases will be described to tell the story of UAPK; then leading us to the discussion of results and recommendations for members of the pedagogical EIL community who would like to conduct further research about this program.

- Participants
- Sample/Participants

Every semester, the sample of student participants is 48 (n) (24 males and 24 females approximately) who range from 18 to 30 years old; all come from Hispanic backgrounds and 95% have an Ecuadorian nationality. These participants study at a public arts university in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Participants who take the EFL class have an English level which ranges from B1 to B2 levels, according to international certification, which is a graduation requirement for higher education standards in Ecuador; thus, the exclusionary factor is that all participants come from artistic backgrounds and must take 16 - week TEFL courses each semester to acquire their required English level for graduation. Likewise, students who engage with the project outside the classroom have the main objective of contributing with didactic material - artistic in English, to foster the socio-environmental development of Ecuadorian childhood and adolescence, within culturally relevant contexts in their communities; they use their pre professional hours to meet this objective in transdisciplinary and collaborative creation and English practice, and abide by the 16 - week activities and deadline explained further below.

PHASE 1

This phase corresponds to my core teaching philosophy and the origin of UAPK. Upon arriving to UArtes as a EFL teacher, my students and I began developing and prototyping educational projects for kids as the semester's final project, as well as for comprehensive application of the knowledge gained. Back in 2018, was mostly working with A1 levels, who had to apply what they had learned to create illustrated tales, audiobooks, and other works for learning English through arts and socio environmental education. This academic project was embedded in a 16 to 17 - week semester, and integral to the English classes offered by the Foreign Language Department of the university.

This academic phase was crucial to the research questions that started the project. English instructions were set up along the semester through a relevant context for UArtes students, who to this day become artistic creators and managers of this brand every semester to share the following mission and vision:

MISSION: To be a sustainable repository of free access to educational, artistic, and recreational products with socio-environmental and cultural relevance, collaboratively generated by the UArtes ecosystem to provide support for learning English through the arts for Ecuadorian society, with an approach to childhood and adolescence in Ecuador.

VISION: we will be a global benchmark of pedagogical-ludic artistic material to promote bilingual interculturality in Ecuador, with the purpose of achieving empowerment in childhood and adolescence with a global approach, promoting the emergence of agents of change within their learning communities in order to influence socio-environmental solutions through the arts.

While the expectations were high, they allowed the project to progress through each stage successfully over the years. To learn a foreign language, contexts matter. And it was evident for me as their teacher to point out how their country had failed to provide bilingual programs that would have granted them a stronger foundation in English learning since childhood.

This failure would creep into the next generations of children unless university students were able to take their own English learning seriously and apply it to the creation of learning tools and means for others. Therefore, this mission towards a vision launched this collective creative endeavor, and participants involved still had to achieve the required English level.

It is not my intention to get into EFL lesson planning for this story. Just bear in mind UArtes students were engaged by this project - based learning assignment because it allowed them to create content and pedagogical resources about the same things they were starting to grasp in English. Furthermore, they were bestowed this generational responsibility to break the cycle of poor English resources and pedagogies within their context. This relevance contributed to their emancipation from previous notions about their learning; in turn, this redirected their willingness to learn for benefitting their own professional growth, critical thinking in their fields of study, and the impact their creativity can make on others.

To briefly explain the semester's dynamics, students worked on the project during the two partials of the semester. The first eight weeks were devoted to determining each student's English abilities and things to work on, while learning the basic grammar, vocabulary and functional language topics for the UAPK project; by the third and fifth week, students had tutoring sessions for writing the narratives, scripts and other textual support that had to be approved before the product creation for pass/fail endorsement core.

The eight last weeks of the semester were geared towards product production, for which students started working together and with transdisciplinary innovation: groups of musicians, visual artists, performing artists, writers and even community members would sign up for the UAPK experience, always under the guidance of the English instructor to ensure product's quality for academic use and sharing with learning communities.

The dynamic and engaging rush woven by the project towards the end of the semester would conclude with final product presentations. At the beginning of this academic phase, we would invite school groups from elementary and secondary public institutions. The university began endorsing bus rides and facilities for students to enjoy fantastically ingenious illustrations, podcasts, theater plays and characters that were presented during the fare to facilitate English learning among the attendees. These pre pandemic times were experimental and joyous because English classes were making more sense, as well as the need to improve English levels for professional development in the art world.

When the pandemic hit, the mission and vision of this project went remote. The project-based learning initiative was able to survive thanks to the university's Moodle platform, which became indispensable for ensuring the class aims. Instead of presenting the products for just one day at a fair, now it was required for final project groups to learn Moodle programming in order to manage the assigned section for product storage. Despite working remotely, students were able to gain a greater sense of transdisciplinary unity for completing their products before the end of the virtual semester.

Throughout quarantine, UAPK grew its online notoriety, and began sharing the pedagogical products on social media. The University considered funding the project with its own online repository; however, many of the efforts were not viable due to budget cuts and the eventual return to a physical campus. Still, this phase has remained ongoing semester after semester because it works for the EIL program at UArtes. In accordance with the university's mission, it empowers a ripple effect among student creators to become responsible for their English practice, plus contribute with pedagogical artistic ludic products that can inspire better bilingual education classes and community workshops in lower levels of public education in Ecuador. With these ideas in mind, the project had to move onto its next phase.

PHASE 2

Given the limitations of keeping UAPK as an academic project, it was decided to officially register UAPK in the university's Community Outreach Department, allowing students outside the EIL program. Once project was approved, students who were not attending EFL courses were still able to participate and validate pre professional hours. In Ecuador, prior to graduation, students must complete 240 hours of work related to their craft or career (termed "prácticas laborales") and about 160 hours of community outreach work (termed "prácticas de vínculo comunitario"), which demands students to come up with or contribute to community building and outreach initiatives that address social, cultural, environmental and education problems in the local territories.

The students who committed during January 2021 had to follow the university's procedures to foster the project's grow within the university in exchange for them being able to meet their graduation requirement and validate their hours responsibly. The beneficiary and the student would agree on the terms for completing these hours, including objectives, activities, and products in exchange for the hours, proceeding to document this agreement for signing.

In this phase, the experience as an intern also included the mentorship of the Department of Community Outreach (termed: "Dirección de Vinculación"), to help activate the third phase by means of inter institutional agreements. And so, UAPK became a community outreach project, whose contribution to society would be to create pedagogical resources for the masses.

With the second phase properly approved and activated, students began taking interest in completing their pre professional practice hours with the project. UArtes is made of a diverse community of artists in formation, and they all need to complete these hours as a graduation requirement. Students have often struggled to find institutions, enterprises organization that can accommodate to increase motivation and commitment to the UAPK mission and vision within the UArtes community, it was best to offer some form of compensation to attract the creative force.

A lot was done for the project during this phase thanks to the help of competent interns. These students were smart enough to seize the opportunity of completing their pre professional hours inside a university project; besides the meetings and transdisciplinary work did not have to be in person, which gave way to an interrelated ecosystem of product creation that was overseen virtually. Moreover, creative managing positions were established during this phase in order to motivate leadership among interns, as well as to foment of proactivity and accountability for the creation of these products according to appropriate age level and theme. These group think exercises helped establish the project's brand beyond the classroom.

Some noteworthy achievements from the first generation of pre professional interns were: 1) the creation of an UAPK logo (branding process), 2) the establishment of UAPK lines of creation, and 3) the launching of an UAPK platform for product archive. Initial lines of product creation were distinguished by age groups and by four major themes promoted by the Ministry of Education: environment, interculturality, gender, and children's rights. The main objective for each incoming intern became to support the creation of artistic pedagogical and ludic material for facilitating English practice in local schools and communities; the common goal also gave students the chance to promote artistic and cultural education in kids and teens. With phase 2 activated, the project gained a more professionalizing route for students to not only learn English through transdisciplinary creation, but to also complete their graduation requirement hours through inter institutionalized community outreach, a crucial turning point which came in the third and fourth phase of the ever-unfolding UAPK project.

PHASE 3

Once UAPK became officially registered at UArtes, the project's growth was imminent. However, it still did not offer the adequate community outreach opportunities those involved to really interact and benefit learning communities with their products. To seize the interest among the student body, mainly composed by student artists who wanted creative pre professional opportunities for improving their knowledge and skills in their field of work, but also for benefitting education programs in learning communities, the director of the project started reaching out to other institutions that could help enrich the experience and scope of the project. The inter institutional liaison with organizations directly working in territory with communities became the main aim during phase 3.

Half a year into UAPK's viability for community hours, the project became part of an agreement for improving bilingual education programs in eleven communities from Guayas, Santa Elena and Manabi provinces in Ecuador. This agreement was signed on November 5, 2021, in the community of Curia, Santa Elena, between UArtes and two foundations, called "Fundación Vueltas" and "Unidos por la Educación" respectively. Both foundations had experience with multi criteria interventions in remote communities, attempting to improve socio economic relations, environmental policies, infrastructure, and education systems in these places. Their pedagogical input was based on the Chango model, an adaptation of the Montessori system of education that was advocating for the construction of sustainable and just communities, helping children's education focus on the self, the relation with the others, and the relation with one's environment. Their belief in reforming education systems was well received by UAPK's consolidated guild.

Prior to the signing of this document, students participating in the project at the time got to travel to these communities. The purpose for these visits was to document testimonies, landscapes, sounds, and audio-visual references, then store and share this field research evidence among the creative UAPK team members. During September and October of 2021, a total of eleven students covered the field trips to the different communities, guided by the organizations' representatives. During each trip, students met with local academic authorities and community leaders, who showed them around their territory and organized interviews and focal groups with members of the community. In some cases, particularly for the visits in Manabi, authorities were kind enough to provide food and lodging accommodations. They also mediated informative sessions and English workshops prepared by UAPK interns before their scheduled travels.

The archives stored served as artistic references for the creation of UAPK products. Soon, more interns were accepted to build a creative "army" (reference of group) that could guarantee quality products for pedagogical use in English classrooms. With more interns also came the diversification of the creative teams, which now included a team of writers, a team of illustrators, a team of music and sound production, and a team of audio-visual content producers for social media. Each team was presided by a creative manager, chosen, and supervised by the beneficiary of the project, who kept thinking about the need for creating a basic English program that communities could implement in their local public schools and institutes. The eleven communities UAPK visited needed a bilingual education program that could complement the education curriculum instituted by the Ministry of Education, to address this need, phase 4 of the project was initiated, which included the design and pilot of the Kuyay English program. This program was the result of collaboration between institutions.

PHASE 4

As soon as the tripartite agreement was signed in Curia, representatives from the university and both organizations began meeting to conceive how to go about designing this basic English program. At that point in the story, it was necessary for all UAPK products to have a pedagogical north, being able to determine their criteria, quantity, and thematic elements for the flashcards, illustrated tales, audiobooks, podcasts, activities, and audiovisual content to be relevant and useful to support this final inter institutional phase for community learning. To do so, one more key institution was invited to help create this basic English program: Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE), a public university located in the province of Cañar, recognized for educating the teachers of tomorrow and contextualizing bilingual programs in Ecuador's mega diverse territory.

UNAE started working with all those involved on defining and determining the products that ought to be created for the basic English program. During 2022, representatives held sessions to guide the creation of three units worth of products to backbone the English program, which will be piloted by faculty at UNAE through their own community outreach program based on the collaboration with UArtes. It was agreed for each unit to have at least the following pedagogical products and resources: three set of flashcards, six illustrated tales, six podcasts or audiobooks, two forms of video content, and a comic strip. The creative proposals also had to abide by three main contexts for children in communities to easily learn A1 level of English: natural and artificial environments, traditional myths, and food habits. These macro topics for each unit were chosen as a shout out to Fundación Vueltas and Unidos por la Educación since both organizations teach under the Chango model.

One final topic distinction was proposed by UArtes: each unit was going to be based on a region visited during 2021 by the UAPK interns. Thus, the products from the first unit would feature environmental, mythical and habitual content based on the Ecuadorian coasts, particularly near towns of Ayampe, Curia and Puerto Engabao; products from the second unit would feature the same but based on the regions of Bucay, near the humid forests, cascades and Shuar communities; finally, in honor of our pedagogical allies, the products from the third unit were based on settlements, traditions and habits from the Cañar region, located in the highlands, where the UNAE campus resides. Throughout both semesters of 2022, UArtes students worked on meeting this product demand, either through final class projects or through pre professional projects with the UAPK brand. While working towards the goal with UNAE to finish PHASE 4, the team set up social media accounts to share and promote the increasingly consolidated products, making the project / brand more popular among the student community, local news channels and academic institutions.

The meetings held with UNAE and Vueltas - Unidos organizations also helped create pedagogical rubrics for evaluating the UAPK products. Because they were being made by PHASE 1 and PHASE 2 students, the products had to go through filters and revisions before reaching the intended quality and specificity for teaching English in the eleven communities. By the end of 2022, more students were signing up for the project, and all schools were now represented within the UAPK ecosystem; for this reason, a stricter path had to be imposed for product creation, albeit keeping the guiding principles of meaningful intercultural contexts and collaborative learning explored in the EFL classroom. In retrospective, the CLIL model was done at a much grander scale to evidence how far the project could go in terms of relevance and impact. But the point of undergoing PHASE 4 was for everyone involved to respect common criteria about the English language, within the relevant context of artistic intercultural education.

Thanks to the inter institutional involvement with these organizations and universities, the project has received pinpointed pedagogical demands. This path has boosted PHASE 1's ongoing relevance for EIL; it has also established order and professionalism for PHASE 2's ongoing community outreach and working

proposals; it has revealed how inter institutional cooperation can implement a great idea inside a territory, whose children deserve to have better bilingual education programs like “Kuyay: English through Arts”, for which the UAPK products have been crafted and donated.

The allies from UNAE have demanded the products for PHASE 4 to be ready by the end of March 2023. So, each prototype created must count for the intended Kuyay program. An inventory is scheduled for the final week of this month, and UAPK is expected to move onto a final phase, which will further answer the questions that have guided this project’s unfolding from the start. With all these four phases in place, it is time to conduct more quanti and qualitative research on the learning outcomes between students who learn through a project like UAPK and students who don’t. Will this project - based learning initiative also make a difference in elementary and secondary levels of education if it continues to be set into organized motion inside a creative ecosystem of English learners like the one flourishing in UArtes?

Discussion

Although working inter institutionally has been quite challenging, mainly due to compromising delays, the experience has been rewarding for the project. It has also begun to reveal the depth of the answers behind the research questions mentioned in this paper. To what extent do students find relevance in acquiring a foreign language through their artistic creation and intercultural awareness?

Students who took EIL classes with the UAPK final project found relevance in acquiring a foreign language through their artistic creation and intercultural awareness to a great extent. In a way, the project’s CLIL approach was extrapolated to such extent to keep the relevant learning contexts strong. Realistic and ominous collaborative scenarios were the main form of engagement throughout this experience, and students were allowed to make calls and make mistakes from the first to the fourth phase of the project. The requirement of learning and improving their English was intentionally linked with the social responsibility of creating for others; towards the second phase, their academic goals were linked to their professional aspirations and explorations, likewise increasing the professionalism inside context from which they were creating for kids. Therefore, for a public arts university, the UAPK project guaranteed a more relevant transmission of language through artistic productions. Something that really helped in this case was framing the project - based learning initiative on the need to improve the students’ own context. Even if some were intrinsically motivated to improve their English, the UAPK experience helped facilitate their own English learning and strengthened their commitment to English practice. By them not wanting their products to be another pile of uninteresting, poorly designed, and grammatically erroneous material, they raised their own bar for language comprehension and productivity.

What are the advantages of implementing an EFL program that prioritizes learning by collaborative creation of artistic pedagogical ludic material based on Ecuador’s local intercultural experiences?

Throughout these two years of project implementation, having given UAPK that community outreach spins off, some advantages have been made evident. If EIL university programs prioritize English learning through collaboration among students and community members, there will be greater engagement, sense, and discipline from all learners. Granted, the particularities of UArtes allowed for UAPK’s mission and vision to exist in the first place: the creation of artistic-pedagogical ludic material based on Ecuador’s local intercultural experiences. Nevertheless, if cultural strengths and professional knowledge are considered, a project just as relevant as UAPK could be created to impact EFL courses in any university, school, institute or community. Creative environments boost self-esteem in English users who are interacting for the sake of creating content that can help others or become relevant for intercultural backgrounds in this globalizing world.

Furthermore, if the learning process is tied to intercultural experiences in a determined territory, there is greater relevance in formative practice and content creation. In the case of UAPK, which started out as a classroom project, the community outreach phase revealed how easy it was to approach new communities and institutions to replicate the contextualization of their students' English learning. Since the products were thought about locally, the collaborative dynamics in the EFL classrooms could generate its own content and share it with other communities. More than a rigid education system, it turns into an intercultural movement, with transdisciplinary collaboration as the engine.

And if the language learning process is explored through even more relevant and engaging topics like ecology and arts, the ties between language and environment manifest to establish relationships that promote the culture and development of Ecuador without destroying our natural patrimonies and sustainable habits with the Earth. For this upcoming semester, these two questions will be further discussed through a comparative quanti qualitative research at UArtes.

Conclusions

The story of UAProyectKids presents twists and turns that can end up with an outstanding project for TEFL classrooms. Starting out as an in-class project-based initiative to engage art students in their A1 English learning, it quickly escalated to a community outreach program that promoted the creation of material artistic pedagogical and ludic materials and content to support English community learning from their very own intercultural experiences. Thanks to the institutional support, the project became registered and was able to validate pre professional practices for graduation; this was the best strategy to guarantee even more engagement for the project, but also more popularity for the brand among the student body. It became in their self-interest to practice English by participating in a project that wanted to meet the needs of society in terms of intercultural bilingual education through the arts.

The inter institutional liaisons with Fundación Vueltas, Unidos por la Educación, and Universidad Nacional de Educación were indispensable to integrate the language into meaningful content results. These pedagogical allies proposed the CLIL model to determine the pertinent content for UAPK products. The three units included the most relevant contexts in accordance with the Chango model, which prioritized the connection with the self, with others, and with the environment for children's education. Even better, they raised awareness among the UAPK interns about the relevance and accountability of their English use, as well as the philanthropic dimensions of a career in arts, since artistic professionals have what it takes to provide support for setting up English learning programs through the arts, with an approach to childhood and adolescence in Ecuador.

The UAPK project remains committed to creating for communities but is now exploring the development of product lines with less regulation than those seen in PHASE 3 and PHASE 4. For now, UAPK interns must responsibly deliver all the finished products for the three units intended for the Kuyay program. Once these products are successfully donated, the ecosystem of creators can decide on new ideas, levels, and themes to address through their products.

Incoming interns must keep in mind that intercultural contexts within Ecuador are integral to the brand's creative approach. They must also abstain from making the same errors as the previous interns, mostly having to do with unmet deadlines and lack of proactive interaction with students from other careers. Fortunately, the approval of a second stage of the UAPK project in the Visual Arts School will help prevent these issues from occurring in the future. Until 2025, students can keep devoting their pre professional hours to creating under the brand's foundational mission and vision.

As far as EIL concerns, the story has yet to unfold and begin somewhere else. From this reflection, one envisions UAPK from Guayaquil, Ecuador as an education movement for girls, boys, adolescents; also, as a supporting brand for family members and teachers, who should freely access, adapt and exchange the generated content to help thrive collaborative learning inside their communities.

For anyone who wishes to replicate this experience elsewhere, it is recommended to explore how to set up the four phases that have allowed UAPK to remain a community - based learning project; just like in UArtes, EFL students can participate as main creators of an intercultural movement, ever so committed the development of a bilingual education program that does their context some innovative justice.

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