

I can introduce my band: Combining multiple activities to create a project

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For the past two years, in the English communication class for 2nd year students, we have incorporated a project called I can introduce my band. This project has proven to be very popular and motivating. This paper will report on how this project was created by combining the topic vocabulary from the class' textbook and two activity- based resources.

Introduction

Student motivation swells and wanes not only throughout their academic life; but, more importantly within the academic years and terms. Group projects are a good way to reinvigorate a classroom's motivation while giving students the opportunity to explore the subject matter more deeply and discover useful content that was not included in the textbook. Group projects can also reduce stress on lower level or shier students in a multi-level classroom by providing a "chance for students to speak without teachers noticing mistakes" (Lewis, 2002, p. 44) and friends to help each other before being expected to produce language. The I can introduce my band project allows students to explore vocabulary and grammatical structures that are deeper than what is modeled on page 132 of the Oxford Word Skills Basic (OWSb) textbook. It also has been consistently reported as an enjoyable projected that even the lowest and quietest of students have been able to participate and successfully complete. The following description of I can introduce my band reports the accommodations for this year's schedule.

Hour	Class Material	Description
1	OWSb Unit 51 p. 132	I can talk about music
2	My Song handout/OWSb p. 133	Rhyming and basic song structure
3	Inverview with a star handout	Basic writing/pairs info. Exchange
4	Form groups & make group band	Each member must have a role with the band/rough drafts collected
5	Make final poster & begin rehearsing	Corrected rough drafts returned to groups
6	Rehearsal and presentations	

Hour 1: Unit 51 – I can talk about music

Unit 51 of the Oxford language skills textbook is titled *I can talk about music* and is broken into 2 single page sections *A Pop and rock* and *B Classical music*. In section A students are introduced to basic vocabulary related to music such as, *band, single, album, lead singer, guitar* and a couple of multipurpose verbs *be able to, download* (Gairns & Redman, 2008, p. 132). Section B introduces vocabulary specific to classical music, *conductor, orchestra, composer* and the *-ist* change to indicate a person who plays an instrument *piano - pianist, cello - cellist, violin - violinist* (Gairns & Redman, 2008, p. 133). However, only the language from section A was given context in the form of an article that might be written to introduce readers to a new band. This basic introduction to talking about music was a good primer to our project, which creates opportunities to explore basic music structure and discovering more vocabulary and grammar.

Hour 2: My Song handout – Moving into the project

The most basic process of writing songs is to use rhyming patterns. *My Song Activity 1 & 2* (Figures 1 & 2), an activity from Madylus’ *Film, TV and Music* (2009, p. 83), are activities that helps students raise awareness that aural rhyme is not based on the similarity of spelling.

Figure 1 Activity 1 recreated from *Film, TV and Music* Cambridge University Press (2009)

Start	bear	here	eye	me	friend
	hair	air	pair	know	no
	dear	fly	fair	there	free
	go	send	near	wear	stair
	sat	see	high	end	care
					Finish

Figure 2 Activity 2 recreated from *Film, TV and Music* Cambridge University Press (2009)

here	high	see	friend	go

Prior to doing Activity 3 of this worksheet, we reviewed the classic Trick-or-Treating rhyme:

Trick-or-treat!
Smell my feet!
Give me something good to eat!
If you don't, I don't care!
I'll throw candy everywhere!,

which the students had learned in the previous lesson and drew attention to the 3-2 rhyming pattern as a way of introducing the third activity in which the students worked in pairs to complete the sample songs by creating original lyrics to match the patterns.

Recalling a familiar and entertaining chant before giving the students a creative and open-ended task allowed high-level students to push their working vocabulary and grammar, while lower-level students were encouraged to use the rhyming words that they had mapped out in Activities 1 and 2, so that they could work on grammar and cohesion while completing the song samples (figure 3) of Activity 3. The pairs enjoyed producing couplets such as:

Song 1

*“Let’s go somewhere we don’t know.
 Our story doesn’t have end.”*

*“I want you to know.
 My love I send.”*

Song 2

*I want to fly
 “I want to go sky high.
 And I want to be free.
 I just want to be.”
 I want to fly
 “Go to sky high.
 Then we are free.
 Happiness comes to you and me.”*

Figure 3 Activity 3 from *Film, TV and Music* Cambridge University Press (2009)

<p>Song 1 I love you so You set me free. I want you to know You are everything to me.</p> <p>Song 2 Don't say no You're my best friend.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Song 1 When you're near Standing here I'm so glad I can't be sad.</p> <p>Song 2 I want to fly</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Figure 4 From Film, TV and Music Cambridge University Press (2009)

Hour 3: Interview with a star – individual conceptualization

Advancing the project, Madylus' (2009) Interview a star (figure 4) was used to give individual students the opportunity to imagine their own band by completing worksheet A. Worksheet B focused on generating question forms by reordering and/or adding the missing words to form interview style questions. Completion of the two work sheets created the groundwork for an authentic exchange of information in a pair activity. Worksheet A, being completed individually, also created the opportunity for students to brainstorm autonomously before working within their groups in the next lesson period.



This tasks from worksheet A and B scaffold into the projects final presentation by guiding the type of information that should be presented about the group' s band, developing simple structures that model or might be copied into their final presentation, and an opportunity to for one-on-one speaking practice.

Hour 4: Form groups & make a band

After forming groups of 4 or 5 students, the students were given an example of a model band poster (figure 5). We reviewed the example as a class and drew attention to the structure and minimum amount of information required. Groups were instructed that they could use the band of one of their members or create a different band. The amounts of work and presentation responsibilities were to be shared equally amongst the members.

Figure 5 Band example

Oyajji Band

We are a four piece band. We are not very famous but are popular at local events in Kansai.

We play flower viewing parties and summer dances.

The members are Kenzou Yamaoka who plays the guitar and sings, the lead singer is Bryan Gerard, Toshiyuki Okamoto plays the guitar and Yukhiro Shouda sings background.

Sometimes Sayonara Onara will play with other local bands.

The band formed in March 2010 and their cover of *Country Roads* by John Denver is their number 1 single.

Oyajji Band will make their first album, *Merry Christmas to all and to all a goodnight*, available for download in December of 2012.

Figure 5 Band introduction example

The groups were then given 30 minutes to write a rough draft of their band introduction. During this time the groups had access to electronic dictionaries, magazines, and the teachers for help. At the end of the class period, the rough drafts were collected and students were asked to bring any materials (pictures, magazines, colored pencils, markers) that they might need to make their final poster. They were, also, given permission to bring costumes or props for their final presentation.

Hour 5 & 6: Complete the band poster, rehearse, and present

At the beginning of the 5th hour of this project, the corrected rough drafts were returned to the groups and given roughly 20 minutes to complete their final poster. During the week between classes many groups had made revisions or additions on their own. Because of this enthusiasm time for completing the final posters was loosely monitored and most groups consulted with the teachers on making additions or changes from their rough drafts. Some groups, even, wrote or translated songs to sing as part of their presentations.

Groups that only needed one or two members to be working on the poster gave the other members extra time for memorizing their portion of the presentation or creating props. This arrangement gave students who had more

difficulty memorizing or lower confidence with speaking an opportunity for additional practice time.

Students were then given approximately 40 minutes (crossing from the 5th hour into the 6th hour, which were back-to-back) to rehearse as a group. During this time groups did more than simply work on memorizing. They incorporated presenter orders, timings for presenter changes, and presenter transitions. Groups whom had included a song as part of the presentation also added choreography while practicing their songs.

The groups then presented their bands with their poster posted for the class to see on the blackboard. At the end of the presentations, the class would vote for which band they would most like to see in concert. The evaluation vote at the end of the presentations helped to keep non-presenting groups quiet and listening to their classmates. The group format of the presentations created a supportive environment for nervous students to feel comfortable and supported. When a presenter stumbled or froze in front of the class, it was typical for at least one group member to help, generally by providing cues to the next word or sentence. In extreme cases, students could look back at their poster for a reminder.

Evaluation

The students were evaluated individually for their performance in the project. Because this project was conducted in a team teaching class, the evaluation rubric was divided in half with the total score coming from the combination of each teacher' s evaluation. Figure 6 illustrates the evaluation rubric of 5 criteria (memory, pronunciation, expressions, teamwork and poster) evaluated on a scale of 0-2 with 0=poor, 1=average, and 2=above average performances.

Figure 6 Evaluation rubric

	Memory	Pronunciation	Expressions	Teamwork	Poster
0					
1					
2					

Conclusion

This project illustrates how it is possible to combine activities that focus on differing linguistic nuances but share a broader common topic can be organized into an entertaining and productive group project. A project that provided ample input and opportunities for students to work autonomously while freely experimenting with the target language, discovering useful vocabulary and grammar, and applying previously studied material into a broader context.

References

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