FINAL DEGREE PROJECT

Creating a new English classroom with resources considering pupils' voice.

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“***TELL me and I will forget.***

SHOW me and I may remember.

INVOLVE me and I will learn.”

Benjamin Franklin

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the value of the student's voice to improve the arrangement of the school, suggesting that it is often assumed to be something good to do. The document reports on a project of innovation when remodelling the English classroom of Eiximenis' school (Girona). The students are the main protagonists in such process, mainly in the English commission subject, and in the development of a learning-centre session, an approach that contributes to the effective learning process. The results indicate that when pupils are engaged in school projects, can make their own decisions, and when they can learn by using the learning-centre methodology, they are more motivated in their own education. This qualitative study uses observation tables, interviews, surveys, student works samples, photographs, and discussions to collect information throughout the process.

Keywords: primary education, learning-centres approach, students' engagement, project of innovation, pupils' voice.

RESUM

Aquest article examina el valor de la veu de l'alumnat per millorar la seva participació a l'escola, assumint que sovint és una bona tasca a fer. El document plasma un projecte d'innovació sobre la remodelació de l'aula d'anglès de l'escola Eiximenis (Girona). Els estudiants són els principals protagonistes d'aquest procés, principalment en l'assignatura de la comissió d'Anglès, i en el desenvolupament d'una sessió de racons, un enfocament que contribueix en l'afectivitat del procés d'aprenentatge. Els resultats mostren que quan els alumnes s'involucren a projectes escolars, poden prendre decisions, i poden aprendre mitjançant el treball per racons, ells estan més motivats en el seu propi aprenentatge. Aquest estudi qualitatiu fa servir taules d'observació, entrevistes, enquestes, mostres de treballs dels estudiants, fotografies i debats a fi de recopilar informació durant tot el procés.

Paraules clau: educació primària, enfocament per racons, participació dels estudiants, projecte d'innovació, veu de l'alumnat.

INTRODUCTION

When pupils are actively involved in applying course content to solve problems, answering questions, and other activities beyond just receiving content, the capacity of learning can improve as well as motivation. In recent years, there has been an increasing move towards listening to the students' voice in school context. (Flutter, J. Rudduck, J. 2004)

According to a number of contemporary theories of constructivism, learners do not acquire knowledge through a process of transmission by traditional teaching practices such as the lecture. Instead, they construct new ideas and concepts through an active process of engagement. Furthermore, knowledge is acquired through experience and involvement in real-world situations, so students should be engaged in any task that has a direct or indirect impact on them. (Penido, A. 2018)

The involvement of pupils in the school projects is an idea whose time appears to have come. The idea of this document has grown from an account of a school innovative project that involves students and teachers of English in remodelling a learning place. Learners' participation in the community enhanced their autonomous learning and fostered subtle changes in their self-identities. For this reason, it is absolutely necessary to create the awareness of involving young people in school improvements and projects. (Fielding, M. 2001)

As a result of my observation in different lessons in Eiximenis' School, this paper extends the idea of the active participation of young pupils in a school project of innovation. Its central issue is the lack of learning resources in the English classroom and the poor layout of such place. That space needs to be transformed, the necessity is real and there is no time to waste. In this sense, the first proposal is that pupils create new material for the English classroom, in a way that this space will become suitable for learning, according to students own needs. The other purpose of such project is to encourage the students to take part in an English corners session (also known as learning-centres, learning stations or interest area) in order to work in a different way and with the resources designed. Scholars in Eiximenis English lessons tend to learn individually and, sometimes, in a passive way. Now I would like to make a small

change and put the strategy of corners in practice so that they can take a more active role while cooperating with their mates. As far as I know, learning-centres allow children to investigate, explore, and discover things that are new to them and make connections with things that they already know.

In these interest areas, students will learn about specific content by playing and engaging in activities. Exploring and discovering are active forms of learning that involve all their being. In these learning spaces, children develop certain strategies and skills, such as making decisions, carrying out plans, cooperating with others, and problem-solving, in order to play and learn independently. (Verner, S. 2017)

Throughout this project of innovation, English will be the vehicular language to develop the whole process, from beginning to end. The whole process is not expected to be finished in only two months, but it will be developed on the premise that students' voice needs to be heard at any time to move forward. If we stop to think about this, the pupils' voice benefits pupils and helps schools to improve.

"I would rather have one day of authentic student engagement than a career of handing out worksheets."

Sean Junkins

LITERATURE REVIEW

When we think of student involvement in learning activities and school projects, it is often convenient to understand engagement with an activity as being represented by good behaviour (attitudinal engagement), positive feelings (emotional engagement), and, above all, student thinking (cognitive engagement). (Fredricks, J. 2014) The future of students depends on their schools and so do as the future of schools depend on the students. The students' involvement should be introduced into schools not as an occasional task, but as an inherent value in the school community. The world is changing rapidly, demanding for new skills and knowledge, offering new educational environments and ways of learning, and preparing pupils to be proactive citizens outside the school context. Curricula focused on 21st century looks for more active pedagogical techniques. In this sense, *hands-on learning* fosters students to put their knowledge and abilities into practice by creating projects. With no hesitation, everyone can be an agent of positive change at school and in the community.

Students' participation and engagement in school projects

Most students participate in academic and non-academic activities at school, and develop a sense of belonging – their friends are there and they have good relations with teachers. But many pupils are not engaged. They do not believe their school experience has much relevance on their future, and they do not feel participants in the school context.

Why don't teachers meet the needs of students to make them feel important members in the school and also to have voice in this context?

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) offers a report in which examines several questions concerning students' participation and sense of belonging. These two aspects of student engagement are considered important, not only because of their relationship with pupil learning, but also because they represent a disposition towards schooling and life-long learning. The results indicate that there is considerable variation among countries in their levels of student involvement and in the prevalence of

disaffected students. The analyses also provide evidence that achieving strong student engagement at school does not have to be at the expense of their literacy performance. (OECD. 2000)

Although most teachers acknowledge the value of active participation in the classroom, achieving such success appears to be more difficult. Teachers talk almost 80% of the time. Only about 10 in 40 students participate in discussions, and typically, just 5 of these dominate the discussion (Karp & Yoels, 1976). According to Karp and Yoels, this participation in the classroom is known as the "consolidation of responsibility". With this responsibility, pupils assume the role of active participators in the lesson, while the majority engage in "civil attention", laughing when it is appropriate or appearing attentive without risking too much involvement. (Weaver, R. QI, J. 2005)

Researchers have recently used the term *engagement* to refer to meaningful student involvement throughout the learning environment. (Roy, K. William, C. 2004) Moreover, there exists a *psychological component* that emphasizes pupils' sense of attachment to school, which has to do with feelings of being accepted and valued by their peers, and by others at their school. Engagement is seen as an attitude towards learning, working with others and functioning in a social institution, which is expressed in pupils' feelings. This has significant implications for the design of project learning experiences. Teachers need to identify what excites students, and promote their interest and involvement. (Belmont, M. Skinner, E. 1993)

Pupils' needs. Don't just listen to students; give them power

Within primary education, the pupils' voice is frequently overlooked in the design of teaching approaches, courses and curricula**.** Research indicates that students who believe they have a voice in school are seven times more likely to be academically motivated than students who do not believe they have a voice. (Quaglia Institute for School Voice and Aspirations. 2016) The student's voice is more than listening to them at an occasional focus group. Listening to the pupils' voice is more than eliciting their opinions on an occasional survey. It

is about understanding them and, then, giving them power. The student's voice is essential in the classroom and, obviously, in the school projects.

Educators need to trust pupils so that they can take real ownership of their learning, and they can be part of every decision that is made about them in the school. If we want to know how to reach, engage, and best teach our students, it is essential to ask them. Moreover, teachers should frequently know which are the students' needs and interests in relation to the school context, especially when doing a project, so that pupils feel included. To achieve this, a good option that can strongly impact a group-class is a brainstorm, for example: *If you could build a class, what would it look like?, Describe a moment in school last year when you felt really engaged. Why do you think that moment was such a positive one for you?* The questioning and the attentive listening communicate teachers care for students. (Aguilar, E. 2016)

Collaborating with pupils requires a willingness to listen, generate goals together, and share authority. But *"listening to students doesn't mean unilaterally considering their perspective*" Brion-Meisels says. Instead, *"it means recognizing that young people have a perspective on the world that adults can't share, and that their perspective should be welcomed alongside the wisdom that adult perspectives bring".* (Brion-Meisels, G. 2015)

When schools give pupils the tools to speak out, the effects can influence across students' lives. The process of becoming actively engaged can give young people strategies they can use to create positive change in future classrooms or contexts. In order to introduce the voice of the young ones, teachers should welcome a wide range of student opinions in decisions with academic content, free time, school culture, the physical space of the school, and others. Educators should even consider the individual pupil's wishes and the personal needs.

Bringing students into conversations about changes and improvements is one main goal in the school context. It is not easy to create structures that allow all the students voices to be heard. For schools that want to facilitate their own pupil voice on conversations, Andrew Brennen, a national field director for Student

Voice program, recommends having pupils take the lead, and welcome those whose voices are not typically heard. (Boss, S. 2016) Students are the chief stakeholder in the education system. The author assures that one useful way to achieve this engagement is to foster pupils as members in school who participate in projects actively. In this way, they can take the initiative on issues that matter to them, and then take action with the decisions they want to make everybody know.

Education focused on project-based learning

Collaborative learning is a powerful facilitator of engagement in schooling activities. When students work effectively with others, their engagement may be amplified as a result. (Wentzel, K. 2009) *Project-based learning* is an educational approach that favours learning activities specifically designed to engage student motivation and interest in an active way. The projects and activities assigned allow to move pupils towards answering a question, proving a theory, solving a problem, or some other active tasks (goal-oriented). In this way, pupils develop deep knowledge as well as creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication skills, while unleashes a contagious energy among pupils and educators.

In many schools, the project-based learning is becoming increasingly common, replacing traditional teaching methods. Most pupils like learning this way and learn more as a result; it is also more challenging for educators, often wanting to offer excitement in teaching.

Teacher modelling is one key aspect in this effective method. There is no doubt that homogeneous groups and grouping by ability should be avoided. Instead, we should foster individual responsibility by assign different roles, and evaluate both the pupil and the group performance. Besides, through a project of innovation, it is essential to offer activities that involve a challenge, are interactive and use a variety of skills. Without questioning that the process needs to be meaningful for students, it has to move them forward according to their own needs and agreements. (American Federation of Teachers. 2018)

When elaborating a school project, it is highly essential to give importance to the developing of effective teamwork competences. *Team-based learning (TBL)* is a systematic method where group activities are designed in a particular sequence to achieve a goal or to solve an issue. (Michaelsen, L. Knight, A. Fink, L. 2004) TBL strategy has been associated with a variety of positive student outcomes, improving the pupil's predisposition to learning, and developing their collaboration skills. (Michaelsen, L. Sweet, M. 2008) With TBL method students and teachers adopt a learning paradigm opposed to a more traditional and instructional one. This keeps professors "fresh" in their classrooms and allows pupils behave less like "empty vessels" and more like colleagues (Lane, D. 2008).

In addition, research has shown that pupils find TBL enjoyable, motivating, and interesting. (Haberyan, A. 2007) Similarly, studies have shown that students learn most when they are more engaged in the experience rather than as passive participants. According to Kuh (2008), high-impact activities such as projects, which foster deep learning, general gains, practical gains or personal achievements increase pupil engagement. In a nutshell, students' success is always based on collaborative assignments and projects.

The importance of classroom environment and organization

Teachers do not often get the chance to choose their classroom and its disposition. However, there is a lot they can do to change the layout so that students can feel comfortable in this space of learning. There are many fittings and fixtures in the space that educators can take into account and cause significant benefits to children.

A well-organized classroom permits more positive interactions between teachers and children. Classroom environments are extremely important for students and teachers. Everything from the colour of the walls to the arrangement of the desks sends impressions to pupils and can affect the way a student learns.

Additionally, environmental modifications are an essential part of the classroom management. Changing the classroom environment can increase academic engagement and decrease disruptive behaviour. Researchers have investigated

the relationship between the classroom environment, academic engagement and pupil behaviour. A well-organized classroom allows more positive interactions between teachers and pupils, minimizing the probability that challenging behaviour and disruptive attitudes can occur. (Visser, J. 2001)

As students settle in different classrooms, educators should think about the decisions made regarding the organization of the class. The environment of a classroom includes a wide range of educational concepts, including the psychological environment, created through social contexts, the physical setting, and numerous of components related to teacher attitudes and characteristics. Some authors argue that how pupils view the formal and informal structures of the classroom affect their class participation. (Miller, A. Cunningham, K. 2013)

The layout of a classroom of English can have a serious impact on the way teachers teach and on the way students learn. The class dynamics can improve enormously when teacher change the layout; it is a matter of experimenting and seeing what works best for themselves and the students, and it is something that should be taken into consideration at the lesson planning stage.

Effective teachers manage and organize the classroom consciously, as they expect their students to contribute in a productive and positive manner. It is highly necessary to pay attention to classroom climate, as it has much impact on student learning and aptitude (Wang, M. Haertel, G. Walberg, H. 1993). In the beginning of the year and especially on the first day of school, successful teachers take time to establish classroom organization, classroom management, and expectations for student behaviour.

There is no doubt that the classroom disposition can contribute to problems between pupils as well as reduce student engagement and learning. When teachers and schools give careful thought to how the environment is arranged, authentic learning is enhanced and incidental behaviour issues can be prevented. (Earp, J. 2017) That is why it is important to understand the ways in which teachers can improve this environment in order to assure maximum effectiveness in their instruction, and to achieve a favourable learning context.

Learning-centres methodology to promote the English language

> "*Learning-centres are places where students can self-direct their learning – usually in pairs or small groups – within the classroom. These designated spaces allow children to work collaboratively by accomplishing activities given an allotted amount of time and rotating to the next centre after they have each completed a task. Learning-centres also provide children with opportunities to practice hands-on skills and social interaction".* (Cox, J. 2019)
>
> "*Learning stations technique is a modern strategy that enables students use plenty of tools and materials, not experience passive listening monotony, be actively incorporated into the learning process, and experience greater retention of the information learned with the aid of audiovisual tools".* (Demirörs, F. 2007)

Learning-centre activities are also called *play centre activities* or *guided play* in western countries, and they are known as *corner play* or *interest area activities* in China. This learning-centres prompt student groups to engage with relevant activities and have thoughtful disputes while, at the same time, allow educators to interact with students.

Highlighting suggestions from researchers and authors (Bulunuz, N. Jarrett, O. 2010; Cox, J. 2019) and integrating my experiences, I provide the following guidelines for successfully using learning stations.

- **Choice:** it is a good option for students to select stations that they wish to visit, according to their necessities and preferences. They also need to know the sequence of activities that should be complete in each centre.
- **Instructions:** post a set of directions in each centre. Plan time to share and discuss each set of rules with students as part of one or more introductory lessons.
- **Physical setup:** prepare the material, furniture, space and post signs before class. In this way, the learning is more pupil-centered than the usual activities with the whole group.
- **Learning alternatives:** offer a variety of learning alternatives within any centre. For instance, include a variety of tasks ranging from difficult to easy.

- **Assess and check:** once the station activities begin, the teacher should move around the classroom and hear the groups' discussion, monitor the activities, and foster pupil thinking and English speaking through questions.
- **Reflection:** the best resource pupils have in such group activities is each other. Assure to build reflection into the learning station activities and facilitate students to share new insights or questions raised from the tasks.
- **Provide clean-up time:** after each centre is completed, give students time to return the material to its place for the next session. Moreover, this is the time to collect the job done.

Educational programs go in the direction of a progressive philosophy (developments) and the constructivist approach. In this context, constructivism and collaborative learning model are included in curriculums (primary and secondary education), and learning-centres techniques are incorporated in this model.

When establishing learning stations, the most common strategy is the one that focuses on building centres that address curriculum information and skills. These centres tend to be developed around specific curriculum areas — language, arts, math, social studies, and science. Teachers should distribute several centres focus on the same curricular area, to provide a wide range of opportunities for students to learn the subject in different ways. (Aydogmus, M. Senturk, C. 2019)

This way of learning can take place after a topic is taught to students, during the course of presenting important concepts, or as an introductory lesson. When an introductory class on a particular concept has taken place, teacher can assign students to various centres to help reinforce the information given by using own skills (writing, listening, speaking and reading). Skill centres offer activities of enrichment after an initial concept or skill is taught.

Learning-centres offer many benefits for students and allow each one's to meet their particular educational needs. The hardest part is taking the initiative and including them in the classroom; they do not need to be too much elaborated or

complicated. Once the teacher is sure to implement this strategy, sooner or later, the benefits will absolutely be evident. (Verner, S. 2017)

METHODOLOGY

Type of investigation

This research emerges from the idea of an innovation project that arises in response to a school petition. A specific aspect of this article is that the analysis uses quite qualitative data, based on the evidences of the enquired pupils, instead of trusting the intuitive judgment alone. Concerning the innovation, it is time to connect students to the school context, focusing on changes that cause improvements in their learning. One can nevertheless not overlook that both, teachers and students, benefit from this project.

The following sample has been developed in an attempt to initiate the proposal by the management team in relation to the English classroom and to conduct the research in the field of learning-centres technique. Thus, it consists of a didactic unit that could offer different sessions in order to provide a suitable classroom in which the learning of the English language is possible and meaningful. *(See Annex 7)* With this project, I also would like to encourage teachers to make a change in the way they teach because if students are engaged and feel motivated in class, they will want to go to school with enthusiasm.

The two main objectives of this project of innovation are the following ones:

- To create new resources for the English classroom with the students' participation according to their needs.
- To organize the classroom in learning-corners in order to work with a new approach and with the material designed by the pupils.

Participants

This project took place in Eiximenis' school, located in Girona's city. As it is a small educational centre, and there is only one classroom per course, all the students (from 1st until 6th primary) have participated in the initial part of the process (sharing their needs). However, students from the English commission play the main role in this project of innovation.

In this Commission there are 15 students coming from 4th, 5th and 6th grade. After each month, each group change and go to another commission. Students do this subject every Friday from 15:00h until 16:30h. In each commission, pupils work with *democratic projects*, which means that the activities are related to some issues that influence in the educative community.

In this current group, there is a mixture of English levels. However, the fact that they start the subject without knowing each other's learning capacity, allow them to form different heterogeneous groups in every activity and get to know each other little by little.

Procedure

The sample on this document constitutes a research conducted in the field of learning-centres technique and the importance of the students' voice in school projects.

My didactic proposal was carried out in the first term as the school necessity was real and there was no time to waste. After several meetings with the English specialists and the school principal, I decided to learn about the initial needs and thoughts of students in relation to the current English classroom. To collect data, I created a survey for pupils of Upper Cycle, who had to answer some questions individually. For students from Medium Cycle, I asked only three questions to pupils and we carried out a debate. The questionnaire was as follows:

- *What kind of decoration would you like to have in the new classroom?*
- *Name possible games and activities you would like to have there.*
- *Which two rules would you write in the English classroom?*

Concerning students from Initial Cycle, they tried to say, orally, what they would like to have in the new classroom, and wrote or drew it on colourful post-its, which they stuck on the wall; their answers were mainly pictures but words as well. Previously, they had seen videos and pictures about how an English classroom could be like.

After knowing the needs and having made the emptying of the results, the 6th grade students wrote an email (requesting text) to the school principal and

waited for a response. To do that, I suggested some guidelines on how to write a requesting text. As well as that, I provided useful formal words and vocabulary. *(See Annex 1)*

Being aware of the acceptance from the school principal, it was then the turn of the English commission job. A mixed group of pupils from 4th, 5th and 6th grade did research on different resources and material, according to the requesting needs of the schoolmates. Moreover, this was the moment that they also designed labels, the classroom rules, infographics and wrote several instructions for the board games. Throughout these sessions, I filled out an observation table with the items I had some interest in.

During the last week of October, coinciding with the end of the English commission, students from Upper Cycle placed the materials in the library, not in the new English classroom. The initial idea was to locate them in the new English classroom, but it will be under construction until January. Nevertheless, pupils had to imagine that the library was the new English classroom and try to reorganize the space, intending to create a comfortable, pleasant and warm atmosphere.

Subsequently, during the first week of December, the learning-centres session took place. The four learning-corners were: *"Let's be writers", "Once upon a time…", "DO NOT DISTURB. We are playing with the language" and "We are all connected";* all of them were thought by the two teachers of English and me. *(See Annex 3)* Students from the 6th grade were the participants in such activity. I split the group-class in two, so that pupils could work better. The library was the chosen place to develop that session and I told the pupils to imagine that they were in the new English classroom. Throughout that session, I filled out an observation table with the items that the specialists and I had been curious about.

The last week was useful to assess the project and all the tasks that the students had developed. Therefore, pupils answered a survey in relation to the individual work and their own opinion in the learning-centres session. Furthermore, I interviewed the two teachers of English and they gave me their opinion on the progress they had seen, according to their expectations, and

they provided me with possible improvements to finish with this innovative project.

Finally, on the 13th October, the last day of my teaching practice, the students (from 1st to 6th grade) and the Eiximenis' teachers went to *Auditori Josep Irla (Girona)*. There, each commission group exposed the job done to the rest of the pupils. Children could put into practice their oratorical skills, a useful fact for their future. Personally, this encounter represented another evaluative action in my Final Degree Project. *(See Annex 6)*

Instruments of data collection

Concerning the first part of the project, knowing the **pupils' needs**, I used the *Google Forms APP* to collect all the responses in the survey[1] addressed to pupils from Upper Cycle (UC). The goal of that questionnaire was, mainly, to discover which were the students' real needs in relation to the future English classroom. Moreover, their answers were useful to know the own perception of the space in that moment, its distribution and resources. The questionnaire was completely qualitative with questions that pupils had to choose among several options, to give their own opinion and explain the reasons for its decisions. Collecting this sort of data was useful to indicate a constructive and meaningful way forward.

During the **development of the project**, I filled out two observation tables. The first one that I designed was used during the English commission sessions, in which students had to create the requested resources. In that table there were some items to take into account such as the students' interactions, autonomous and cooperative work, values and attitudes, and the organization of the time. For four Fridays, the teacher of English and I wrote some comments on the sections that were of my interest. *(See Annex 2)* The second table that I designed was divided into two sections; the part at the top was about "general aspects" and the part at the bottom was dedicated to each learning-corner. The general section was dealt with the material organization, temporal organization, and the follow-up of the main instructions. Besides, for each issue there was a particular chart to write interesting observations. On the other hand, concerning

[1] This is the link that leads to the initial survey (UC): https://forms.gle/EVVZG4cksyrR2kru8

the "four corners sections", I took note of the students' need for help, following the specific instructions, respecting the material, students' interactions and attitudes. Apart from these, there was a particular box to write interesting facts. *(See Annex 4)*

Finally, for the last part of the project (**assessment**), I created a survey[2] with *Google Forms APP,* in order to collect the 6th grade students' opinion regarding the initial needs and the result achieved until December. In this survey, I asked them to reflect their opinion over the learning-centres session as well as the English commission. This was a qualitative questionnaire in which pupils had to choose between several options, to give their own opinion and explain the reasons for their decisions.

Another conclusive tool that I used, was the interview to the two teachers of English. It was formulated with qualitative questions so that they could answer freely and agree or disagree on common criteria. Its purpose was to go back into the past, focusing on the initial needs, and watch each task of the project in detail until the current situation, to assess the project in general. It was a useful evaluation for the three of us and we could share the different points of view that we were not aware of until that moment. *(See Annex 5)*

Receiving the responses from students and teachers was a useful opportunity to analyse what was still missing and which the following path was. They all knew that the project was not finished as the classroom is still under construction, thus there is no doubt that we did a good job, with effort and involvement.

[2] This is the link that leads to the final survey (UC): https://forms.gle/o9B43QoVjXUVkz8j6

RESULTS

Having developed part of the project of innovation in Eiximenis' school and carried out the didactic unit, in the next section I intend to expose the results obtained by the use of three tools. These findings are in reference to the students' needs (start-up), the participation and interaction in the English commission tasks as well as in the corners session (development), and the final point of view and improvements, from students and teachers, for the following steps (ending).

Initial needs

Firstly, in reference to what pupils from **Initial cycle (IC)** wanted in the new English classroom, *board games* was the most common answer among the pupils decisions, they also wanted computers and new colourful decoration in that space, such as pictures and notices.

Referring to what students from **Medium Cycle (MC)** answered in the three brainstorming questions, they agreed that the classroom needed board games, and new decoration based on didactic posters and songs, quite similar to pupils from Initial Cycle. Moreover, they suggested the implement of several rules in relation to the attitudes and behaviour that should be adopted in the classroom.

If I focus on the initial survey addressed to students from **Upper Cycle (UC)**, I can state that none of them felt comfortable with the classroom environment at the moment. Moreover, when they had to write down what they did in such space, the majority answered that they worked with the activity book, used the notebook to write relevant vocabulary, and listened the *Hello song*. Linked to this question, they added some disadvantages like "the class is disorganized and ugly", "there is unnecessary stuff", "there aren't interesting games and resources" and "the decoration is really poor". Therefore, they suggested some material that could be bought to equip the place; 36% wanted English books and films, 34% would like to have laptops with headphones, and 30% wished to have educative English games. As far as the classroom organization (learning-centres) is concerned, their response was completely determining; 91% were attracted by that proposal while 9% refused it. Pupils also suggested ideas for improving their learning in such classroom areas. These were: working with

laptops (watching films, songs, games…), doing storytelling or drama activities, and having a library corner. About 95% of the students were interested in taking part in that tempting school project.

Project development

Secondly, in reference to the **creation of the materials in the English commission**, the specialist in English and I observed and wrote down some important aspects in an **observation table**.

Students helped each other a lot. Moreover, the fact that pupils could work with different mates from 4th, 5th or 6th grade, was a nice and rewarding experience. Cooperation, solidarity and empathy were the three adjectives that could describe better the relations between pupils during the Commission moments.

Scholars interacted with each other (active participation) during the development of the class and at the end of the session when they had to explain the job done (general converse). However, at the beginning of the lesson, I had to contextualize the current situation in relation to the job done and the pending tasks (guided conversation).

The intervention of the teachers was, generally speaking, almost absent. Nevertheless, the fact that pupils worked on their own (autonomy), with hardly any involvement from the teachers, caused that, occasionally, they did not use the English language to communicate. That is why I had to move around the classroom to point out that essential rule.

As for the second **observation table**, the specialist in English and I wrote comments and interesting facts about the **students work during the corners session**.

The distribution of the time was the proper one; 45 minutes doing learning-corner activities was long enough to develop all the planned tasks: contextualization, a sample of the material created, instructions, organization in the four corners, and cleaning up. However, I have to point out that only two students helped me to collect the material and tidy the classroom up. The distribution of the material was the suitable one and the general instructions were well followed.

Concerning the learning-centres, in *"We are all connected"*, students needed the help of the teacher to find the links or to know how to play a specific game; their digital competence was a bit low. Moreover, it was the only corner that had no sheet to register the job done. In *"Once upon a time…",* pupils did not use the dictionary very often; their first option was to ask me their doubts. Since I did not answer, they tried to solve by themselves together with their mates. As a final choice, some of them used the dictionary. In "*DO NOT DISTURB. We are playing with the language*" corner, the activity of riddles was the one that pupils chose most often. They did creative productions, but, once again, they were not familiar with the dictionaries. Moreover, one student took the role of the "teacher" and explained the riddles task to the other mates (interaction with each other). In the fourth zone "*Let's be writers",* pupils interacted with each other after having written their own story; they had time to share each production. In this area, students did not need the teachers' help, except for one autistic boy whose behaviour was not as expected.

Assessment

Thirdly, to complete the results section, I will focus the analysis on the **final survey addressed to students from the 6th grade,** and the **interview to the two teachers of English**.

In terms of the current English classroom, the totality of the respondents (22 pupils) claimed that, when the space will be totally finished, it will definitely become a better one with the new material they have created. They justified the answer saying that now, with the innovations, there are feeling faces, motivating quotes, posters, new resources, signs, rules, and the walls have amazing infographics. As for the corners session, children wrote what they had learnt *"New vocabulary, specifically unknown adverbs", "I have discovered a new book", "I didn't know what a riddle is, and now I have learnt three and in English".* In a group of 22 students, 21 felt very satisfied with the English corners session. Some of them typed: *"This lesson has been more interesting than the rest of the English classes ever", "I loved the variety of activities", "I want to discover more new corners and explore them with different mates".* The pupil who was not convinced, enough clarified that he would have liked to try

the other corners, in particular the one with laptops. About 86% are looking forward to working in the English classroom with all the renovations done.

As a final part, focusing on the interview to the two specialists in English, they expounded that children spend nearly the whole day in different classrooms, so it is very important that they can feel it as if it was theirs; *"when the brain has the right conditions and the person feels motivated for the new input, knowledge is acquired*". According to the learning-centres session, both reinforced that corners are a good tool to motivate and a fantastic resource to assist diversity, respecting the different levels of learning and rhythms of work. And on top of that, students can perceive themselves as singular. As for the English commission job, the two of them assured that they were lucky to have that space so that the contributions from students could be valued and executed. They will keep on developing this project of innovation with pupils to make them feel important, part of the school and motivated. "*Scholars only need open-minded teachers in front of them to help them grow with real challenges"*.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This project was mainly conducted in the classroom of the 6th grade in primary education and in the English commission group; about 22 students participated in the full project, allowing them to be observed. Although the results in this article may be unique to this 6th grade classroom and the Commission group, the same literature and methodology may be applied in other classrooms of varying size, grade level or geographical area.

Student's voice has in some cases been meant to ask for the views of young people on school facilities: toilets, uniforms, food and lockers; but it can also mean developing a project of innovation, for all members of the community. The purpose of this school project was to look into a different view of what pupils are used to doing in class projects; a very challenging task that consists of the real decisions of the scholars while undergoing high involvement. Given the fact that I could work in detail with one group class (6th primary), I could see that they felt deeply involved, motivated and fascinated by such project, as some of their ideas were being taken into account and carried out. For example, they asked for motivating quotes, notices, rules, and interesting infographics (needs) and we could reach that goal, too. I must admit that it caused great satisfaction among the scholars when they could make use of the corners session with the material they had created, and some of their petitions were fulfilled. Ainee (2015) asserted that student participation inspires and empowers pupils to take charge of their education. In accordance with her, thanks to the data collected at the moment, students suggested more ideas of what teachers had to take into account. Brion (2015) claimed *"young people have a perspective on the world that adults can't share",* I took into account all of their voices; including the ones that are not typically heard. (Boss, S. 2016)

In addition to that, thanks to the obtained results written in that research article, I could see that learning using stations-based teaching practices have a positive influence. Dikici (2014) compared student-centred teaching practices with traditional teaching practices and he claimed that approach based on learning stations is significantly more effective than traditional teaching practices for pupils' success. (Gozuyesil, E. Dikici, A. 2014) As for that contribution (and others in the theoretical framework), I was encouraged to implement English

learning-centres strategy as a pedagogical practice. As I have seen in my practice, learning-corners activities progress simply by keeping students busy and let them get deeply engaged in learning. The four corners I designed, could supplement the regular classroom instruction and allow pupils to think critically about what they were learning in the ordinary English lessons (the description, word order sentences, present continuous and past simple).

Concerning the learning-centres session, I must admit that it would have been interesting that all students could work in the four corners, which means to arrange more lessons like that. After the session, mates from the 6th grade had a positive general feeling of the activities and they discovered a new approach. They asked me to do this more often and they did not want the tasks to end. Some of them told me that they usually do not like the English subject and this kind of activities encouraged them to learn the language. The specialist and I were completely satisfied with their responses and she assured me that they will continue with this strategy as a way of learning.

From my point of view, teachers also need to develop the students' capacity for autonomous and strategic learning in the classroom. For this reason, we may need more research on learning-centres so that our pedagogical endeavours can be informed about how to empower pupils with the capacity for organizing and maintaining their autonomous learning efforts inside the classroom. (Pickard, N. 1996) Moreover, it has been a good point that some activities have been thought for different levels of difficulty. For example, pupils could choose between answering first the "making words" sheet, or completing directly the "making sentences" task. Along with differentiating activities, teachers have to incorporate a critical thinking component into each job to allow pupils of all ability levels to be challenged to think deeply. (Edward, J. 1981)

Going back to the **students' needs**, there were two corners (board games and drama) that could not be implemented because of the lack of equipment; thus, four corners were enough for half of the students in the group. In the future, after several months of rotation, these two (and more) will probably be created. However, I am pleased to say that the majority of the students' needs were met in such session.

Even though the topic of each corner came from the children proposals, the specialists and I had to plan the activities to assure that all the skills were taken into account. We also organized the students fostering individual responsibility by assigning different roles, avoiding grouping by ability. In only one session I could not assess pupils one by one, but I tried with the group performance (attitudes, interactions, support...) through the observation table.

Making reference to what Bulunuz and Jarret (2010) highlighted, I consider that the final part of the corners session (assess, reflection and clean-up) was the most forgotten one. I should have taken the last minutes more seriously to comment and reflect on the job done, as well as returning the material to its place.

To finish with this point, I would add that the corners session did not take place in the new English classroom, as I had planned. During four weeks, the space was out of order as the walls were being painted. This was a surprise for me but it was not a dramatic problem, so I made a simulation in the library with the new resources created. This is a big school project and there is a lot to do during 2020.

Turning now to the job during the **English commission** and the creation of the new material, it was wonderful to see how students, who have difficulties in several subjects, were able to work calmly, efficiently and consciously. I was strongly impacted by a dyslexic boy, who always has a dispersed attitude, but in the Commission, I could see how he worked to do its best; I congratulated him in several situations. Teachers can develop learning-centre activities that can cope with different specific abilities, learning styles, interests, and needs of the diverse pupils. Besides that, I would have liked that more than one group could participate in the creation of material. My idea was to encourage as many students as possible to participate. However, I must admit that the Team-Based Learning strategy was a successful one to develop this part of the project; children could interact, cooperate and help each other as I expected. On top of this, pupils were highly immersed in the tasks and they behaved less like "empty vessels" and more like active participants. (Lane, D. 2008)

Pending aspects and future recommendations

Based on the tasks done and the upcoming actions to do, I will mention some points that can be useful for the following steps in this project of innovation.

- Use a larger number of participants, various grade levels, and classes over a longer amount of time in the learning-corners sessions to provide more general results.
- There is still a lack of equipment (boxes, resources, infographics, posters, computers, earphones, game boards…) that should be solved in the following steps. I have not seen the final result, but I have to say that I feel grateful to the involvement of the school members for giving me time and a space to develop this big project.
- There should be a kind of rubric to control which corners and tasks the students have already done. So, it is necessary to create a document to revise the pupils' work, especially in the laptops area.
- From now on, the two specialists of English will go on with the learning-centres approach as they perceived a strong impact on the students' attitudes and engagement. Teachers should use corners to supplement regular classroom instruction, relating the learning-centre activities to the curriculum, while introducing the understanding of new ways of teaching.
- I would recommend to continue working with the project in the English commission, as well as presenting the process in the IRLA meetings. Students are able to put into practice their oratorical skills, a useful fact that prepares them for their future as citizens. What they will expound in front of their mates is the result of the whole commission members' hard work.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Nelson Mandela

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. AN EMAIL TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Guidelines on how to write a requesting text

Before writing

1. Don't use flowery language.
2. Don't use abbreviations and slang language.
3. The e-mail must be precise and the message should be direct.
4. Always include the subject line.
5. Always follow the formal letter format for school.

Formal e-mail format

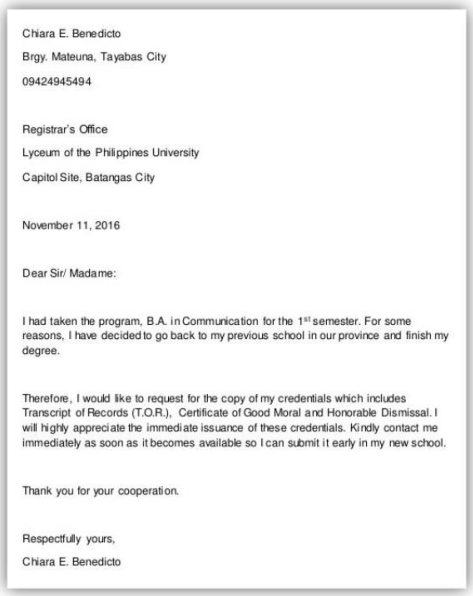
- **Sender Address**
- **Receivers Address:** school principal email or the school email.
- **Subject:** this subject line talks about the purpose of the letter; our necessity.
- **Salutation:** you should greet the person to whom you are writing the letter. [Dear sir, Respected school principal / Ester, etc.]
- **Body of the Letter:**
  Paragraph 1: introduce yourself and the purpose of writing this email.
- **Paragraph 2:** now explain the reason in detail.
- **Paragraph 3:** conclude the email. This section must say what you're expecting or the solution.
- **Complimentary Closing:** now end the email with – yours sincerely, faithfully, thankfully…
- **Signature:** name of the whole group of students.

Useful vocabulary for a request

- We have a request (for you)…
- We have a/another favour to ask you…
- Could you…?
- How about…?
- Could you possibly…?
- We need (to)…. Could you help?
- We would be (very) grateful if you could…
- Mai you…?
- Can we ask you to…?
- Do you think you could…?
- If you could…., We'd / we'll…

- Thanks in advance for…
- We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Example format



Chiara E. Benedicto
Brgy. Mateuna, Tayabas City
09424945494

Registrar's Office
Lyceum of the Philippines University
Capitol Site, Batangas City

November 11, 2016

Dear Sir/ Madame:

I had taken the program, B.A. in Communication for the 1st semester. For some reasons, I have decided to go back to my previous school in our province and finish my degree.

Therefore, I would like to request for the copy of my credentials which includes Transcript of Records (T.O.R.), Certificate of Good Moral and Honorable Dismissal. I will highly appreciate the immediate issuance of these credentials. Kindly contact me immediately as soon as it becomes available so I can submit it early in my new school.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Respectfully yours,
Chiara E. Benedicto

Email written by the 6th grade students

Thursday, 24th October 2019

Dear Ester,

We are the students from 6th grade, but we address to you on behalf of all boys and girls in the school. We write this email to inform you that we want to change some things in the English classroom. We consider that there are some disadvantages that you need to know:

- The class is disorganized.
- It is old and poor.
- It is boring and ugly.
- The walls are dirty.
- There is unnecessary stuff in the class.

We also want to explain our proposal in buying some materials to equip the class. We would like to have English books and films, laptops with headphones, dictionaries and educative English games. Moreover, we would like to have a library with adventure books, picture books and novels. Could it be possible? We would be very happy if the class could have all of these things.

In relation to the decoration, we have another request to ask you. We are interested in adding images about customs and celebrations, routines posters, titles of the materials, and we want to stick some rules on the wall. What do you think?

Besides, we would like to organise the classroom with corners. For example, the laptops area, the books and dictionaries zone, the board games corner, the dramatic space, and others.

To finish with this request, how about decorating the walls with Origami shapes and painting the walls? We are sure that there will be plenty of volunteers to develop these tasks. All of us are really interested in taking part in this tempting school project!!

Kindly, tell us what you think and if our proposals are possible.

Thanks in advance for your attention.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Pupils from 6th grade.

ANNEX 2. OBSERVATION TABLE

How students work during the English commission?

DAY:

TIME:

NUMBER OF STUDENTS:

COURSE:

During these 4 Fridays, the teacher of English and I will be observing how students are working with their mates, how they behave and their attitude to the materials created. I have created an observation table to write comments on issues that are of my interest.

ISSUES	COMMENTS
Have pupils finished the expected tasks on time?	
Have they helped each other?	
Have students interacted with each other? *(active participation)*	
Has the intervention of the teachers been necessary?	
Have they worked on their own?	

Have students respected each other and the teachers? *(Listening, taking turns to speak, respecting the others' opinion….)*	
Have students done their best?	
Have they been creative and entrepreneurs? *(Suggesting new ideas, new activities, new designs….)*	
Other comments	

ANNEX 3. SOME MATERIAL IN THE ENGLISH LEARNING-CENTRES

Once upon a time...

In this corner you can choose between two options:

- You can take a **dictionary**, discover how it works and complete the sheet "*How useful is the dictionary*!"
- You can choose a **book** from the library and read it. Take one of your level so that you can feel comfortable during the reading. At the end of the book, you will have to complete the sheet "*A book to remember*".

Riddles

Do you know what a riddle is?

Write the solution of the riddles.

Try to invent a new one and ask to solve it to someone.

Making sentences

ADJECTIVE	NOUN	VERB	ADVERB
Angry	Apples	Paint	Quickly
Beautiful	Babies	Drive	Always
Big	Boy	Quack	Quietly
Bitter	Brother	Dance	Rudely

Delicious	Cake	Walk	Slowly
Sweet	Flowers	Run	Softly
Sour	Friends	Jump	Carefully
Salty	Frogs	Climb	Easily
Hard	Giants	Fly	Kindly

Let's be writers

All about me

Write a text about yourself. You can explain different things such as: *free time, family, sports, physical description, likes and dislikes, school subjects, hobbies….* Be creative!!

You can use your dictionary to do this task.

You should also answer these sentences:

One thing that many people don't know about me is…

One problem I would like to solve in the world is…

If I could spend a day doing anything, I would choose to…

One thing I want to get better at this year is….

My goal for English this year is…

Story creators

Choose different flashcards (landscape, character and place) to invent your own story. Be creative and have fun!!

Share it with a friend and write your opinion about his/her story.

You can use your dictionary to do this task.

CORNERS INSTRUCTIONS

- You have to listen to the instructions at the beginning of the lesson.
- You have to respect all the material in the class.
- You have to listen to your mates and the teacher when they are talking.
- You have to respect the others' opinion.
- You have to finish the activity you have chosen, before starting a new one.
- You can give a hand to your friend when necessary.
- You have to tidy up the classroom when the session is finished.
- You have to deliver your tasks to the teacher at the end of the session.

ANNEX 4. OBSERVATION TABLE

How students work during the English corners session?

DAY: **TIME:** **NUMBER OF STUDENTS:** **COURSE:**

GENERAL ASPECTS	
Issues	**Answers and comments**
Did the students listen and follow the general instructions?	YES / NO
MATERIAL ORGANIZATION Was the material well distributed?	YES / NO
TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION Did the activities last the proper length of time? Did the students finish the chosen tasks?	YES / NO YES / NO
Did the pupils tidy up the classroom?	YES / NO
OBSERVATIONS	

WE ARE ALL CONNECTED!	
Issues	**Answers and comments**
Which link has been the most chosen?	Guess who / fill the gaps of a song / short stories about topics
Did the students need the teachers' help? Why?	Yes / NO
Have they interacted with each other? Why?	YES / NO
Did they understand the instructions of the activities?	YES / NO

Did they respect the laptops?	YES / NO
OBSERVATIONS	

ONCE UPON A TIME…	
Issues	**Answers and comments**
Which sheet did they choose the most?	How useful is the dictionary! / A book to remember
Did the pupils use the dictionaries often?	YES / NO
Did they read in silence?	YES / NO
Did the students need the teachers' help? Why?	YES / NO
Have they interacted with each other? Why?	YES / NO
Did they understand the instructions of the activities?	YES / NO
OBSERVATIONS	

DO NOT DISTURB. We are playing with the language	
Issues	**Answers and comments**
Which sheet did they choose the most?	Riddles / making words / making sentences / tongue twisters
Did the pupils use the dictionaries often?	YES / NO
Have pupils been creative with the productions?	YES / NO
Did the students need the teachers' help? Why?	YES / NO
Have they interacted with each other?	YES / NO

Why? Did they have fun?	YES / NO
Did they understand the instructions of the activities?	YES / NO
OBSERVATIONS	

LET'S BE WRITERS	
Issues	**Answers and comments**
Which sheet did they choose the most?	All about me / story creators
Did the pupils use the dictionaries often?	YES / NO
Have pupils been creative with the productions?	YES / NO
Did the students need the teachers' help? Why?	YES / NO
Have they interacted with each other? Why?	YES / NO
Did they understand the instructions of the activities?	YES / NO
OBSERVATIONS	

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

ANNEX 5. INTERVIEW TO THE TWO TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

After several weeks developing the innovative project with the students, now it is time to listen to your opinion. I would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions in relation to the innovative project "Creating a new English classroom with resources considering pupils' voice". Besides, your answers should reflect how the classroom is working now and which tasks are still in progress (future).
Your opinion is really essential!

MARIA CODINA **03.12.2019**

Why is it important to have a good environment in the classroom and feel comfortable?

When somebody is immersed into the learning process, an appropriate environment is expected in order to feel comfortable, inspired and ready to learn. Knowledge is acquired when the brain has the right conditions and the person feels motivated by the new input. The same happens when talking about children. They spend nearly the whole day in the same classroom and it is very important that they feel it as if it was their own space.

What is still missing in the English classroom?

There are a couple of things that are not there yet. If I tell you the truth, by now the project is still more of our imagination than a fact. The classroom is already painted and everything is decided. We have got most of the furniture and materials we need to furnish and decorate it, but we are in a 'neverending busy life', so after planning the lessons and helping the children to learn, we run out of time. This is our main problem! We've got the illusion and the motivation (the same as our students) but we have few hours to dedicate to that kind of 'business' that we have already started.

Would you continue doing more tasks like the ones we have done (signs, corners, posters, motivational quotes…) to improve the classroom surroundings?

Yes, sure! I'll do everything to make them feel important, part of the project and motivated.

Which are your tasks so far (future) in relation to the English classroom?

Well… It is not easy to think about new tasks when I am still in the middle of the old ones. My immediate objective is to have the English-ICT classroom ready for the 8th of January. Then I would like to have a proper opening, with a red ribbon to cut and a short parliament from the school staff.

What do you think about the corners' session?

I really liked that session! Students were motivated all the time and they enjoyed the activities a lot! I congratulate you for your effort, your ideas and your good manners.

Would you have more lessons like the one we gave?

Sure! In fact this is the first year I don't have 'English corners' in my initial planning. This is because I only have two sessions per week and also because, in September, there was nowhere to install the learning-corners.

How would you improve the corners and/or the activities?

Taking into account the different skills and making sure that they are all practiced through the distinct corners. A great variety of changeable materials and activities can help to improve them.

Do you think that the corners methodology is a good one? Why?

My experience has taught me that English corners are a good tool to motivate and a fantastic resource to assist diversity, respecting the different levels of learning and rhythms of work. Students feel confident and not disappointed when doing tasks that are not the same as the other pupils' activities. They can perceive themselves as singular.

In what sense is it important to count on the students' participation?

Students love participating in almost all the activities. Depending on how the teacher suggests the task (the mood, the non-verbal language, the tone of voice...) the pupils will feel quickly involved in the activity. The teacher must be a good 'seller' of knowledge! Participation and learning are words that go often together.

As a teacher, why do you think students need to contribute in school projects?

It is their school and we are talking about their lives, so why shouldn't they not contribute in its projects? It has no sense! They only need open-minded teachers in front of them to help them grow with real challenges.

How do you value the process in general (students' needs, letter to the principal, research, materials and resources, corners session)?

Everything well-planned and carried out in a better way. I'm proud of you Jordina! You've done a very good job and I'm sure you'll be a great teacher!

THANK YOU MARIA FOR ALL YOUR DEDICATION AND SUPPORT!!

HELENA AZNAR **05.12.2019**

Why is it important to have a good environment in the classroom and feel comfortable?

Classroom environment is one of the most important factors affecting student learning. Simply put, students learn better when they view the learning environment as positive and supportive. A positive environment is one in which students feel a sense of belonging, trust others, and feel encouraged to tackle challenges, take risks, and ask questions. Such an environment provides relevant content, clear learning goals and feedback, opportunities to build social skills, and strategies to help students succeed.

What is still missing in the English classroom?

The classroom is still under construction. After collecting all the ideas and thinking about how we can put them into practice, we are now carrying out the last phase: choice of materials, furniture assembly and decoration of the classroom. We will try to make the classroom completely finished in January.
The idea is that it is an atypical classroom, where the children feel very comfortable when they go in, as if they were in the living room of their house. That is why we have not chosen the typical decoration of a school, but they are neutral colors, with cozy corners where they can enjoy a moment of reading, board games or dress up with their friends while they learn.

Would you continue doing more tasks like the ones we have done (signs, corners, posters, motivational quotes…) to improve the classroom surroundings?

Sure. A classroom/school is a living space that needs constant innovation, change and recycling so that students always feel motivated by learning. We will do this according to the demands of the students, families and ours.

Which are your tasks so far (future) in relation to the English classroom?

Perceive the demands of my students and adapt to them so that they can mature and get the best of themselves and particularly in the English area.

Do you think that the job in the English commission has been affective? In what sense?

For me it has been interesting and very motivating to see how students were involved in the idea of the reform of the classroom. I think they have done a good cooperative work where all the contributions have been valued and come true.

Has the IRLA meeting been a good opportunity to share the project with the whole of the school members?

Yes, I think we are very lucky to have that space. It is a unique opportunity to share with the rest of the students and teachers of the school the work done by each commission and share it.

In what sense is it important to count on the students' participation?

One of the pillars of the Educational Project of our center is the Democratic Education Program, so we have always taken into account the needs and demands of our students and have left them a space of expression and participation that we call Assemblies. Very good ideas have emerged from the Assemblies over the years, and we believe that it is also important for them to feel the most important part of the school, safe and motivated and to help them speak in public and defend their ideals.

As a teacher, why do you think students need to contribute in school projects?

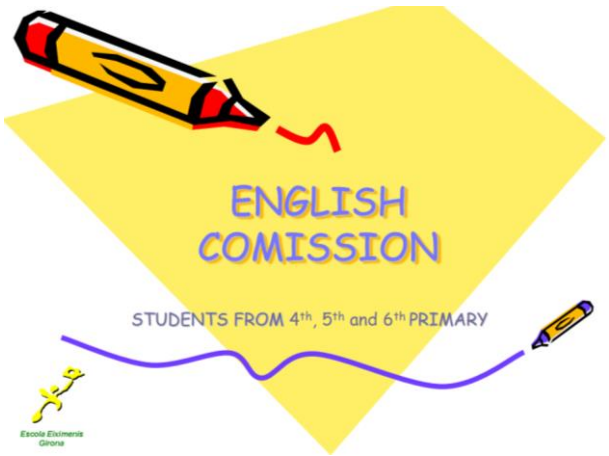
Because a project that does not take students into account is an incomplete project and therefore is not a good project.

How do you value the process in general (students' needs, letter to the principal, research, materials and resources, corners session)?

I value it very positively, since the students and many families have been involved and focused on the project. When students participate and feel part of the project, when their likes and needs are taken into account, this directly influences on their self-esteem, motivation and in the end on their learning.
You have done a great job, the new English classroom will always have a piece of you, thank you very much Jordina.

THANK YOU HELENA FOR ALL YOUR DEDICATION AND SUPPORT!!

ANNEX 6: *IRLA* MEETING, ORAL PRESENTATION



LET'S UPDATE THE
ENGLISH
CLASSROOM

1. We wrote an e-mail to the school principal and we told her its purpose

Thursday, 24th October 2019

Dear Ester,

We are the students from 6th grade, but we address to you on behalf of all boys and girls in the school. We write this email to inform you that we want to change some things in the English classroom. We consider that there are some disadvantages that you need to know:

- The class is disorganized.
- It is old and poor.
- It is boring and ugly.
- The walls are dirty.
- There is unnecessary stuff in the class.

We also want to explain our proposal in buying some materials to equip the class. We would like to have English books and films, laptops with headphones, dictionaries and educative English games. Moreover, we would like to have a library with adventure books, picture books and novels. Could it be possible? We would be very happy if the class could have all of these things.

In relation to the decoration, we have another request to ask you. We are interested in adding images about customs and celebrations, routines posters, titles of the materials, and we want to stick some rules on the wall. What do you think?

Besides, we would like to organise the classroom with corners. For example, the laptops area, the books and dictionaries zone, the board games corner, the dramatic space, and others.

To finish with this request, how about decorating the walls with Origami shapes and painting the walls? We are sure that there will be plenty of volunteers to develop these tasks. All of us are really interested in taking part in this tempting school project!!

Kindly, tell us what you think and if our proposals are possible.

Thanks in advance for your attention.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Pupils from 6th grade.

2. AFA membres came to school to paint the walls of the English classroom.

3. We created materials and resources

During few days....
we had to imagine that the school library was the "new English classroom"

ANNEX 7: DIDACTIC UNIT SAMPLE

THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM OF OUR DREAMS

TERM	1st term	**COURSE**	6th grade of primary. 26 students.

CLASS GROUP	**DURATION**
As Eiximenis is a small school and there is only one classroom per course, all the students (from 1st until 6th primary) will participate in the initial part of the project (sharing their needs). However, students from 6th grade will play the main role in this project of innovation.	This project will last for 2 months; from 04/10/19 until 13/12/19. We will dedicate two hours a week approximately to develop the idea with students. We will count on 2 English hours (6th primary students), the English Commission subject [3] (Fridays 15-16:30h) and some playground moments for those pupils who want to be volunteers (depending on the week).

JUSTIFICATION

At the beginning of the course, the management team was aware that there was some space in Eiximenis' school which needed to be turned into: the English classroom. This idea was communicated to the two English specialists and they completely agreed with this issue. The necessity was real and there was no time to waste. Just two weeks after my arrival at school, the two teachers of English talked to me and suggested helping them in reforming the classroom. My answer was totally affirmative and I looked forward to getting down to work.

Immediately, I knew that this could be an interesting starting point for my Final Degree Project, and it was. Thanks to the opinions coming from the university mates, I achieved a clear idea of what to do. Luckily, the teachers of English agreed with it and thought it would be an interesting school project, as well as a considering it a democratic project.

My idea is to create the new English classroom with the pupils' participation, who will be the main protagonists and, at the same time, a classroom will be created from their

[3] In the **English Commission** there are 15 students coming from 4th, 5th and 6th grade. After each month (4 weeks more or less), each group change and go to another Commission. We do this subject every Friday from 15:00h until 16:30h. In each Commission, students work with "projectes democràtics", which means that the activities are related to some issues that influence in the educative community, such as: the new English classroom (comissió d'Anglès), the school magazine (comissió TIC) or the care of the garden (comissió natura).

own ideas and needs. There is no doubt that English will be the vehicular language to develop the project. I am aware that the new class won't be finished in only two months but my idea is to create materials and resources to use in a corners session in the new English class, with the students creations, coming from their suggestions.

The following didactic unit intends to show the curricular part and the structure of the sessions to achieve the main aim; the creation of the new English classroom according to the students' needs and participation.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this project are:

- To conceive the English language as a way of communication that is used in a normalized environment.
- To discover which of the students' needs are in relation to the new English class in order to encourage their participation.
- To write a requesting email to the school principal in order to expose the pupils' suggestions.
- To foster the pupils' creativity and autonomy to create suitable materials and resources in order to be used in the corners.
- To work through the corners organization making use of the different activities and resources designed by the students.
- To improve the communicative competence of students, especially when referring to oral skills (oral comprehension and expression) and focusing on fluency rather than on accuracy.
- To share the job done with all the students and teachers in order to introduce the new English classroom as a suitable place of learning for them all.
- To assess the process until the last task to improve what is made and to revise what is still in progress.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES

Exploration

Initial needs and ideas of students.

- **Initial Cycle (IC):** with small groups, students will try to draw or write the needs in our English classroom. Previously, they will have seen videos and pictures about how an English classroom could be like. To do this initial task, they will use colourful post-its and stick them on the wall.

(30 minutes in the English lesson)

Materials and resources: pictures and videos to show examples of English classrooms, colourful post-its, pencils and crayons.

- **Medium Cycle (MC):** with small groups, students will have to discuss 3 questions and write the agreed answer on the parquet floor. Previously, they will have seen videos and pictures about what an English classroom could be like. The questions will be:
  - ✓ *What kind of decoration would you like to have in the new classroom?*
  - ✓ *Name possible games and activities you would like to have there.*
  - ✓ *Which 2 rules would you write in the English classroom?*

  (30 minutes in the English lesson)

  Materials and resources: pictures to show examples of English classrooms and markers for the parquet floor.

- **Upper cycle (UC):** students will have to answer an initial questionnaire on their own. This will be an individual and anonymous task. First, I will be with half of the class and then the rest will come to do the survey with their laptops. Moreover, I will send the link to the two teachers of English to answer it online and at home.

  (30 minutes with each group in the English lesson)

Materials and resources: **laptops and the survey link.**

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION	OBJECTIVES RELATED
In the IC and MC groups, the teacher will mainly guide the task so that students can express their own opinions. She will also explain the purpose of the following project. The discussion between the pupils and the final agreements will be their main responsibility. They will be guided and advised by the example pictures and videos as well. In the UC session, students will be the main protagonists. They will need to be self-sufficient, independent of the need to write what they consider feasible to create. The teacher will be in the class to explain the purpose of the following project.	• To conceive the English language as way of communication that is used in a normalized environment. • To discover which of the students' needs are in relation to the new English class in order to encourage their participation.

Development
On a Friday, students in the English Commission will use the laptops to look for activities, resources, posters, infographics, … to create the materials (research). I will create a general list about the main ideas that the students answered in the initial survey, so that they can respect the interests of their mates. Other pupils will make a list of the material (colour papers, glue, photocopies…) they will need to create the activities and the posters. In addition, there will be another group of people who will think about the organization of the spaces (corners) in the new classroom, and the essential rules during these lessons. ***(1 hour and 30 minutes in the English Commission)*** ***Materials and resources:*** laptops, papers and pencils.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION	**OBJECTIVES RELATED**
The students will have the main role as they will have to do research. They will have to develop strategies to work with other mates, whom they don't know well, and to cooperate. They will have to help each other as the job will be by pairs or with groups of 3. The teacher will approve or reject the pupils' ideas, depending on the viability. She will also give a hand with the organization of the students and with the supply of the materials.	• To conceive the English language as a way of communication that is used in a normalized environment. • To discover which of the students' needs are in relation to the new English class in order to encourage their participation.

Synthesis
During the first week of December, students will be able to do a corners session with the new material created. The 4 corners will be: "Let's be writers", "Once upon a time…", "DO NOT DISTURB. We are playing with the language" and "We are all connected"; all of them are thought by the pupils. Students from the 6th grade will be the participants in such activity. I will split the group-class in two, so that pupils can work better. The library will be the chosen place to develop this session and I will tell them "Imagine that you are in the new English classroom". Throughout the session, I will fill out an observation table.

(1 hour for each half of the group - Monday, 2nd December from 9:00 until 11:00h)

Materials and resources: the materials in each corner, pencils and photocopies.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION	OBJECTIVES RELATED
The teacher will explain how the corners work to the students, as most of them won't still know. Pupils will be the protagonists while they will be working in 4 different corners (work teams). Moreover, the teacher will give a hand in the corners to make the information clear or explain some statements. The attendance of the 2 teachers of English (the specialist and me) will be essential, as the involvement will be crucial; it will be a new kind of methodology for them.	• To conceive the English language as a way of communication that is used in a normalized environment. • To work through the corners organization making use of the different activities and resources designed by the students. • To improve the communicative competence of students, especially when referring to oral skills (oral comprehension and expression) and focusing on fluency rather than on accuracy.

Assessment orientation
Regarding the evaluation, the teachers of English and I will focus on the strategies and processes that each pupil uses to express themselves and also to understand the others. Correct some communicative mistakes will be an important task to take into account as a teacher. The assessment will be done at the end of my final project (according to my initial objectives), during the corners sessions and, obviously, I will pay special attention to the students' participation and attitudes during the sessions. That is why I will take notes during the process of creating materials and the corners session (2 observation tables), which will be useful for the assessment of the English subject. Besides, I will carry out a survey to the 6th grade students so that they can reflect on their own job, the corners session, and their use of the language. Apart from this, I will interview the two teachers of English, who have given me a hand during the process, so that they can give me their opinion in relation to the innovative project, give me some improvements, and agree what is still in progress. Finally, the IRLA

meeting will be a crucial event to see if what pupils have done in the English Commission is shown clearly to the rest of the mates.

Cross-curricular topics

In this project, there will be different implicit cross-curricular topics.

Education in values: students will work with students of different ages and places. The values of cooperation, respect, and solidarity will be there at any time.

Education in tolerance: every opinion, every idea, every reflection… should be heard and respected.

The project is considered a **democratic** one, as its purpose is for all the education community; that is why we have the English Commission lessons.

Intercultural education: throughout the project, children can come together, make contact and interact with cultural difference and otherness. Moreover, thanks to the development of the tasks, students will be contributing to the community life, their development as democratic citizens, and their ability to engage (**citizens' awareness**).

Inclusive education: there is no doubt that all the students can participate in all the activities, without discrimination. In other words, different and diverse pupils will learn side by side in the same classroom.

Ethical education: this moral value seeks to offer pupils the opportunity to meaningfully and critically reflect upon this democratic project.