

Peer-assessed Performance Projects: A New Perspective on Freshman English

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Due to the highly instrumental, test-driven, memory-based learning that occurs in high school English classes in Korea, EFL teachers at tertiary level face students who, while differing in terms of proficiencies, majors, and learning needs, tend to share a lack of English performance skills. Communicative competence is not part of the university entrance exam, so it receives little attention in secondary education and it is the task of tertiary educators to foster and nurture this skill. This case study describes a Freshman English program which attempted to do this by acknowledging recent findings in the fields of cognitive, affective and social learning, and which catered to differing learning needs and multiple intelligences. Based on twelve years' experience of teaching university freshmen, the researchers put together a student-centered program which encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning through making performance projects, assessing their performance skills, and continuously reflecting on their learning needs, goals and achievements. The program was in effect for three years (following a number of pilot years), and results showed improvement in student confidence, motivation and attitudes to learning, in addition to communicative competence. (186 words)

Keywords: Projects, performance-assessment, reflection, autonomy, false-beginners

I. INTRODUCTION

In keeping with the strong focus on English as an international language, which pervades every aspect of education in Korea, students arriving in tertiary education are typically required to study at least one year of fluency-based English language tuition ("Freshman English"), in order to improve their communicative competence in a target language which they have previously studied (in elementary and secondary schools) on a non-performance, test-driven, instrumentally motivated basis. This policy is an attempt to address a problem that has been recognized for some time: middle and high school English tuition typically uses teacher-fronted, grammar-translation methods to prepare students for multiple-choice, high stakes English proficiency tests, which are powerful gatekeepers to university entrance. As a result, college and university Freshman English instructors are faced with students whose view of language-learning reflects the discrete-item, grammar-based, language-as-code tuition to which they have become accustomed. Since the goal of such study was primarily to enter tertiary education, these students often feel little need to continue learning once this goal has been achieved.

The globalization which permeates every aspect of contemporary Korea requires its business community to possess communicative competence in English, and Freshman College students soon discover not only that job opportunities depend on standardized proficiency test scores (e.g. TOEIC, TOEFL, TEPS, etc.), but also that credit courses in various majors often use English-medium textbooks. In addition, an increasing number of professors (both from Korea and overseas) are teaching their courses in English. Rather than being able to forget about English, therefore, students find increased pressure to be able to interact with native English speakers (NS) (L2 Second language L1 Mother tongue) and with non-native speakers (NNS) (L2 L2) in order to graduate and find a career. On top of this, the use of English as a *lingua franca* in Email communication and the invaluable information resources offered by the Internet, provide further justifications for acquiring a working knowledge of English.

What is the role of Freshman English programs in this context? How are students to be prepared for business interactions in English,

understanding and designing English-medium business presentations and professional reports, and comprehending various job-related English texts?

This case study considers a recent program which took a student-centered approach to these issues by encouraging students to design and perform their own language-projects, thus identifying their specific learning needs and focusing on their particular linguistic requirements.

II. PERFORMANCE PROJECTS

1. History of research

Project-based syllabi can be seen as a special application of the process syllabus, exemplifying process and task-based ideas by being "collaborative, avoiding competition, and lending themselves to analysis of global goals into sub-components which are then delegated to sub-groups, who take responsibility for completing them" (Skehan, 1998, p. 273). Legutke & Thomas (1991) define the project syllabus as:

... a theme and task-centred mode of teaching and learning which results from a joint process of negotiation between all participants. It allows for a wide scope of self-determined action for both the individual and the small group of learners within a general framework of a plan which defines goals and procedures. Project learning realizes a dynamic balance between a process and a product orientation. (Legutke & Thomas, 1991, p. 160)

Dewey and Kilpatrick, writing in the first half of the 19th century, laid the theoretical and practical foundations of learning by and through experience, seeing the educational project as a "whole-hearted purposeful activity" (Kilpatrick, 1918), taking place in a social environment upon which it has a significant impact. Their work had considerable influence on and was paralleled by the educational reform movements in Germany after the First World War, and Soviet educationalists also took up project learning during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period

(Frey,1982). Project learning became a central issue in the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of a radical critique of institutionalized schooling (Illich, 1970; Reimer, 1970; Graubard, 1972; Winkel, 1974) and became linked with the idea of a more "convivial society" (Illich, 1970) and the democratization of learning through the introduction of the comprehensive school. Since then, the term 'project' has become blurred, often being used to mean an activity which "is in some kind of opposition to whatever is considered mainstream educational practice" (Legutke & Thomas, 1991, p. 158), with "overgeneralised connotations of freedom as opposed to constraint, and, unfortunately, fun as opposed to serious and responsible work" (Legutke & Thomas, 1991, p. 158).

Project-based syllabi have a strong process dimension, but they are also notable for the product which emerges from the process (e.g. oral presentation, drama, written report). This product is seen as part of the process continuum (a means rather than an end), useful for the feedback (and therefore opportunities for assessment) which it gives to the learners concerning their progress, as well as functioning as a "sort of public record of the project, of which the participants have ownership, and which will give the project some durability" (Skehan, 1998, p. 273 cf. Willis 1996). Haines (1989) sees the possibility of specialization within a project and a clearer structure for individual contributions, with the public performance aspect of the product stage encouraging a greater focus on form as well as being a source of evaluative information.

Fried-Booth (1986) suggests a sequence for involving students in project work, in which learners take progressively greater responsibility. The teacher decides on introductory and bridging topics, but once the introductory stages are over, learners are ready for full-scale projects in which they take wider responsibility for topic choice as well as topic execution. This approach can provide a useful introduction (for teachers and students) to process syllabus ideas, as the teacher gradually hands over control of the learning situation to the students, though Legutke & Thomas (1991, p. 204) emphasize that this should not be viewed as a simple linear process. For the full-scale project, Fried-Booth (1986) suggests three stages that can be matched with Legutke & Thomas' (1991) common project structure, (Table 1, below).

TABLE 1
Structures for projects (Finch, 2000, p. 396)

Fried-Booth (1986) (project stages)	Legutke & Thomas (1991) (project structure)
1. Classroom based	Opening
- Provision of stimulus material	Topic orientation
- Definition of project objectives	
- Analysis and practice of language skills	
- Design of written materials	
2. Carrying out of project	Research and data collection
- Group activities	Preparing data presentation
- Collation of information	
3. Review/monitoring	Presentation
- Organization of material	Evaluation
- Final presentation	

2. The case-study

Building on the findings of the author's task-based and project-based research (Finch, 2000, pp. 300ff), the program designers aimed to identify and repair ineffective learning skills and obstructive affective learning filters (e.g. anxiety, negative attitude, lack of confidence and motivation), in addition to promoting linguistic and skills-based categories such as technical vocabulary and internalization of presentation skills.

Working from cognitive, affective, cultural and social learning theories, it was felt that an effective way for students to acquire technical language for future jobs, comprehension of textbooks, and English-medium presentations, would be for students to devise 'learning projects' in which such language figures prominently. The process of designing, carrying out and completing the projects would highlight skills that were in need of development, as well as affective barriers to learning, so that the learning plans required to address these (arrived at in consultation with the teacher) would have meaning and authenticity for the individual learners. Instead of prescribing learning content, class teachers could ask "How does the learner see his/her learning needs" and "How can student perceptions be satisfied and positively modified to produce effective learning?" Such an approach would identify 'false beginners' who had been impeded in achieving fluency by affective constraints, inefficient learning styles,

absence of opportunity to interact in the L2, and a history of test-driven formal secondary education (Finch, 2000, p. 42). It would also help learners to perform realistic needs analyses, and devise appropriate plans for specific learning.

It was not expected that the cycle of self-directed needs analysis, goal setting, achievement and reflection, would produce immediate, measurable results, but rather that the process of learning-to-learn which would emerge from this approach would help students to take control of, and to accept responsibility for, their learning.

III. COURSE DESIGN

1. Basic principles

The program which is the subject of this study recognized that Freshman students have a need for communicative competence in English, and that an interactive task-based approach has been shown to be effective in satisfying that need (Finch, 2000, p. 305). In addition, it also took account of recent research findings regarding cognitive, affective, cultural and social learning.

?Cognitive findings indicate that over-emphasis on one aspect of language (e.g. grammar, communication, fluency, and error-correction) adversely affects the way in which student attention is shared between other learning processes (Skehan, 2000, p. 147).

?Findings relating to affect (Arnold, 1999) show that factors such as attitude, beliefs, perceptions, motivation, confidence, stress and anxiety are strong determiners of what actually gets learned in the classroom. It has been claimed that these factors are more important than cognition (Stern, 1983, p. 386), and that students do not learn what the teacher teaches (Allwright, 1984).

?Recent attention given to 'World Englishes' (Kachru & Nelson, 2001) and 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson, 1992) has highlighted a need for EFL students to be aware of their own culture, and to be able to talk about it in English, rather than focusing solely on the 'target culture.'

?From the social perspective, the classroom is a place of multiple learning affordances (Van Lier, 2000, p. 252) in which social skills such as cooperation, collaboration, responsibility, honesty and trust can (and should be) investigated and developed.

Recent advances in the physical sciences (Chaos Theory, Complexity Theory, Set Theory, Systems Theory, etc.) have added further to the view of language learning which is currently emerging. According to contemporary theories, the classroom is "a complex adaptive system" (Van Lier, 1996, p. 38) in which "details are all that matters" (Gould, 1993) and in which "it is fruitless to search for causal relations" (Van Lier, 1996, p. 38). The complex and dynamic interactions, or "connectivities" (Waldrop, 1992) which occur in the classroom have been seen as the most important events in the learning environment, being mutually-influential, symbiotic instances of the "many striking similarities between the new science of chaos/complexity and second language acquisition" (Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 141).

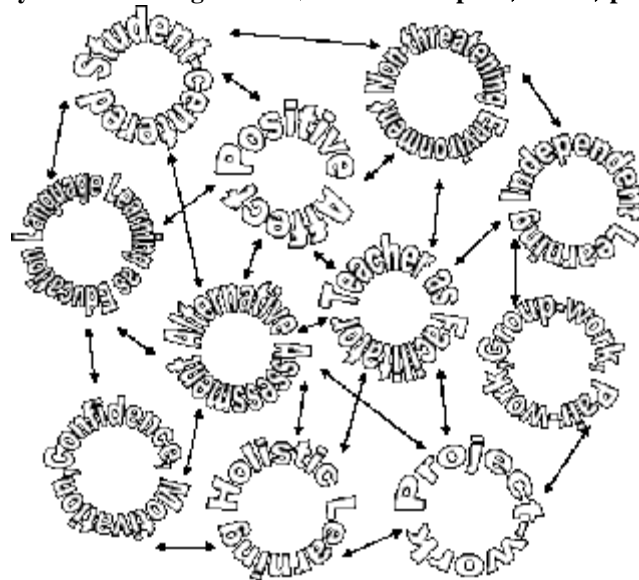
We can neither claim that learning is caused by environmental stimuli (the behaviorist position) nor that it is genetically determined (the innatist position). Rather, learning is the result of complex (and contingent) interactions between individual and environment. (Van Lier, 1996, p. 170)

From this perspective, language-learning is no longer seen as the product of a linear series of events, but as a multi-dimensional and unpredictable process, in which every factor influences and is influenced by all the other factors, with new structures (e.g. awarenesss and achievements) emerging from the mix of connectivities. In this complex situation, it is not possible to predict learning outcomes for the 'local' systems (students), since each student will react differently to different stimuli, and every class will be a totally different learning zone. On the other hand, overall 'global' learning, at the level of the whole class or school, can be expected to take a certain course, dependent on the mix of factors and affordances present. This can be compared to weather

forecasting, through which the climate and the weather over a large area (e.g. a province) can be quite successfully predicted. Yet it is impossible to predict rainfall in a school playing field, however advanced the technical equipment, due to the complex nature of the weather.

The Dynamic Learning model (figure 1, below) reflects this view that every factor in the program has an impact on the learning that takes place, and that the interaction of these factors (and the interactions of the interactions) determines what gets learned by whom. Only a small number of possible interactions are shown on this two-dimensional representation, and various factors (e.g. active participation, cultural considerations, student-teacher relationships, parental-pressure, high-stakes examinations) have not been added. Furthermore, interactions (represented by arrows) are only shown between neighboring factors, whereas each one actually influences (and is influenced by) all the other factors. Nevertheless, it can be seen that there is a great deal happening in the EFL classroom apart from the memorizing of linguistic code.

FIGURE 1
A dynamic learning model (Finch & Sampson, 2003a, p. iii)



Given this complex and dynamic nature of language learning, the program in this case study took a student-centered perspective, focusing on the development of autonomy, problem-solving, critical thinking, and self-esteem. This approach involved putting the student 'in the driving seat' in terms of identifying learning needs (needs analysis), taking responsibility for achieving those needs (course design), and reflecting on the effectiveness of the study process (assessment). In this situation, the task of acquiring language was the student's responsibility, and the role of the teacher was to facilitate the learning process.

The pedagogic reason for choosing such an approach was that autonomous project work in a student-centered, collaborative, non-threatening learning environment has been shown to be conducive to effective learning and the development of positive attitudes to learning (cf. section II.1). It was also hypothesized, based on the concept of "sensitive dependence on initial conditions," popularly known as "The Butterfly Effect" (Sardar & Abrams, 2004, pp. 54-55), that the interaction of positive 'initial conditions' (linguistic, cognitive, affective, cultural, and social) would result in the 'emergence' (Waldrop, 1992) of positive results, both at the local and global level.

Another distinguishing factor of chaotic systems is their sensitive dependence on initial conditions; infinitesimally small changes at the start lead to bigger changes later. This behavior is described as the signature of chaos. (Sardar & Abrams, 2004, p. 26)

2. Learning materials: Learning-to-learn

Task-based performance projects require specific learning materials, since the scope, goals and methods are outside the range of currently available EFL instruction books. The program designers therefore produced a *Student Workbook (SWB)* (Finch & Sampson, 2003a), and a *Class Journal (CJ)* (Finch & Sampson, 2003b), to be used on the program. The main goal of the *SWB* was to guide teachers and students on the path to autonomous production of language projects, so that they could eventually proceed according to their own preferred methods and criteria. The role of the *CJ* was to provide administrative information and assessment records.

It contained lesson plans, teacher-resources, photo pages, attendance sheets, participation sheets, self-assessments, peer-assessments, and grading sheets. The *SWB* and *CJ* can be accessed online at: www.finchpark.com/books/u2u/

The *SWB* consisted of three main sections: i) pre-project learning-to-learn, learning-to-self-assess; ii) project packs, presentations (peer-assessment); and iii) post-project reflection. Prior to these, an introduction to the students (in English and Korean) began the *SWB* and led into the 'Pre-project' needs analysis section, in which students could become acquainted with methods of identifying learning needs, preferences and styles. Self- and peer-assessment were introduced in this section, as students investigated oral performance criteria, and applied these to their own and their peers' oral skills. These criteria appear in the L1 (Korean) in the *SWB* and in English in the *CJ*, allowing the L1 to be used as a learning tool. Task-based, interactive activities continued in the first part of the book, as students learned how to: i) interpret instructions; ii) proceed at their own pace; iii) collect and analyze data; iv) make and reflect on learning goals; and v) work collaboratively, maximizing the collective potential of group members in a "learning-workshop" atmosphere. At this stage they also investigated the "Project Packs" which constituted the second part of the book.

The role of the teacher, having been freed from the traditional roles of modeling the language and of micro-managing class events, was to: i) encourage the development of facilitative skills; ii) be a language resource; and iii) relate on an individual basis with students.

In the seventh week, at the completion of the first 'learning-to-learn' section of the *SWB*, students (in pairs) performed their mini-projects to other pairs, who peer-assessed the mini-projects and entered the scores into the *CJ*.

It is appropriate at this point to describe an example activity from the first part of the *SWB*. Appendix A (Finch & Sampson, 2003a, p. 11) shows an early form of project-training, preparing students for critical listening, classroom-language, error-correction and problem-solving. Although little more than a set of static, one-way activities, this page challenges students to transact information successfully (the math-puzzle

format is highly effective in checking the effectiveness of this transaction), to work on data in a logical sequence, and to analyze results.

Appendix A begins with a comprehension test, in the form of instructions. Allowing students to interpret such instructions without teacher-prompts or explanations, helps the teacher to gauge the relative comprehension abilities of the students, to help students who cannot understand the instructions, and to design remedial activities if necessary. An added advantage of this approach is that higher-level students are free to direct their own learning while the teacher is thus engaged. The second feature of Appendix A is the sample language which comes after the instructions. While the learning content of the session is based on interaction, problem-solving and development of critical thinking skills, 'Classroom Language' is also offered as linguistic input, in order to help students in terms of project-management. The emphasis on classroom language in the activities also suggests to the students that questions such as "Are you with me?", "What was that?", "What does it mean?" and "Is this correct?" are valid and desirable in the project-based classroom. Freshman students have typically had little experience in asking such questions, and are unaccustomed to the active participation and collaborative involvement which they promote, and which are needed for project work to proceed smoothly.

'Activity 1' in Appendix A presents students (in pairs) with their first explicit language-problem, though it is by no means the first learning task on this page. In view of the cognitive load represented by the arithmetic calculations involved, the student-directed language of this activity attempts to reduce the linguistic load by using simple imperatives. There are many opportunities to make mistakes, as student B is asked to multiply by 5, add 6, multiply by 4, add 9, and multiply by 5 once more. Student A also has the task of subtracting 165 and taking off two zeros. These seemingly simple tasks can produce a variety of 'incorrect' results, and in this way lead to the main goal of the activity – to promote discussion and analysis in the target language. Having identified and worked with the data together, students A & B can easily confirm whether their interpretation of the data is logical (when student A finds student B's original number). The learning goal is not so much the solving of the puzzle, but the development of the problem-solving and critical thinking skills which ensue during the

activity.

'Activity 2' presents another math puzzle, with the same explicit and implicit goals, though this time the student roles are reversed. Students who perform these activities with ease can proceed onto the next page and find a learning task more on their level. However, in common with all task-based learning, there is scope for development in Appendix A, and the teacher can suggest that students design their own math puzzles. They might even start thinking about a puzzle project!

3. Self- and peer assessment

Students are asked in 'Activity 3' (Appendix A) to assess and record their class participation. Self- and peer-assessment were important in this program, being instrumental in helping students to reflect actively on their learning goals, processes and achievements. Thus, the items in the 'Self-Assessment' in Appendix B (Finch & Sampson, 2003a, p. 249) are not difficult to understand, or to assess. As with all the activities in the first part of the *SWB*, the value of the exercise lies in its awareness-raising potential and (in this case) its implicit suggestions that the 15 criteria in the self-assessment list are desirable, and that self-assessment is a valid form of evaluation. In this context, student feedback from unstructured interviews about the program showed increased awareness of the learning process as a result of being asked to self-assess, along with improvements in self-esteem and responsibility.

Miller & Ng (1996, p. 135) report "a relatively high level of agreement between the peer assessments and the marks given by the lecturers" in their study of a collaborative post-writing assessment (cf. Fok, 1981). They also found that "language students are able to make a realistic assessment of each others' oral language ability" (Miller & Ng, 1996, p. 142). They found that: i) students were able to assess their own work realistically; ii) they were sincere; iii) they demonstrated a similar level of assessment to that of the lecturers; iv) peer-assessment did not result in a lowering of standards; and v) the students benefited in their understanding of and attitude towards assessment (Miller & Ng, 1996, p. 142). Lynch also observes that "tutors can differ widely in their response to assessment of the same oral presentation," and that "we need to experiment with

peer-based evaluation ... to complement conventional tutor- and self-based assessment" (Lynch 1988, p. 124).

Self- and peer-assessment have important implications for the development of self-esteem, along with personal and group responsibility. Students who learn how to assess themselves and others will be more prepared for adult life, and more able to make important decisions, compared with those who remain passive learners. Instances of peer-pressure and unrealistic expectations which inevitably arise should be welcomed by the teacher, being opportunities for discussion and for identification of cognitive, affective or social learning problems. Recognition and resolution of such factors in the relatively "safe" learning environment of the EFL classroom can provide valuable learning experiences for all involved.

4. Learning materials: Project packs

The second part of the *SWB* consisted of 6 Project Packs, designed to guide students into their own project work. Each pack focused on one topic (Korean culture, drama, technology, film festivals, TV news, global issues) and presented interactive tasks designed to promote project work. Suggestions at the end of various activities also stimulated students to begin the process of project design.

Appendix C (Finch & Sampson, 2003a, pp. 74-75) shows a typical activity from one of these packs (Korean culture). In this survey activity, students (in groups) allocated responsibility for collecting data to group members, and then set out to obtain information from class members. The explicit language practiced was "Have you ever ...?", and students had the opportunity to stick to the one-way nature of the factual questionnaire, or to develop two-way interactions (Really? When? With whom?). Having collected the data, students reported to their groups, and completed the data sheet together. Groups were then invited to "Make some conclusions about your research." Finally, a Project suggestion at the bottom of page 75 gave ideas about making a project based on similar data-collection/analysis methods.

Once students had performed a number of guided activities, and had decided on the nature and scope of their performance projects, they were

free to work on their own (accessing the teacher when convenient), allocating responsibility, discussing procedure, collecting data, and preparing and rehearsing presentations.

At the end of Part II (c. week 12 of the program), students performed and assessed their projects according to criteria in the *SWB*. An effective consciousness-raising activity at this point was to ask students to make their own project-assessment criteria. In addition to evaluating the efforts of their peers, students reflected on their own achievements and attitudes, and entered the scores in the *CJ*. Teachers were free to use only these scores for final evaluations, or to combine their own weighted scores.

5. Learning materials: Debriefing

Having designed, rehearsed, performed, and assessed group language projects, students proceeded to the third part of the book, in which a number of reflective and evaluative activities encouraged them to think about their learning, and to make realistic plans for the future. At this time, they entered further self-assessments and peer-assessments in the *CJ*, and final grades were worked out in consultation with the teacher.

The second semester had its own Learning-to-Learn and Debriefing materials in the *SWB*, but used the same Project-Pack section as the first semester, since students had only performed one of the 6 suggested projects, and they could be further stimulated by the 5 others. By this time, teachers and students were gaining in confidence in terms of project learning, so students were expected to produce more original and autonomous work. Videos of sample activities from the first two parts of the *SWB* can be viewed at: www.finchpark.com/videos/u2u.

6. The Class Journal

The *CJ* differed from the normal EFL Teacher's Book, in that it was a resource for both teachers and students. In addition to attendance, participation and assessment sheets (in which the students entered their scores), the weekly lesson-plan pages had empty spaces for teacher/student feedback on any aspect of the program (and of the lessons). The *CJ* was thus common property, and was available to all participants

during the class sessions. By the end of a semester, the teacher had access to a *CJ* containing evaluative information for all class members. Use of that information was a matter for professional judgment, though comparison of teacher/student scores showed little relative divergence. A video about the *Class Journal* can be viewed at www.finchpark.com/videos, and an online version of the *CJ* can be viewed at www.finchpark.com/books/u2u/cj/cj.htm.

IV. METHOD

During the second semester of 2002, c. 120 Freshman university students of varying majors were invited to try the program and to give feedback on their impressions. Results of this pilot period were positive, in that students reported improved confidence and motivation. They also exhibited improved attitudes to learning and were excited by self-assessment and peer-assessment. Following the first trial semester, the program was offered to all Freshman students (n = c. 2,000) in the subsequent two years (2003, 2004), before administrative and personnel changes in the university caused the program to be dropped. It was then continued on a smaller scale for two more years with 4th-year English Education students in a different university, as part of their teacher-training studies.

During the two years of full implementation, Freshman students of all majors took well to the project approach, designing language-related projects about their own majors. This was significant for a number of reasons:

1. Students were accessing the sort of professional and technical English they would need in their careers.
2. The Freshman English program was promoting English for Special Purposes (ESP), and was satisfying the learning needs of diverse learners.
3. Students were acquiring learning-to-learn skills, and were able to teach themselves the technical English that was often not possessed by their instructors (e.g. Engineering English, Musical English, Legal English, and even Computer Studies English).

4. In preparing presentations (assessed by their peers), students acquired and rehearsed presentation skills as part of the Freshman English course. Such skills would be helpful for them in their future careers.

5. In performing self-assessment and peer-assessment, students developed realistic expectations about time management, goal-setting, and intra/inter-personal responsibility.

Self-assessment and Peer-assessment were important in the program, in that they were intended to raise evaluative awareness in the students. Teachers were also required to undertake performance assessment of oral skills and group achievement, for which various assessment instruments were provided. Oral assessment was based on Use-of-English assessment methods used in Hong Kong, and employed rating criteria adapted from the Canadian Language Benchmarks (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2006). The assessment instruments were contained in the *SWB*, for use by students and teachers. Oral assessment was thus collaborative, ongoing, and absolute, describing progress and development in five key areas: Range (vocabulary, grammar), Ease of Speech (fluency, lack of hesitation, expression of concepts and opinions), Attitude (confidence, motivation, lack of anxiety), Delivery (volume, pronunciation, word stress, rhythm, intonation), and Interaction (ability to listen to others, respond to them, and bring others into the conversation). Further teacher-based assessment was carried out when students performed their project presentations.

In addition to assessment instruments in Parts I and II of the *SWB*, the reflective instruments in the Debriefing section (Part III) provided a wealth of student-derived feedback about the program. One of these (*SWB*, page 265) asked students to interview each other and summarize their opinions in connection with the following questions:

1. Did this course help me develop my English skills?
2. Did I become more confident/motivated/positive about my English skills?
3. Did this course satisfy my expectations?
4. Did my ideas about language learning change while doing this course?

5. Did this workbook help me improve my English skills?
6. Did this workbook help me become more organized?
7. Am I able to continue learning English by myself?
8. What was my relationship with the teacher and with other learners while doing this course?
9. How can this course be improved? (Finch & Sampson, 2003a, p. 265)

Responses to these questions in students' books were used for formative assessment of the program, along with ongoing self-assessments, peer-assessments, unstructured interviews with students and teachers, and portfolios, which were introduced in the second year of the full program. Results obtained from investigation and triangulation of these data resources are summarized in the following section.

V. RESULTS

It was noticeable during the early stages of the full program that most of the 15 teachers in the University Language Center had not met the 'process syllabus' approach during their professional training and consequently were unfamiliar with project-based teaching and learning, describing the program in terms of "shock and awe." So a week of teacher-training was offered at the beginning of each semester. This training focused on both principles and practice, and guided teachers through the concepts of the program.

Teacher-training has been identified as a major-factor in student-learning, and is important whenever new curricular infusions occur. It is essential for the program-planner to recognize, especially in programs which aim to promote student autonomy, that the teacher often needs to develop new skills, and that development of these skills needs training and preparation. The role of the teacher in the project-based approach is not one of 'standing back and letting the students get on with it.' Rather, the teacher becomes a learning resource, advising, counseling, explaining, suggesting, helping, and encouraging students to learn-how-to-learn and to do their best. This is a more active role than the traditional concept of

teaching, and requires ability in the macro-skills and micro-skills of teaching (Kelly, 1996) as well as sensitivity to differing learning styles, learning preferences, learning goals, abilities, proficiencies, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes.

Self/peer-assessment was a continuing source of debate during teacher-training sessions, and was problematic for students at first. This was not unreasonable, since neither teachers nor students had any experience of using this type of assessment. Recognizing this situation, it was possible to use self/peer-assessment as 'learning content,' to be developed during the semesters. Rather than expecting students to be competent assessors from the start, they were expected to develop this skill during the course. Collaborative assessment was thus used as an awareness-raiser, promoting realistic attitudes to assessment. Students' evaluative abilities (and scores) changed during the semester, as their assessment training progressed, so teachers were invited to exercise their professional judgment and to monitor student perceptions.

Despite initial concern on this topic, analysis of peer-assessment scores of student presentations, when compared with teacher-scores, showed remarkable agreement and consistency. If anything, it was observed that student-scores tended to be stricter than teacher-scores, while agreeing in overall distribution. Some students were also noticeably more strict or lenient than others, but in a class of 20-30 students, the occasional student who consistently gave low (or high) scores to his/her peers did not affect the overall grading curve. Inconsistency of scoring was more significant, since it indicated a possibility of peer-pressure, and provided an opportunity to discuss this with the student(s) concerned. Rater-absence was also a factor which could affect overall peer-assessment scores. In this respect, it might be interesting in the future to perform a Rasch analysis (Schumacker & Linacre, 1996, p. 470) in order to compensate for students whose assessments were more severe than others, and in order to take absence into account.

Peer-assessment (e.g. of group presentations) was also an issue for students, who commented that they did not feel comfortable in making their peer-assessment scores public by writing them in the *CJ*. They felt that honesty in this case led to undue peer-pressure. This opinion was also expressed by English Education students when the program moved to its

second university setting. Because of this, it was decided to make peer-assessment more private by using online forms, which could be submitted only to the teacher. An example of such a form can be seen at www.finchpark.com/books/u2u/workbook/ppassess01.htm.

One of the self-assessment instruments in the program was a pre-course and post-course needs analysis (*SWB*, pages 3, 226), which is reproduced in Appendix D. This instrument allowed students to record their perceptions of their language abilities regarding skills which were the focus of the program (listening, public speaking, emotional management, body language, writing skills, equipment skills). Students performed the pre-course analysis as an interactive activity at the beginning of the semester (*SWB* page 3), and entered their score in the *CJ* (Appendix D). They then repeated the activity in week 14 (*SWB* page 226), and entered their second score in the *CJ*. When examining the *CJ* at the end of the semester, teachers and students could compare the two scores and discuss whether differences between them reflected changes in ability, or in perceptions and attitudes to learning.

As with earlier student-directed needs analyses (Finch 2000, p. 255), results for this assessment instrument showed noticeable differences between the two sets of scores (average difference: >30%), indicating that students saw significant improvement in their abilities over the semester. The extent to which this result reflected actual improvement is not in question, since the number of variables involved makes such a claim worthless. However, it is significant that students perceived this difference, having spent a semester in semi-autonomous, student-centered, project-based study. Given that attitude change and a focus on realistic learning expectations (promoted through self/peer assessment) were prime goals of the program, the 30% figure can be seen as reflecting a number of possibilities, including: i) improved self-esteem/confidence; ii) improved self-assessment abilities; iii) positive attitude change; iv) actual ability change; and v) familiarity with the methods and terms used in the program.

The novelty-factor cannot be ignored, since most Freshman students had not met this sort of learning before, and were quick to welcome any new approach to learning. It was noticeable, however, that initial enjoyment and on-task application did not die down during the first

semester, and that students were successful in comprehending the principles and methods of the program. There were no significant problems associated with self/ peer-assessment and use of the *CJ* (though students were reluctant to enter their comments on the student feedback pages) and the sense of meaningful learning which project-led study provided was an effective motivator.

Collaboration in group work was another issue which arose during the program (in all its settings), since students who had grown accustomed to competing for grades on an individual basis, found it hard to accept that their grades on the Freshman program were largely dependent on the performance of the groups. It was felt that lazy or dominating students would allow (or force) the other members of the group to do all the work. However, teamwork was one of the skills promoted by this project-based approach, being an important aspect of living and working that is ignored by standardized testing. The problem for teachers in this respect was largely one of identifying student perceptions and explaining that working as a team did not mean that everyone had to do the same tasks. Rather, they should investigate the strengths of group members, and encourage everyone to excel in performing according to their abilities. As with many issues that arose, the freedom given to the teacher gave him/her time to observe groups and watch for problems. These would then be addressed on a case-by-case basis, preparing students for teamwork in their careers by using the classroom as a microcosm of society as a whole.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has described the principles, methods and results of a student-centered, project-based program which was carried out for two years in its full form, and a for number of years in a reduced form, with different types of students. Results at all levels of proficiency show increased confidence and motivation in the students, as well as heightened awareness of the learning process and of assessment strategies. Rather than exclusively questioning the extent to which linguistic ability improved, it must be remembered that the goals of Freshman English programs are largely communicative and that performance assessment reveals (and relies

on) a number of skills in addition to linguistic ones. These skills (presentation skills, report-making skills, teamwork skills, etc.) are concerned with education of the whole person, and can be said to prepare students for future careers, in addition to giving them language skills.

Overall results showed that students of all abilities and majors took to project work well, since it gave them the opportunity to use their specialist knowledge to make language projects. It was quite usual for students to undertake a significant amount of self-directed homework at the project stage of their studies, since the freedom to learn given to them by the program motivated them to design interesting and informative projects, and to learn how to present them effectively and successfully.

Considerable learning was in evidence in terms of learning skills and assessment skills. Students typically came to understand that they could learn how to assess themselves, and thereby how to develop the skills to set realistic goals, assess their achievements, and reflect on their future plans. In this case, it can be said that students gained the abilities to teach themselves the language they would need in their future lives and careers.

Before making recommendations based on this case study, it is necessary to reflect on the nature and goals of Freshman English programs. Recent trends at university level have shown that standardized tests such as TOEIC are being required of Freshman students, in addition to the normal English programs. TOEIC tests are internationally accredited, and will be effective in helping students to gain employment after they graduate. However, this raises the issue of the purpose of Freshman English programs even more strongly. If the goal is simply communicative competence in the target language, then tests such as TOEIC and IELTS, which are rapidly including more and more performance assessment, seem appropriate, and students and teachers can focus on test-preparation for these tests. If education of the whole person (holistic learning) is the goal however, in line with the Ministry of Education's emphasis on *Hongik Ingan*, then the Freshman English course must address much more than linguistic goals. This case study thus describes how a project-based Freshman English program can address cognitive, affective, cultural, social, and specialist linguistic goals, and in doing so, can effectively prepare students for their future careers.

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APPENDIX A

Math Puzzle (Finch & Sampson, 2003a, p. 11)

Math Puzzles & Self-Assessment

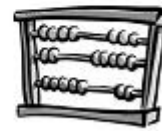
Math Puzzle 1:

Who?	Pairs
What?	Here is a puzzle that helps you develop problem-solving skills in English.
How?	Student A: Look at Math Puzzle 1 and tell Student B what to do. Student B: Listen to Student A and do what he/she tells you to do. Here is some sample language you can use:

Student A: Are you ready? Are you listening? Do you understand? Shall I say it again? Have you got it? Are you with me? Shall I spell it? That's not right. You must have made a mistake.
Student B: What was that? I can't hear you. One more time, please? What does it mean? Can you spell it? That can't be right. Is this correct? Let's try again.

Student A:

Ask your partner to think of a number
Ask your partner to multiply that number by 5.
Ask your partner to add 6.
Ask your partner to multiply the result by 4.
Ask your partner to add 9.
Ask your partner to multiply the result by 5.
Ask your partner for the result.
Without speaking to your partner, **subtract 165** from the result and take off two zeros from the final number. This is student B's original number! Ask Student B if this is correct.



$$\begin{array}{r} 510784.36 \\ - 2710372 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Math Puzzle 2:

How?	Student B: Look at Math Puzzle 2 and tell Student A what to do. Student A: Listen to Student B and do what he/she tells you to do. Use the sample language from Math Puzzle 1.
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Student B:

Ask your partner to multiply his/her age by 2.
Ask your partner to add 5.
Ask your partner to multiply the result by 50.
Ask your partner to add the age of his/her father.
Ask your partner to subtract the number of days in a year.
Ask your partner for the result.
Without speaking to your partner, add 115 to the number your partner gives you. The first two numbers of your final number are your classmate's age and the last two are his/her father's age.

Self-Assessment:

Who?	Individuals (Students A & B)
What?	This is your first Self-Assessment activity.
How?	Go to page 284 of this book. Assess your class participation in the "p.13" column. Go to the Class Journal. Enter your Self-Assessment score.

APPENDIX B

Self-assessment: class participation (Finch & Sampson, 2003a, p. 249)

Participation Self-Assessment (Part 1)

Who? Individuals
What? Participation equals learning. If you participate actively in class activities and group projects, then your language skills will improve. You will assess your participation THREE times this semester. The criteria on this page help you to assess your participation.
How? Score your Class Participation as 0, 0.5, 1.0, or 1.5. Score your Project Participation as 0, 0.5, 1.0, or 1.5.



Class Participation Criteria	p.13	p.26	p.250
	0.0 to 1.5 points		
1. I came to class on time and prepared.			
2. I brought my workbook to class and used it fully.			
3. I tried my best in the classroom sessions.			
4. I made contributions to my group.			
5. I helped others in class when needed.			
6. I asked other students for help when needed.			
7. I asked the teacher for help when needed.			
8. I learned new words and grammar.			
9. I did extra work by myself.			
10. I entered information into the Class Journal.			
Class Participation Total /15			
Project Participation Criteria	0.0 to 1.0 points		
11. I completed the project workbook and presentation checklist.			
12. I learned to organize my time and meet deadlines.			
13. I prepared and learned my script for the presentation.			
14. I learned new information while preparing the presentation.			
15. I attended group meetings outside of class.			
Class + Project Participation Total /15 = 5 = 20			

Enter each total into the *Class Journal*.

APPENDIX C

Culture questionnaire (Finch & Sampson, 2003, pp. 74–75)

Culture Questionnaire

Who? Groups of four people
What? This activity helps us to collect and analyze information.
How? Each person chooses one set of questions. Ask your questions to 10 people in the class (not in your group). Write the responses in the boxes at the bottom of this page. Everybody: Report back to the group and analyze the information (next page).

SET 1 1. Have you ever been to the local airport? 2. Have you ever been to a local museum? 3. Have you ever been to a national park? 4. Have you ever been to a hot spring? 5. Have you ever swam in the East Sea?	SET 2 1. Have you ever been to a football stadium? 2. Have you ever been to a baseball stadium? 3. Have you ever visited a library? 4. Have you ever seen a mask dance? 5. Have you ever drunk dogeongju?
SET 3 1. Have you ever learned a traditional dance? 2. How you ever tried Go-gong? 3. Have you ever learned Juhwondo? 4. Have you ever sung a traditional song? 5. Have you ever played a traditional musical instrument?	SET 4 1. Have you ever visited the 83 Building? 2. Have you ever visited Suigyojeo? 3. Have you ever visited Jibong? 4. Have you ever visited an ancient fortress? 5. Have you ever visited a folk village?
SET 5 1. Have you ever visited the Gyeongju World Culture Expo? 2. Have you ever visited the Dwango Biennale? 3. Have you ever visited the Daejeon Science Festival? 4. Have you ever visited the Pusan International Film Festival? 5. Have you ever visited the Gyeongju Festival?	

APPENDIX D

Self-assessed Needs Analysis (Finch & Sampson, 2003, p. 226)

My Language Skills and Needs (2)

Who? Students in pairs
What? Exchange books with your partner.
How? Ask your partner the questions on this page.
 Record the answers in your partner's book.



4 = Yes, absolutely 3 = Yes, mostly 2 = Not really 1 = No, not at all

Skills		4	3	2	1
Listening Skills: TV, radio, lectures, conversations	1. Can you understand when the teacher uses English?				
	2. Can you understand when your classmates use English?				
	3. Can you understand TOEIC tapes?				
	4. Can you understand movies in English?				
	5. Can you understand the TV news in English?				
Speaking Skills: conversations, interviews, travel, seminars, lectures, employment, public speaking	6. Can your classmates understand your spoken English?				
	7. Can you give directions in English?				
	8. Can you express your likes and dislikes in English?				
	9. Can you talk about your daily routines in English?				
	10. Can you express your opinions in English?				
	11. Can you interrupt politely in English?				
	12. Can you bring others into a conversation in English?				
	13. Can you keep a conversation going in English?				
	14. Can you check that you understand other people?				
	15. Can you check that other people understand you?				
Presentation Skills: describing, discussing, reporting	16. Can you explain how to do something in English?				
	17. Can you describe things in English?				
	18. Can you negotiate in English?				
Writing Skills	19. Can you write your resumé in English?				
	20. Can you write business letters in English?				
	21. Can you write reports in English?				
Other Skills	22. Can you use an English Search Engine?				
	23. Can you use an English Internet Browser?				
	24. Can you understand a computer textbook in English?				
	25. Can you understand a newspaper in English?				
Sub-totals:					
Add all the subtotals to make the final total:					

Enter the final total into the *Class Journal*.