

Beyond the Language Classroom: Learning English in Real-Life Projects

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Artikulu honek ingelesa atzerriko hizkuntza (EFL) gisa ikastea aztertzen du proiektuetan integraturiko hizkuntza-ikastaroetan. Proiektuetan hizkuntza ikasteari buruz ikasleen eta irakasleen ikuspegiak gaitasunean oinarrituriko curriculumarekin kontrastatzen dira, eta azken honetan ikaskuntza ikasgelaz haratago dauden bizitza errealeko proiektuetan gauzatzen da. Finlandieraz mintzo den ikasle talde batengan eta hizkuntza-erabiltzaile autonomo izateko beraien lanbide-garapenean zentratzen da azterketa.

Giltza-Hitzak: Autonomoa. Gaitasunean oinarritua curriculum. Hizkuntza ikaskuntza. EFL. Proiektuetan integratua.

El artículo aborda el aprendizaje de inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL) en cursos de idiomas integrados en proyectos. Las opiniones de estudiantes y profesores en torno al aprendizaje de idiomas en proyectos se plasman en un currículo basado en competencias, en el que el aprendizaje tiene lugar en proyectos reales fuera del aula. El estudio se centra en un grupo de estudiantes, hablantes de finlandés, y su desarrollo profesional como usuarios lingüísticos autónomos.

Palabras Clave: Autónomos. Currículo basado en competencias. Aprendizaje de idiomas. EFL. Integrado en proyectos.

Cet article met l'accent sur l'apprentissage de l'anglais comme langue étrangère (EFL) dans les cours de langues intégrés dans certains projets. Les opinions des étudiants et des enseignants concernant l'apprentissage des langues dans certains projets débouchent sur un programme axé sur les compétences dans lequel l'apprentissage se déroule dans des projets réels en dehors de l'établissement de formation. L'étude porte sur un groupe d'étudiants, locuteurs de finlandais, et leur perfectionnement professionnel comme utilisateurs linguistiques autonomes.

Mots-Clés: Autonomes. Programme axé sur les compétences. Apprentissage des langues. EFL. Intégré dans certains projets.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today language learning in tertiary education is affected by curricula development and there is an apparent need to recognize language learning outside the classroom. The Internet has given access to an abundance of authentic material and language learning is becoming increasingly contextual, with an emphasis on communicative skills. Consequently, the traditional language teacher faces new challenges in developing language instruction. The benefits of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), where a curricular subject is taught in another language than the mother tongue, have been explored in the educational systems throughout the EU countries. The European Commission defines teachers working with CLIL as “specialists in their own discipline rather than traditional language teachers” (European Commission). The contemporary adult language learner is defined in the following terms in *CLIL/EMILE -The European Dimension*: “In terms of foreign language learning, older learners are increasingly unwilling to *learn now for use later*, but prefer to *learn as you use and use as you learn...*” (Marsh, 2002, p.10). Against this background, there is a need to revisit the language classroom, examining the changing role of the professional foreign language teacher educated at a department of philology. In the traditional language classroom, learning has been defined in terms of *acquisition* metaphor, a model where the teacher provides input and the learner serves as the processor of this input, eventually resulting in output, i.e. speech according to a more or less predictable pattern. However, as argued by Kalaja, Menezes and Barcelos (2008), the acquisition metaphor is gradually being replaced by a model where language learning turns into a subjective experience involving body, identity and emotions, thus being defined by *participation* metaphor, where the role of the teacher is that of someone providing learning opportunities to the learner, who in turn would experience language learning as something ultimately personal.

In Finnish universities, foreign language learning seems to be shifting towards a more communicative and task-based direction. This, for instance, is apparent in a publication by Helsinki University Language Centre, *Out-of-classroom language learning* (Pitkänen et al., 2011), where the core themes focus on language learning in exchange programs, the accreditation of out-of-classroom learning (APEL), and the independent learning that takes place outside the classroom. As pointed out in the introduction by Pitkänen et al.: “while language skills may be developed in language courses led by professional language teachers, this learning activity extends to a variety of academic and everyday activities” (p.7). Karjalainen and Laulajainen, co-authors in the publication, describe modern language center teaching as being inclusive of authentic learning materials and co-planned with students as well as with faculty in some cases. Flexible study paths would also be taken into account in the learning process. Similarly, a survey conducted by Lappalainen (2010) at the Language Centre at Helsinki University of Technology (TKK), today part of the new Aalto University, advocates for focus on dialogue and simulated working life tasks rather than correct language usage.

This article will present two cases of language integration into real-life projects, as implemented at HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences, Porvoo

Unit. This business polytechnic, accommodating 10.000 students and 600 members of staff in the Helsinki Metropolitan area, does not have a centralized language center. On Porvoo Campus, the teaching of English and Swedish is generally integrated into so-called semester projects, where foreign language teachers are members of a semester team of teachers representing several disciplines. The learning in the semester project is centered around a real-life project, the role of the language teacher being that of linguistic expert on the semester team. Notably, this approach may not be regarded as CLIL, since the subject matter is mainly taught in the native language of the students. However, since the language teacher operates in close cooperation with the teachers of the curricular subjects, project-related tasks which demand foreign language skills are performed under the joint supervision of the language teacher and the teacher of the subject matter.

The focus of this article is on EFL learning at HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Unit, the Finnish Degree Program in tourism, where foreign language courses have been integrated into real-life project since the beginning of year 2004. Naturally, the integration of language studies into semester projects have involved close cooperation between language teachers and teachers of the curricular subjects, as well as continuous curriculum development. The process of curriculum development has been intensified by the introduction of Porvoo Campus, a building project of constructing a campus that would accommodate all six degree programs of Porvoo Unit (tourism and business in three languages: Finnish, Swedish and English), involving about 1000 student and 60 employees. The university building was designed for future learning, thus calling for the development of a Campus Curriculum based on the integration of different subjects into real-life projects, with the aim of creating an authentic working environment where students may develop the competences required in the industry (Ritalahti and Lindroth, 2010).

Notably, integration of EFL learning into real-life projects puts Finnish students into a new role as language learners. Projects take learning beyond the classroom walls, moreover, often these real-life projects call for an autonomous approach from the students, since many phases take place without the immediate physical presence of the teacher. Ideally, the role of the teacher is that of a coach, as stated during the planning stages of the Campus Curriculum (Ritalahti and Lindroth, 2010). Upon entering their tertiary studies, Finnish high school graduates possess a long history of learning foreign languages. The first foreign language, English in the majority of cases, is introduced in the third grade at the age of nine. Throughout primary and secondary education, formal language learning takes place in the classroom and is more or less teacher-dictated. Notably, literature on language learning often employs the term *language classroom*, thus spatially and linguistically confining learning to an enclosed teacher-centered space. Accordingly, Nikula and Pitkänen (2008) reports in a study on Finnish teenagers, how the respondents regard formal learning taking place between school walls as proper language learning, whereas language activities which emerge from own personal interests, such as learning English through travel or the modern entertainment industry are placed in a subsidiary role in relation to learning.

This article follows project-integrated EFL learning of a group of Finnish-speaking tourism students (Group M4B) during their second academic year at Haaga-Helia Porvoo Unit. The methodological approach is qualitative and the topic is treated as a story-telling case study in educational setting; story-telling being discursive in nature and predominantly a narrative account of the exploration and analysis of the case. Furthermore, the story-telling mode is characterized by a strong sense of time line (Bassey, 1999). Thus, the purpose is to explore the students' perceptions of language learning in real-life projects, in other words, as a narrative journey towards becoming professional users of English. Language learning is examined from the perspective of tasks, spatiality, and interaction with peers: which tasks are performed, where does learning take place, and with whom does learning occur? The first example is a Business English course of spring 2011 that was integrated into the organization of an international conference, Encounters11 Bridging Learners, on Porvoo Campus. This was followed by a second project in the autumn, where Group M4B was commissioned by the Finnish Tourist Board (MEK) to conduct a survey on Alpine wellness in Austria, involving a field trip to Salzburg. In this case, English for Tourism Product Development was integrated into the semester project.

Finally, the starting point of this article is pragmatic; practical examples demonstrate how language teaching is implemented in the competency-based curriculum of Porvoo Campus. Accordingly, the reader should acknowledge my triple role as author, English teacher of Group M4B as well as conference delegate at Encounters11. Thus, apart from being a narrative account of the students' use of English in projects, this study also reflects my own personal and professional development as language teacher of integrated language courses. This, in turn, stands in dialogue with views on language integration expressed by a long-term colleague, Senior Lecturer Niina Moilanen, interviewed for this article in December 2011.

2. POINT OF DEPARTURE: A CAMPUS BUILDING DEFYING LAWS OF PHYSICS

The point of departure and the setting for this article is the newly-built Porvoo Campus, into which staff and students moved in January 2011. Thus, the students' narratives on language learning in projects start at the point when the building was new to everybody. Before examining the students' accounts in further detail, the Porvoo Campus ought to be explored in order to illuminate the pedagogical approach of Haaga-Helia Porvoo. In qualitative inquiry, space is often overlooked despite of it being socially produced and contributing to human meaning-making, as verbalized by Kuntz: "as though I could separate my interpretation of my work at the university from place and practice"(2010, p.145). This is particularly evident on Porvoo Campus, where the project-based approach of the new curriculum is reflected in the transparent architecture, room layout and lack of plenary rooms. Upon entering the building, the visitor is struck by the transparency and sense of physical space. Architect Jukka Siren referred to this transparency in his speech at the opening ceremony of Porvoo Campus on 5 September 2011, stating humorously that for the first time in his career the client had

requested a more transparent building than the architect was actually able to deliver, after all, he was still tied by the laws of physics. Accordingly, the role of the lecturer in the new campus curriculum is defined by Ritalahti and Lindroth as follows:

The work of lecturers used to be a lonely job behind closed doors. They now need to transform into active team players who need to share with colleagues and aim at joint solutions. This calls for commitment, collaboration, transparency, and ample amounts of joint planning. (2010, p.13)

Student autonomy is enhanced by accessibility to negotiation rooms, as well as a great variety of serendipitous learning spaces, such as negotiation rooms open to the use of students and staff alike, complemented by several comfortable meeting points where groups may assemble. Students get together in the negotiation rooms to work on their project, often without the immediate physical presence of the teacher.

“Where is my language classroom in a project-integrated language course, both concretely and metaphorically speaking?” I ask myself. It is definitely not one fixed venue, from the language teacher’s perspective it is located somewhere else, at times even outside the country. Moreover, the nature of a real-life project encourages students into autonomous language learning, consequently, often the teacher is left with the sense that learning is happening beyond her control. This is in accordance with the role of the student as stated in the new Campus Curriculum, summarized by Ritalahti and Lindroth in the following terms: “For the *students* the new way of learning means a change from being an object to becoming a subject. This changes their role from an individual learner to a team member with different roles depending on the learning task” (2010, p.11). From the point of view of language learning, the tasks may vary considerably depending on the project. In the following chapter the two real-life projects explored in this article will be illuminated.

3. LEARNING ENGLISH IN PROJECTS: BEYOND THE CLASSROOM WALLS

The integration of foreign languages into real-life projects has its roots in year 2004, when Problem-Based Learning (PBL) was introduced as a method to students in the Degree Programme in Tourism. There was already a long-established tradition of implementing authentic projects in the Porvoo Unit, yet, previously the theoretical aspects of project management had been taught during lectures. The objective of including PBL tutorials into the curriculum was to make students take a more active role in the learning process, as well as to enhance their understanding of the connection between theory and practice. Initially, some PBL tutorials were conducted in English, putting into practice language skills that had previously been acquired in a separate Business English course. These sessions were supervised by both a teacher of the substance matter and the language instructor. Advanced use of English was possible due to generally good language skills: usually the oral skills of Finnish tourism students comply with the level B1-B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), occasionally there

might even be C1 speakers in a group. Subsequently, tutorials have not been conducted in English, instead the focus of language instruction has been on the implementation of semester projects. How this works out in practice will be demonstrated by the two semester projects explored in this article.

The organizing committee of the international conference, Encounters11 Bridging Learners, commissioned a group of tourism students in their third semester to plan and implement a pre-conference dinner on Porvoo Campus for the conference delegates. The third semester teacher team included experts on event management, marketing, accounting and the English language. The learning process was planned in cooperation and, in accordance with the Porvoo model for language instruction, a Business English course was integrated into the learning process. The semester also included elements of CLIL, since marketing was taught by an English-speaking lecturer. Furthermore, English was the working language of the organizing committee of Encounters11. Apart from studying business correspondence and language of event management in theory, the students had an opportunity to use English in real-life tasks. These involved the following: coming up with a name for the event, *Springalicious*, translating a menu into English, writing and performing speeches, planning and hosting workshops for the delegates, as well as serving the guests during the pre-conference evening. The marketing course, on the other hand, enhanced EFL learning by including a press release and a press conference in its program. Significantly, these tasks enhanced students' motivation for autonomous language learning as well as autonomous language learning patterns.

The second project took place in the autumn semester of 2011; Group M4B was then commissioned by the Finnish Tourist Board to conduct a survey on Alpine Wellness. This project involved a study tour to Salzburg with the purpose of data collection. As already indicated in the previous example, the teacher team of experts of different disciplines planned the semester jointly. The role of the English teacher turned out to be central, since the project involved a lot of English usage in practice. From the point of view of EFL learning, this was beneficial for the students, since the theoretical knowledge on business correspondence gained during the previous semester could now be put into full practice when writing business messages to partners in Austria. Furthermore, during the study tour itself, the students had the opportunity to practice oral language skills in interviews with professionals in the tourism industry.

As demonstrated above, integration of language learning into real-life projects takes students beyond the classroom walls. Furthermore, learning also becomes a collective act: documents are translated together outside class hours and presented to the teacher for proofreading; speeches and workshops are jointly planned and interview questions are written in cooperation. However, it should be noted that this type of cooperative activity is not in accordance with how Finnish students traditionally perceive themselves as language learners, as clearly manifested in a longitudinal research project called *From Novice to Expert*, conducted by the Department of Languages and the Centre for Applied Languages Studies at the University of Jyväskylä. This study involved two groups of undergraduates

in the BA/MA program: language teacher trainees as well as students studying for other language professions. The purpose of the research project was to trace the development of beliefs regarding language and language learning. The data for the first stage of the project were collected in 2005-2006, including visual narrative as one of the tools of data collection. Hence, students were requested to draw a self-portrait with the subtitle 'This is how I look as a learner of English'. Based on the self-portrait, some interesting conclusions could be drawn, suggesting that EFL-learning is depicted as a lonely pursuit where books play an important role (Kalaja, Alanen and Dufva, 2008). Significantly, only one third of the self-portraits included others, making the learners into "cartesian rationalist agents, that is, individuals who rely on their own internal intellectual capacities when learning a new language, considering the role of others as unimportant and relying on a literacy-based way of learning –receiving knowledge– from books." (2008, p. 197). Consequently, the findings suggested that students regard themselves as recipients of knowledge transmitted by an external source, as pointed out by Kalaja, Alanen and Dufva.

Against the example above, it is interesting to explore how the practice-based approach in projects affects the perception of the students as language learners on Porvoo Campus. Notably, during their first semester of studies, the tourism students meet every week for a PBL tutorial, where key concept in the industry are covered by means of authentic cases. Furthermore, the first project-integrated English course is introduced with students involved in organizing an event on Porvoo Campus. Thus, students get initially acquainted with practice-based learning as well as practical use of English in service situations, attending to foreign exchange students who are invited to the event. In reference to practice, Gherardi claims the following: "Knowing is something people do together, and it is done in every mundane activity, in organizations where people work together, and also in academic fields" (2009, p. 118). However, this notion of *doing together* stands in diametrical opposition to how learning is approached in Finnish secondary education, where students are prepared for the national Matriculation Examination, being guided to literary sources and encouraged to study in solitude instead of being involved in team activities.

In sum, the language teacher's role in integrated language courses is multifaceted. As metaphorically expressed by Niina Moilanen in the interview: since many actors are involved in cooperation, the teacher seems to have many tentacles reaching out into various directions. Accordingly, I have noted my role shifting from classroom teaching towards the position of a language professional with tasks such as proofreading business documents and coaching students in planning acts of speech. Compared to a traditional clearly structured Business English course, a project-integrated language course might appear fragmented from the teacher's point of view, involving many elements of uncertainty and surprise. Furthermore, since the activities often happen beyond the classroom walls, the teacher is sometimes left with a feeling of having less control of whether learning is actually occurring. Moreover, as Moilanen pointed out, unexpected tasks might appear at a very short notice, thus the script of the language course is more unpredictable than that of a traditional course and time management may

often prove to be a challenge. On the other hand, students seem to be strongly motivated by language tasks related to the semester project. Consequently, this approach may be very rewarding to students and the teacher alike, since language learning is perceived as relevant.

4. DATA COLLECTION

In the introductory chapter to this article, I already pointed out my triple role as author, teacher and conference delegate. Significantly, at the point of data collection for this article, in November-December 2011, I had served as English teacher for Group M4B since January 2011, thus being closely involved in the two semester projects. I had also visited the project implementation of the group, the Encounters11 preconference in April 2011, this time mainly in the role of conference delegate rather than language teacher. Notably, at the point of data collection, I shared a 12-month history with the students, which is reflected in the interpretation of their stories. Consequently, in order to make my stance visible, I am consciously shifting from the traditional use of passive voice typical for research reports into the use of first person singular, as recommended by Cousin (2010). “Am I researching *with* or *on* people? What is my emotional investment in this question? Am I finding what I am looking for?” (p.11). These reflexive questions are highly relevant when writing this article.

Group M4B of tourism students was invited in November-December to participate in a group discussion, where I asked them to look back at the two projects they had been involved in during the past year. In order to achieve a mode for storytelling, the discussion took place in the “Fatboy room” on Porvoo Campus, a classroom where chairs and desks have been replaced by comfortable beanbag chairs. Each student was asked to sketch a timeline, marking the highlights on the journey of English learning in the projects, in other words, instances where the student felt that intensified language learning had occurred during the year-long process of learning. After having completed the timeline, the students shared their stories with the group. Notably, the stories were presented rather laconically, in a matter of fact manner. This was in accordance with Wilkins’ (2009) conclusions on Finnish speech culture being info-centric and to the point: in Finnish culture chit-chat and small talk is often perceived as negative *empty talk*, in the classroom setting the discussions ought to be centered on the matter. Accordingly, this preference for getting to the point is also evident in the Haaga-Helia students’ oral accounts.

Altogether, there were eleven students in Group M4B who had participated in both the Encounters11 and Alpine Wellness projects, including nine female and two male students. Out of the total number of students, eight students, seven female and one male, showed up for the group discussions; five students took part in the first session and the remaining three participated in the second session. Both sessions were recorded on video. The data indicated that there seemed to be clearly distinguished focal points in the stories. The story-telling sessions were complemented by a semi-structured interview with Niina Moilanen,

Senior Lecturer of English on Porvoo Campus. The interview was conducted on 9 December 2011 and it gave an insight into project-integrated language-learning from a teacher's perspective. In the following chapter the findings will be presented and the impact of project-integrated language learning will be discussed in further detail.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The timelines presented by the eight students taking part in the group discussion sessions share many common features. Notably, the highlights of learning English in a project-integrated course often involve interaction with peers or real-life clients and the tasks are in many instances performed outside the language classroom. Thus, the language learners appear to be embodied subjects engaged in a variety of activities involving the use of English. On the other hand, the teacher often finds herself in the role of coach or proofreader rather than lecturer. Furthermore, apart from referring to the two semester projects, the students also mentioned activities outside the school curriculum, such as socializing with English-speaking friends or serving clients in English in a job situations. Apparently, the students also regarded these as relevant in their journey towards proficient English users.

Language tasks performed prior or during Encounters11 Conference are presented in Table 1. These are defined in terms of venue or setting for the activity, the role of the language teacher and student as well as whether the task was integrated into the English course.

The tasks defined by students seem to form a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle with several actors. During the group discussion session, one female student defined an integrated language course as *rönsyilevä* [rambling] as opposed to the linear structure of a high school English course with a clearly defined beginning and ending where all lessons follow a strictly defined structure. This is in accordance with how interviewee Moilanen described project-integrated courses as something stretching out rather than being tightly packed, as seemed to be the case with traditional language courses.

Taking a closer look at the tasks expressed by students, the first category, *written task*, would involve some theory taught in a class-room setting. However, the writing process itself was conducted outside the classroom in cooperation with a peer student, for instance one informant pictured herself and a peer in the process of writing the menu, notably, in the absence of the teacher. However, the teacher would subsequently be involved in proofreading the document. Naturally, the preconference itself, *Springalicious*, derived from spring and delicious, turned out to be a highlight for the majority of students. In this case, the teacher's role was to coach the students in preparing their speech acts, however, once the event took place, the students were acting autonomously. One female student noted in her presentation of her timeline, that conducting a workshop for international conference delegates had boosted her self-confidence as speaker and

**Table 1. Encounters11 Conference:
Tasks defined by students in the integrated Business English course**

Task defined by students	Number of mentions	Venue	Language teacher/ student role	Integrated course/ commissioner
Written tasks: emails/ invitations/ menu and food vocabulary/ speeches	4	outside language classroom	proofreading and coaching/ autonomous interacting with peer	Business English course
Springalicious: Hosting the event/ entertaining guests/ serving/ conducting workshops	6	Porvoo Campus, outside language classroom	coaching/ interacting with real-life clients	Business English course
Press conference and press release (CLIL)	2	Porvoo Campus restaurant	proofreading/ interacting with real-life clients	Marketing course
Project meetings conducted in English	2	Porvoo Campus negotiation room	non/ autonomous	Conference's organizing committee
Assisting in parallel session at the conference	1	Porvoo Campus	non/ autonomous	Conference's organizing committee
English course: unspecified tasks	6	language classroom	teacher-dictated/ pupil	Business English and English for Tourism Product Development courses

performer. Finally, it should be noted that the nature of integrated learning also leads to situations where students' tasks vary, in other words, not everyone is engaged in the same activity. For instance, there were two students who mentioned that they had not used any spoken English with conference delegates, since they had been engaged in kitchen duties.

From the language teacher's angle, it was interesting to learn that two students had participated in project meetings assembled by the organizing committee of the conference. Naturally, they regarded these as beneficial for the development of their English skills. Not being aware of student participation in project meetings exemplifies the position of the language teacher in project-integrated

courses, a lot of learning takes place autonomously and beyond the control of the teacher. As expressed by Moilanen in the interview, projects bring surprises to the language course, e.g. incidents when students learn something that had not originally been intended to be included in the course plan. In the case of Encounters¹¹, the press release and the press conference were examples of surprise elements, the English-speaking marketing teacher being in charge of the implementation of these real-life tasks, falling under the category of CLIL. Finally, the last item in Table 1, unspecified items, refers to student statements such as: “And then there was the English course”. Apparently this is a reference to occasions when the group assembled in the physical classroom for the purpose of studying language of business writing or formal meetings. Notably, non-integrated elements of traditional language instruction were often defined as “English course” in the students’ stories, whereas activities outside the classroom were not necessarily labeled as a part of the language course itself.

The Alpine Wellness Project, commissioned by the Finnish Tourist Board, took M4B Group on a field trip to Austria. In this case, one of the students defined English as an excellent auxiliary subject supporting the semester project. This is in accordance with how Moilanen perceives the position of an integrated language course, language tasks should be planned to support the activities in the project, primarily focusing on language as means of communication, both oral and written. The study tour was preceded by two months of preparations from mid-August to mid-October 2011. When contacting tourism establishments in Austria, the students had the opportunity to implement their theoretical knowledge on English business correspondence into real-life situations. Tasks identified in the integrated English for Tourism Product Development course are presented in Table 2.

Interaction in authentic situations provided the students with valuable insights into language usage. Apart from improving their own business writing skills, they learnt that English does not necessary work as a lingua franca everywhere, since representatives for some Austrian companies did not always possess advanced English skills. Often students found themselves employing communicative strategies such as simplifying messages by omitting formal vocabulary and complicated grammatical structures. This aspect of English as a lingua franca might not have been covered in a traditional Business English course, where standard text book material is used as source of learning. On the other hand, students’ command of academic English improved by reading professional literature assigned by the teachers of curricular subjects and by writing an abstract in English, a task supervised by the English teacher.

Finally, the students’ accounts also included some examples of language learning beyond the school context. Notably, the students seemed to regard these activities as a vital part of language learning. This corresponds to the notion of the learner as subject presented in the Campus Curriculum. These extra-curricular activities are listed in Table 3 below.

**Table 2. Alpine Wellness Study:
Tasks in the integrated English for Tourism Product Development course**

Tasks defined by students	Number of mentions	Venue	Language teacher/ student role	Integrated course/ commissioner
Written tasks: emails/ interview questions	2	outside language classroom	proofreading/ autonomous interacting with peer	English for Tourism Product Development
Reading theory in English	3	outside language classroom	non/ autonomous	Semester project commissioned by the Finnish Tourist Board
Preparatory tasks: getting acquainted with the destination	2	language classroom	teacher-dictated/pupil	English for Tourism Product Development
Travel arrangements: phone calls	1	outside language classroom	non/ autonomous interaction in real-life situation	Semester project commissioned by the Finnish Tourist Board
Interviews and mystery shopping in English, visiting the tourism information office	5	Austria, Salzburg area	coaching/ autonomous interaction in real-life situation	English for Tourism Product Development
Unspecified use of English in destination	5	Austria, Salzburg area	non/ autonomous interaction in real-life situations	
Sharing knowledge to peer students in other semesters	1	language classroom	coaching/ expert on subject matter, interaction with peers	English for Tourism Product Development & English for Tourism Professionals 1
Academic Writing, Abstract	4	outside classroom	proofreading and coaching/ autonomous interaction with peer	English for Tourism Product Development

Table 3. Autonomous English learning beyond the school context

Activity	Number of mentions
Talking to friend or exchange student	3
Reading literature in English	1
Summer job/ work placement/ volunteer work: interacting with clients in English	4
Attending an international conference	1

It may be concluded that the tasks mentioned in the student's stories suggest an autonomous language learner who finds her/himself in interaction with peers when performing various activities. They are fully participating in the process of learning with body, mind and emotions, borrowing an argument presented by Kalaja, Menezes and Barcelos (2008) on the direction towards which language learning is moving today. Notably, when describing the highlight of their year-long journey of learning English and a venue of learning in particular, out of eight students, only one pictured herself writing the abstract at home in solitude. The rest of the students pictured themselves hosting a press conference, a workshop, guiding conference delegated or writing the abstract with a peer.

In sum, the project-based approach on Porvoo Campus has clearly enhanced students' autonomous learning, as suggested by the tasks mentioned in the students' timelines: language learning is not only something that happens in the classroom, it goes far beyond it and is multi-faceted. Moreover, it appears to be less teacher-dictated, since the students get to take autonomous decisions during the project. On the other hand, also the teacher finds herself in a multi-faceted situation demanding flexibility. The semester projects are jointly planned in teams where teachers represent many different disciplines, thus there is a need for constant dialogue between the different subjects taught during the semester, with the ultimate purpose of providing the competences students need in implementing a project. Over the years, the teacher teams in the degree program in tourism have become increasingly multi-voiced and the language teachers feel that they can genuinely contribute to the semester planning with their expertise. Furthermore, language instruction given by the foreign language teacher is often complemented by CLIL, since the semester teacher team might include an English-speaking colleague in charge of some specific curricular subject. In reference to CLIL, Takala observes the following: "Effective learning requires teacher support but also, more fundamentally, active learner involvement" (2002, p. 41). His conclusion is that CLIL probably sets more demands on self-directiveness of the learner than more traditional forms of study. Finally, the need of active learner involvement also seems to apply to project-integrated language learning as demonstrated in this study.

6. CONCLUSION

At its best, a project- integrated language course may be highly motivating for students and teachers alike, since the tasks are perceived as relevant and directly connected to the industry. However, it should be pointed out that the two integrated language courses introduced in this article represent the ideal situation. In the two cases discussed in this study, students were involved in challenging projects where they had the opportunity to practice English with international partners in a professional context, both orally and in writing. Notably, the reality on Porvoo Campus is more complex than implicated by these examples, there are also cases where the semester project does only involve Finnish-speaking clients, thus, students do not get the opportunity to practice English in real-life situations. In these cases, the solution is to practice simulated communicative situations based on themes raised from the semester project. However, naturally this would often be less motivating and challenging. Yet, despite the lack of English-speaking partners, the language course would still be planned and conducted in cooperation with the semester team of teachers of different disciplines.

In conclusion, returning to my role as teacher in integrated language courses, I clearly see the benefit of integrating language courses into projects, since this approach enhances the communicative use of language. Since the English skills of Finnish tertiary level students are generally adequate for functioning efficiently in working life, it is rewarding for students to put their knowledge into trial in authentic situations. Evidently, the emphasis of communicational skills in foreign language learning should be placed against its cultural context, i.e. traditional Finnish speech culture. As pointed out by Wilkins and Isotalus, stereotypes represent Finnish oral communication as being silent, slow, and reserved, accordingly, Finns traditionally characterize themselves by the following: "Finns keep silent in two languages" (2009, 1). Against this stereotype, truthful or not, it is of paramount importance to develop language learning that is communicative and interactive in Finnish universities.

The integration of language skills demands flexibility and creativity of students and teacher alike. Obviously, students cannot expect finalized implementation plans, as used to be the case with traditional language course packages that were taught separately from curricular subjects. Moreover, students need to be ready for quick turns and unexpected tasks. Finally, the teacher being used to possessing the floor of the lecture room and having complete control of the course planning, needs to give up power and regard the students as autonomous subjects who are capable of taking their own decisions in the process of language learning.

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