proPIC's values in education: How do they help to enhance students' motivation and interest?

Cristina Martín

Introduction

Teaching has never been easy. As teachers we are not only in charge of conveying academic knowledge, but of being capable to manage a long list of skills, such as class organization and control, pedagogical and psychological coaching abilities, empathy, creativity, being innovative, self-development and, of course, in nowadays society, digital and technological skills. Being a teacher means to constantly learn and develop professionally, but also personally. Thus, we must prepare ourselves for the various situations that we face in our daily work.

The overall aims of proPIC are "actively engage in lifelong learning processes and to cooperatively establish a culture of self-reflection, innovation and interculturality in foreign and second language learning and teaching" (proPIC, 2020). All these objectives are meant to "promote professionalism, innovation and transnational collaboration […] and using mobile technologies […] integrated in different curricular" (proPIC, 2020). Promoting and enhancing all these aims among different communities of teachers can help improve professional development and, consequently, the learning processes. As a result, we achieve a more motivating educational environment and better outcomes in our students' performances. That is why experiences such as proPIC are an excellent opportunity for (future-)teachers to develop professionally, as well as personally.

This essay shows the personal experience of a student of foreign language teaching who took part in the proPIC project. It further illustrates the benefits of the proPIC project, for example when creating a gamified activity in an escape room[1] format. Moreover, and based on my experiences, I would like to describe to what extent proPIC supported my professional development, as well as the student's learning processes and motivation.

proPIC experience

During proPIC study week in Kiel (2019) we focused on two main areas: fostering the development of the prospective teachers' continuing professional development and the use of digital resources, both of which influenced my personal projects (Martín, 2020; Martín & Batlle, 2021).

In Kiel, we also participated in a workshop on video production where we were able to familiarize with the process of video production; from the brainstorming ideas phase until the finished self-edited and self-produced product. Regarding the digital resources, we also worked with many useful applications, such as Padlet[2], Plickers[3], Flipgrid[4], among others, that helped improve our teaching development as well as our students' learning process. Despite the great variety of activities, they all responded and focused on the main elements of the proPIC project: professionalism, innovation, transnational collaboration, mobile technologies, prospective teachers, lifelong learning processes, culture of self-reflection and interculturality, and more.

Analysis and results

As part of my own research project, I created a didactic sequence of activities entitled "Hispanic diamond: educational escape room proposal and testing for A2 contents revision" (Martín, 2020). This research project consists of a designed set of activities for Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) students that focus on the development of language and different skills, cultural aspects, and Spanish varieties (from Spain, Argentina, Cuba, Chile, Mexico and Colombia). This project is meant to be a revision

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[1] "Escape rooms are live-action team-based games where players discover clues, solve puzzles, and accomplish tasks in one or more rooms in order to accomplish a specific goal (usually escaping from the room) in a limited amount of time." (Nicholson, 2015)
[2] Padlet is an online collaborative interactive board.
[3] Plickers is an interactive app to collect instant formative assessment data.
[4] Flipgrid is an educational platform to create and share short videos for teachers and students.

activity for the A2 level, according to the CEFR (2001) in a format of an educational escape room that includes gamified elements (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). "Hispanic diamond" was tested and analysed from both, teacher and students' perspectives, regarding the use of language, the gamified elements and the ICT resources, in order to reach a conclusion on whether it had a positive impact and benefited the students' learning process or not.

One of the key elements in an escape room is the story through which the game is set up: the narrative (Batlle et al., 2018; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). The story is as follows: The Hispanic diamond, a jewel of incalculable value and one of the best-preserved treasures that belonged to some of the most important people in the history of Spanish-speaking countries has been lost. A thief has stolen the diamond, but it is not known where he has hidden it. The police in all Spanish-speaking countries need help finding both the thief and the treasure. The school will provide the students as an investigation team to solve the case and will give a reward if they solve it successfully.

Once the objectives of the escape room are settled, the target group, 15 international students (18-25 years old) learning Spanish as a Foreign Language in Barcelona in a linguistic immersion context, is ready to start solving the mystery. In order to succeed and win the challenge it is crucial that they communicate in the target language they are learning; they must work in teams and cooperate as well. Since students are not used to do escape rooms in a language course, the idea of doing something new, innovative engages, excites and motivates them. This motivational environment and the fact that the activities are meant to work on the communication, teamwork and cooperation leads to an excellent combination that allows our students to develop a meaningful learning process that suit their need and interests.

The Hispanic diamond project has been designed following most of the proPIC's main elements stated herewith (see *2. ProPIC experience*) as part of the material that has been created specifically for the escape room there is a set of self-produced videos about the Spanish-speaking countries included in the game. These videos were successfully produced and edited thanks to the tools and resources from the workshop on video editing I had the chance to use in Kiel. Mobile technologies also play a key role in Hispanic diamond: QR codes, Google Maps app, YouTube and the mail are some of the digital resources that I used.

The analysis of the project carried out from both perspectives: the teacher's, by a written hot evaluation diary and, the students', by a 14 item-questionnaire, shows that the results are positive. Therefore, they corroborate the utility and positive impact of such project in educational contexts (Martín, 2020). As part of the concluding global evidence reached throughout the analysis, the following graphic demonstrates that most students' opinion has been positive (3) or super positive (4) when evaluating the experience from a general point of view, taking into account the use of language, gamified elements, ICT tools, as well as motivation, fun, among other features.
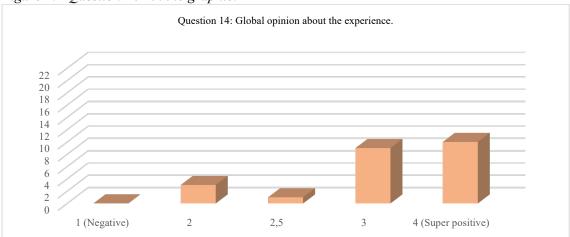
Figure 1. "Question 14" in the graphic.

Question 14: Global opinion about the experience.

Conclusions

All in all, I believe that as teachers we must be aware of the different preferences, difficulties and backgrounds of our students have. Being a language teacher does not only mean to teach linguistic

content, but having the adequate tools and resources, as well as having a great pedagogical management in order to make the most of our students and having a positive impact on their learning processes.

In that sense, the Hispanic diamond project has proven to be a great asset to promote and improve our students learning process, as well as their motivation by using not only merely linguistic content, but by introducing gamified and digital elements and resources (Martín, 2020; Martín & Batlle, 2021). For that purpose, gamification is a learning approach that aims to encourage the students to learn by means of game elements. Although, it offers numerous benefits for our students as previously stated, it has its downsides as well, such as challenging the teacher's skills, the teacher's need of being update and catching up in educational innovative experiences and, probably, the time consuming effort that it entails (Lee & Hammer, 2011; Chia & Hung, 2017; Chapman & Rich, 2018).

I think that many teachers regard gamification activities and escape rooms are still out of their comfort zone and they are not common in language courses. However, it is worth trying them out and checking first-hand any possible improvement in terms of motivation, interest, autonomy, social, personal skills and, academic performance in our students' learning process. By taking into account the elements of the proPIC project, such as innovation, mobile technologies, development as teachers and as learners, prospective teachers, lifelong learning processes and the culture of self-reflection and interculturality we can benefit in many aspects and they can help us become better teachers, improve the learning, grow professionally and educate covering our students' needs and interests and, therefore, motive them.

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