<u>CITY PROJECT</u> – Primary School (R. Franchetti)

English language teacher – Vecchiato Silvia

"Children can learn almost anything if they are dancing, tasting, touching, seeing, and feeling information"*
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The ever-growing need for good communication skills in English has created a huge demand for English teaching around the world. Millions of people today want to improve their command of English or to ensure that their children achieve a good command of English. The demand for an appropriate teaching methodology is therefore as strong as ever. And opportunities to learn English are provided in many different ways such as through formal instruction, travel, study abroad, as well as through the media and the Internet.*

On the other hand this general and obvious statement might be a challenging goal to be achieved in local communities which seem not to be ready for European development with a special care for foreign languages since early ages. Opportunities to learn English outside school seem to happen only occasionally.

- Primary school partnership

Our primary school R.Franchetti has been involved in the Comenius programme with an original project "City Project". It is focused on healthy and sustainable habits in children's everyday life (foods, games, music, relationships) with English as vehicular language. The final outcome was a show based on drama acted out in English with live music performed by a real orchestra of "young" recorders, drums and bagpipes! Total students: 98

- Principles and guidelines

This project has been developed through the years and is based on situational tasks which emphasize the importance of focus on meaning. This criterion supports the notion that conveying an intended meaning is the essence of language when used for real-world tasks or activities that are comparable to authentic task behaviour. Performing real-world tasks therefore necessitates the use of real language task performance. It often involves achieving a goal or an objective, or arriving at an outcome or an end product. As a result, lessons have always been (Williams,1995 and Chastain,1988): 1. Task-oriented; 2. Needs-based; 3. Learning-centered; 4. Contextualized; 5. Authentic; 6. Recursive

- Implementation

PART 1 – October/December

The 5th grade class works in small groups which share their ideas and expectations about an ideal "city", its citizens and what they are like.

They will work on a word list about public places, shops, public services and words describing physical appearance and character.

They will finally draw and paint a map of their common ideal city with the proper labels for shops and places.

Target language:

- descriptions (places): I live in, I'd like, In my city there is, in my city there are, prepositions (near, next to, in front of...),
- ask for information and give directions: where's ….., please? How can I get to...., please?

It's over there/ go straight down this road, go straight on, turn right/left, you'll find...., you'll see...

PART 2– January to May
Children at all grades give their contribution to create the story which has always been based through the years on a recursive scheme of useful scenes in everyday life.

🕐 **Scheme**

Each scene (music class, square, clothes shop, toyshop, bakery, supermarket, theatre etc...) has been developed starting from a revision of the relevant vocabulary and structures which had been previously studied with the national curriculum, always following this scheme (3hours total each scene – underneath the general scheme for the clothes shop):

1) Preparation
*Vocabulary **revision** – flashcards. Hold up the flashcard and guess the correct word for it.*
*Then let them stick the flashcard on the wall if their guess is correct. They should learn and practise '**this** is a cap...', '**these** are...' and '**That** is...' , '**Those** are'*
*Then remove the flashcards but continue to drill by saying "I**'m looking for** ...." and each student has to stand up and show the class the correct flashcard. Finally, worksheet for writing vocabulary.*
2) Role Play Instructions
Introduce the role play and hand out the worksheet.
A) Give the students 10 minutes to complete the conversation and help them with the new words. Check the answers. Check they understand the meaning of all right, just looking, looking for, expensive, cheap.
B) First students read the conversation out in pairs. Then the assistant should pick up the copy, so that the customer can't see and must perform their role from memory.
C) Divide the class into assistants and customers. 10 minutes to read and to try to remember the sentences they must use. Start the role play when they are ready. When they have finished, they can swap roles and start again.
3) Follow-up Suggestion
Only roleplay and speaking activities. Use these expressions as feedback in different funny situations. 'hey you over there', 'just looking', 'I'm looking for a spaceship'........

🕐 The teacher created the original script always based on new ideas developed through situational role-plays during lessons.

Extract from the script (scene: at the square)

*"**(Policemen getting angry)***
From here? Well, you go straight down this road, you'll find a river, swim across the river, then turn right, turn left, no turn right! Go through the trees. Ehm, it's near girls.

(Girls looking at each other and miming the actions and repeating astonished)
Swimming across the river?? Going through the trees?? I can't believe that. Mission impossible 4! They are crazy!

It seems very far, sir. Ehm, thank you very much (pretending to be very kind)

(Policemen)
Don't worry, be happy...it's near! Bye bye girls!"

🕐 **Making up the story as you go along!**
"Let's have a surprise birthday party"

Christine is a sad girl and thinks she has no friends. She always stays at home eating lots of sweets and chips, drinking cola and reading romances or playing video-games. Her friends are worried and during their music class they all agree on having a surprise party for Christine!
Some of them are going to the clothes shop to buy special outfits for the party, others to the toyshop for her present and others are going to the bakery to buy a super-duper-yummy-scrummy chocolate cream cake!
There's only one problem: they don't know how to go to the shops! Four crazy policemen are walking through the square as the children ask them for directions...what funny and strange directions!

PART 3 – JUNE: on stage...

Smiling, merry little elves – Christine tempted to eat junk food

Orchestra, little clowns and friends all partying for Christine! We don't need junk food!

- Project dissemination

Engaging students in a variety of tasks is necessary to promote acquisition. As far as pupils are concerned, the most significant effects were in fact connected to their active participation in making up a show. As a consequence, it had a positive influence on the way in which pupils regard English as a foreign language, felt by all members of the school community, including parents.

Communicating in a foreign language in a context was also expressed by an improvement in pupils' skills and has helped return creativity and pupils' artistic expression to their rightful place on the school timetable.

These activities also provided opportunities – sometimes never before encountered – for pupils to express themselves through collaboration. Development of creative skills combined with other competences encourages a spirit of competition, bringing out the best in those pupils who experience problems in more academic subjects.

It contributed to the development of pupils' "learning to learn" skills. They acquired greater self-confidence and greater capacities for working in groups or on their own.

*References

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