MINI RESEARCH PROJECTS IN THE FIRST TERM

The Curriculum Committee has initiated and encouraged the mini research projects in the first term for the advanced group. Such projects combined with presentations in class prepare the students primarily for the more serious task of the second semester research project. However, as will be discussed, they serve other more pragmatic and pedagogical purposes too.

These mini projects can be done on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis, or the students may be required to complete one mini project in the first term (without writing up the paper.)

These mini projects may be organized in many ways, as the teacher and the students wish. Students can work on their projects individually or may choose to work in groups. Although they may not be required to write an official research report or paper, these studies can be combined with writing in the form of notes the learners make for themselves, research journals they keep, presentation notes they make for reference, etc. From time to time these mini research topics may be utilized as quiz topics to write about. It all depends on the teacher’s creativity and the needs of the learners the teacher observes.

All in all, these mini projects raise student motivation and serve pedagogical purposes as well.

1. Students do something they enjoy doing when they are working on the topic of their own choice, and this certainly raises motivation.
2. Students form work groups, and this again raises motivation since the learners are working together and enjoying cooperation.
3. Students do research, and this is an introduction to academic life.
4. When students do projects, they work on something different from learning English, which in the prolonged form we have in our school, can be quite tedious for students.
5. Students do presentations; it is a social and academic skill. They practice public speaking, organization and equipment use.
6. Students enjoy using technology for their presentations. Overhead projectors, power point presentations, videos, photos, slide shows, graphic presentations and other visuals are some of the many. They are a nice change from teacher talk, blackboard and chalk presentations of ordinary lessons. They present a break from the routine of everyday lessons and therefore raise the motivation on part of the learners.

If these presentations are held in a series regularly, students can be guided through methods of doing successful presentations. As one of our colleagues, Najla Osseiran did in the fall 2003 term, students learn to
perfect themselves in presentation skills, which means actually that they are developing not only their speaking skills but also public speaking skills. This is a more valuable skill in our case if we remember that our students are doing these presentations in a foreign language. With the help of some guidelines to be provided by the teacher, critiquing presenters in addition to critiquing one’s own performance are also valuable skills to be gained, and offer the learners extra motivation.

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