



VALKEAKOSKI-OPISTO

PEOPLE

Improve Your English with PEOPLE
Course evaluation



Improve Your English with PEOPLE

- * 14 participants
- * for learners with basic skills in both English (level A2-B2) and ICT.
- * 11 x 3 contact hours and independent study, September 2013 – May 2014

Why we used the PLE methodology:

Lifelong learning in Finland is about

- * Self-development
- * Self-fulfilment
- * Individual interests and goals
- * Learner autonomy
- * Interaction
- * Heterogeneous study groups

PLE provides a possible answer for combining social interaction and learner autonomy

What we examined:

- * how and what kind of learning environments the learners build;
- * how the teacher can support the learner in planning the PLE and during the course;
- * how the group can support the learner while studying with the PLE;
- * how the learners' conceptions of learning English and their PLEs change during the course.

How we evaluated:

- 9/13 Initial taped group discussions about learning experiences
- 12/13 Group discussions and handouts about use of tools
- 3/14 Online questionnaires about learning and learning environments
- 5/14 Final taped group discussions about this learning experience

Content of the course

- Making a personal learning plan
- Learning to use various social media tools such as blogs, and using them for learning English
- Building a PLE with the help of those tools
- Studying English according to personal learning plans and with individually selected contents
- Reflecting on the learning experience.

Search	Google
Storage and archiving	Blog
Editing	<p>Google Drive (learners made presentations)</p> <p>Quizlet.com (learners made vocabulary exercises for themselves and each other)</p> <p>YouTube (video editing)</p> <p>Blog</p>
Publishing	Blog (travelogues etc. with photos, text, videos)
Communication	<p>Skype</p> <p>Email</p> <p>Facebook</p> <p>Personal conversations both during and outside the lessons</p>
Sources of content	<p>Language learning applications(kuten Quizlet.com) and websites (both recommended by teachers and found and shared by the learners)</p> <p>Online audio materials for listening comprehension</p> <p>News sites for gathering information</p> <p>Television</p> <p>Dictionaries (both online and on paper)</p> <p>Books, newspapers</p>

Methodology: presential

- * Contact lessons were used for:
 - * practicing English conversation skills
 - * working on technical problems
 - * introducing and practicing new tools
 - * refining and updating working plans
 - * reflecting on the learning experience

Methodology: autonomous

- * Each small group worked according to their **own working programme**
- * Each learner worked according to his/her **learning plan**
- * Learning environments consisted of
 - * Social media tools
 - * Independent and group work online
 - * Face to face in person and online
 - * Textbooks, newspapers, literature, television etc.

Result 1: Learning environments

- * At the beginning of the course: adopt easy tools for collaborative working and sharing information.
- * One joint platform for the course to collect and store materials and links.
- * Most useful parts of learning environments for English
 - * Joint working platform (blog),
 - * Collaborative applications for learning and practicing vocabulary
 - * Google tools

Result 2: Teacher's role

Important at the early stages of the course. As the course progresses, the learners work more and more independently.

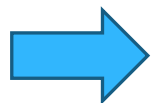
- * Supporting the development of personal learning plans and the group's work programme
- * Planning and organising the work in the classroom
- * Expert of language and ICT-related questions (learners choose contents and tools)
- * Supporting reflection on learning and learning environments

Result 3: Group support

- * One of most important parts of learners' learning environments.
- * Helped to increase cooperation between lessons.
- * Helped to increase use of English outside classroom.

Result 4: Conceptions

- * From the “course and textbook” idea to various social media tools and various “real life” environments
- * New approach: personal learning plans and scheduled work programmes
- * Realisation: informal learning is learning.



Learning becomes a wider concept

Advantages

- * Helps learners become more active both as language learners and members of the information society.
- * Helps find meaningful uses for computers, tablets and smartphones, when they were used for learning English.
- * Takes into account learners' experiences and interests
- * Emphasizes learner autonomy
- * Makes it possible to introduce flexible, learner-centred models into lifelong language learning

Challenges

Teacher:

- * Providing sufficient support at the beginning of the course, but also letting learners work independently
- * Feeling comfortable with social media tools and being ready to explore new ones.
- * Tolerating uncertainty
- * Helping learners form small groups with similar levels and interests

Learner:

- * Taking responsibility of his/her learning
- * Learning how to work independently
- * Tolerating uncertainty with social media tools.
- * Exploring new tools
- * Being a responsible group member

The life of a PLE course

