

## **TEACHING THE SPEECH ACT OF PRAISE VIA THE PHENOMENON-BASED APPROACH**

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### **Rezumat:**

Scopul acestui articol este de a investiga modul în care abordarea învățării bazate pe fenomene poate fi aplicată în predarea actului de vorbire “laudă”. Fiind centrată pe student, învățarea bazată pe fenomene este un stil de predare multidisciplinar, relativ nou, având la temelie cercetarea efectuată de însuși studenții și activități de soluționare a problemelor. Noutatea sa constă în procedura în cadrul căreia elevii însuși, sub îndrumarea profesorilor, aleg o temă

(fenomen), decid ce vor să afle despre aceasta, explorează și răspund la propriile întrebări folosind și aplicând cunoștințele pe care le posedă la diverse obiecte de studiu, adecvate pentru atingerea obiectivelor stabilite. Propunem scenariul unei astfel de activități urmând câțiva dintre pașii specifici abordării învățării bazate pe fenomene.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Învățare bazată pe fenomene, abordare centrată pe cursant, act de laudă, interogarea elevilor, rezolvarea problemelor.

### **Abstract**

The goal of the present article is to investigate how the Phenomenon-Based Learning Approach can be applied in teaching the speech act of praise. Being learner-centred, Phenomenon-based learning is a rather new multidisciplinary teaching style based on learner inquiry and problem solving activities. Its novelty lies in the procedure within which the students themselves, under the guidance of teachers, choose a topic (phenomenon), decide what they want to know about it, explore and answer their own questions using and applying existing knowledge from various subjects appropriate to the solving of the set goals. We propose the scenario of such an activity following some of the steps specific for the PhBL approach.

**Keywords:** Phenomenon-based learning, learner-centred approach, the speech act of praise, student inquiry, problem solving.

### **Introduction**

Educators' keen awareness of the necessity to improve the quality of education has grown over the years. The considerable need to educate a bright, strong, creative personality who will be capable of mastering and overcoming the complexities and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century realia has led to the idea of introducing and accepting new teaching styles into practice. A modern young person should acquire new skills in order to be able not only to identify and resolve various problems, but also to look for non-standard ways of solving them independently.

Consequently, the task of instructing such a person in the educational environment, i.e. in schools and universities is coming to the fore, moreover a foreign language (FL) class is considered along with other subjects both as a goal and as a means of education and training. Thus, the most wide-spread trends of teaching/learning FL, associated with the integration of latest psychological, and methodological research can serve as a sufficient basis for revising many of the provisions and concepts of FL teaching/learning previously used in practice.

We are convinced that the relevance of introducing new

approaches to teaching foreign languages is determined by the new target orientation of modern education. Incontestably, the Phenomenon-based learning (PhBL or PhenoBL) approach may be one of the solutions.

### **Phenomenon-based Learning**

This concept has been “invented and introduced” by Kirsti Lonka, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Helsinki. Creating a learning format that would captivate children and make them enjoy the learning process, the researcher has managed to make a kind of “revolution” in the world of teaching and learning. Phenomenon-based Learning can be defined as “a learner-centred, multidisciplinary instructional approach that is based on student inquiry and problem solving. [...] What is characteristic of PhBL is that no definite “subject is taught” and no fixed learning goals are set. As an alternative, students explore “and solve their own questions by applying what subjects are relevant to the problem” (n.a, 2022, online).<sup>1</sup> In addition, PhBL creates a special educational environment that motivates students to act and cooperate with others.

In other words, the essence of the PhBL is not the study of abstract theories, but the phenomena of real life. The student, who initially asks questions about a phenomenon of interest and then independently investigates it, using his/her knowledge from various fields is to be found in the centre. The word phenomenon in this context is synonymous with *occurrence* and *topic*; it is something that happens in the real environment. Any chosen phenomenon is considered from different perspectives, which may not fit into the framework of only one school subject and which can be studied interdisciplinary. In our work we will consider the phenomenon of “praise” in communication.

According to certain research “The phenomenon-based approach has informed the new core curriculum for basic education in Finland, which has officially introduced multidisciplinary learning modules as periods of phenomenon-based project studies”. It is “a pedagogical initiative that has received wide media coverage and publicity, because of the news that Finland has moved away from traditional subject teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Phenomenon-based Learning, (2022), [online] Disponibil: <https://www.valamis.com/hub/phenomenon-based-learning> [citat 10.07.2022]

and toward multidisciplinary learning modules” (Symeonidis, Schwarz, 2016, p. 31-33).

It is considered that the guiding principles of this approach are as follows: Experiential Education, Project Based Learning, Inquiry Based Learning, Thematic Based Learning, Integrated Learning, Systems Thinking, Nature Education, Cooperative Play and Social Emotional Learning. Thus, incorporating so many doctrines it introduces real world issues and requires the students to determine actively the knowledge, conceptions and skills necessary to discover them. Besides, teachers train in their students such 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as: critical thinking, citizenship, growth mind-set, communication, creativity and collaboration aiming at fostering students’ social and cognitive skills that are undeniably essential for their future. Another important outcome is the public presentation of the project results in order to strengthen the connections and applicability to the modern world.

Six stages of implementing PhBL have been identified: (1) Establishing the Phenomena Goals, (2) Engaging and Immersing the Learners, (3) Personalized Learning, (4) Establishing Evidence Based Inquiry to Knowledge, (5) Questioning for Reflection, and (6) Documenting a Portfolio and Sharing the Project. The teachers should cooperate with the learners while designing the projects tasks and directions. The lessons should be designed to enhance students’ awareness and stimulate their natural curiosity. It must be noted that the learning procedure comprises several steps: designing, choosing different learning tasks, selecting practical activities, and considering ways of guiding and assessing. Moreover, a variety of teaching resources and activities are welcome. This diversity encourages learners to collaborate with other group members and discover together. What is essential for PhBL is the opportunity each participant gets to work and advance at his/her own pace, making full use of his / her own aptitudes, getting noteworthy tasks feeling important contributing to the completion of the final goal. PhBL increases students’ curiosity being stimulated to get involved and watch, study what happens around and draw conclusions. Teachers’ purpose is to monitor the discovery- learning process asking such questions that will facilitate students’ independent decoding of meanings.

One of the main goals in PhBL is to find and bring proof of what the learners have acquired and its impact on their future.

### **Applying PhBL in Teaching the Speech Act of Praise**

As it has been mentioned earlier, we intend to compile an activity on the phenomenon of “praise” in modern English communication applying some of the PhBL elements.

*Level:* B1-B2

*Time:* 3-6 hours

*Rationale:*

The speech act of praise is a significant part of people’s communicative and pragmatic competence. It is defined as “words that show approval of or admiration for sb/sth” (Hornby, 2000, p. 990). Across the world, people praise each other in various ways, depending on the factors regulating the cultural norms of the society. Ignoring, or not being aware of the rules how to praise others in a foreign language correctly can be considered impolite or even rude. The speech act of praise has got a well-thought-out goal and a certain linguistic structure.

The teacher’s aim is to interest and involve the students into the discovering, familiarizing, analysing, structuring, exemplifying and presenting the project results in class. While conducting the process, the teacher should permanently be aware of the so-called “21<sup>st</sup> century skills and employability skills” which are of paramount importance in the modern society.

*Procedure:*

- 1) The teacher announces the topic (e.g. How to praise people properly in various cultures).
- 2) The students, guided by the teacher, try to formulate and decide on several collective aims and together, the assessment criteria are stipulated.
- 3) The potential contents are talked over; 4-5 subject procedures of discovering the phenomenon of praise are suggested and the students choose by majority vote 1-3 tactics they would like to apply.
- 4) The students and teachers decide on the aims, timetable and preliminary deadlines.
- 5) The class is divided into 2- 3 groups (depending on the number of students and goals set).

- 6) The teacher motivates the students and increases their interest in the studied phenomenon by brainstorming ideas, suggesting reading short texts, describing photographs and/or paintings, watching and discussing videos, or even organizing certain visits and meeting people.
- 7) Keeping in mind that PhBL is a student centred approach type of instruction, the learners create graphic representations of their own presumptions about the phenomenon under study, formulate their expectations and objectives, ask questions of their own what they want to learn about and what results they expect.
- 8) Exploration is the leading method used in PhBL, that is why teachers should encourage getting in touch with specialists in the domain such as teachers (in our case teachers of English, German, French, Romanian, Russian to find out as much as possible about ways of praising in various cultures as well as teachers of other subjects, for instance, Biology teachers, psychologists, etc. to learn how positive emotions influence people's mood and behaviour), librarians, people of different age, other students.
- 9) After the phenomenon (the speech act of praise) is identified, teachers are advised to encourage two types of learning: (1) the problem-based learning for students to identify an issue to be resolved being actively involved in the process and (2) the inquiry-based learning within which the students use a set of logical procedures and instruments in order to solve it.
- 10) For the period of the research and data collection stage, each student or pair of students fulfil the received task discovering, observing, visiting different places, and communicating with professionals. They are supposed to make notes on the obtained data because documenting a portfolio gives them the chance to keep a record of the learnt material which they can consult any time and share with others.
- 11) On the presentation day each group shares the results of their collective project work. The students are free to choose any format: video, PowerPoint, reports, simulation or any drama activity.
- 12) Another step of the PhBL approach is to motivate the learners to self-evaluate their project results and strive for peer to peer evaluation that gives the opportunity to get instantaneous feedback. An

important issue here is that the linguistic, pragmatic or any other competences the students demonstrate are considered while being graded.

### **Conclusion**

We agree with Ch. Drew's statement that PhBL "is a holistic approach" that gives students the unique chance to "learn through topics and themes rather than subject areas". This new approach allows using "concepts from a range of disciplines, including science, arts, math and literacy to solve the problems they are studying" (Drew, 2022, online).

Those students who have had the occasion to apply this multidisciplinary approach into practice understand better how data from various domains are interwoven and can easier clarify and exemplify phenomena that are directly related to solving real life situations. We are convinced that concentrating studies on persuasive phenomena can definitely aid to sustain active learning of various subjects.

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