



## Project-Based Learning Experience in the Construction of Intercultural Knowledge

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### ABSTRACT

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In accordance with the changing scope of culture learning (CL), i.e., intercultural knowledge development, since the 1990s onwards, this study intends to explore the potential of CL through project work concerning intercultural knowledge construction and its experiences within a pre-service English teacher education. In other words, the research employs project-based learning (PBL) as a tool to incorporate the principles of constructivism and experiential education. This study modified Stoller's (1997) PBL model into a seven-step sequence, which was embedded in the midst of a CL course for eight weeks. The study used three data sources collected from eleven participants: group projects, weekly journals, and post-project written reflections. The results are as follows. First, students showed intercultural knowledge construction by: 1) producing four projects, each for a cultural topic of Korean, American, and other international cultures; and 2) expressing they built deep intercultural knowledge, understood the interwoven nature of culture, and developed genuine interest in the cultures. Second, the study identified four perceived PBL's benefits: metacognitive skills practice, language practice, student-centered active learning, and integration of PBL theory and practice. Finally, PBL's challenges were identified: many time-consuming tasks, insufficient language competence, unfamiliar cultural topics, and being unaccustomed to student-centeredness.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War in 1990, and the advent of globalization in the 1990s have constituted "transnational flows of people, commodities, and ideas" (Risager, 2007, p. 1). With the development of a "world econocultural system" (McKay, 2004, p. 3) and an increase in the variety of the English language particularly in non-Western contexts (Kachru, 1992), the notion of English as an international language (EIL) has emerged, and this has expected

a change in teaching English. In other words, language instruction is to acknowledge "the linguistic, functional, and cultural diversity" of the language; reflect "this diverse and complicated reality of the language needs"; and prepare students to become EIL users (Matsuda, 2018, p. 25). Exposing students to a variety of cultures besides mainstream cultural content, i.e., North America, Britain, and Australia (Nault, 2006), is an example.

In Korea, neoliberalism and free trade markets (J. Park, 2011), and the EIL paradigm have led the government to

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incorporate intercultural content into the national English curriculum (J. Park & M. Kim, 2014). To begin, the fifth curriculum (1988-1992) introduced “culture” in ELT. The sixth curriculum (1992-1997) focused on Anglo-American centered cultures (J. Hyun & H. Kim, 2002). The seventh curriculum (1997-present) with its 2007, 2009 and 2015 revisions, added both Korean and international cultures to culture learning in ELT (Y. Han & Y. Bae, 2005; Y. Koh, 2004). The 2007 revised curriculum introduced the concepts of EIL and intercultural language learner development (MEST, 2008). Subsequently, the 2015 revised curriculum further emphasized intercultural learning experiences. For example, a preparatory government research report on the revised curriculum stated that “English education aims to help learners understand foreign cultures and develop necessary qualities as global citizens” through “a variety of intercultural learning experiences” (KICE, 2014, p. 319). Overall, the scope of culture in Korean ELT contexts has included not only the target culture (e.g., American culture) but also the source culture (i.e., Korean culture) and other international cultures (e.g., Chinese culture); and ELT has faced the ongoing challenge of implementing change from the 1990s onwards.

Approaches to Culture Learning (CL) in ELT have been investigated, and examples include the mono-cultural and comparative approaches. The former provides “a one-way flow of cultural information” of the target culture in a single English-speaking country (Buttjes & Byram, 1991, p. 13); the latter leads learners to question their “taken-for-granted culture” (Byram, 1998, p. 6) and discover differences and similarities of the native culture and the other cultures. Within the changing culture of teaching in ELT in Korea, the comparative approach of comparing and contrasting the source culture and other cultures appears more applicable. Along with the general CL approaches, in this article, practical teaching techniques are explored. Stern’s (1992) eight techniques of CL are one example. Within in-class situations, there are six techniques: creating an authentic classroom (e.g., displaying realia); providing activities with cultural information (e.g., cultural capsules and culture clusters); involving cultural problem solving (e.g., student research); engaging with behavioral and affective aspects (e.g., drama); using cognitive approaches (e.g., student research); and providing the role of literature and humanities (e.g., literary reading). Within out-class situations, there are two techniques: engaging with real-life exposure to the target culture (e.g., pen-pals) and making use of cultural community resources in an English-speaking country (e.g., the everyday environment as a resource).

A mere focus on CL techniques is rather limited and problematic. In Stern’s (1992) list above, using culture capsules (Seelye, 1993; Taylor & Sorensen, 1961) to provide cultural information activities in class is an example. The activity involves the teacher’s oral explanation of specific cultural differences between cultures and then the students discussing the differences of a typical event. Despite the “practical, manageable” nature (Stern, 1992, p. 240),

some fundamental questions are raised. For example, how the cultural topic is chosen (Nault, 2006) and whether the learning process is beyond the transmission of cultural information. In other words, whether the process asks students to reflect on the culture, exercise critical thinking skills (Osborn, 2006), and participate in an inquiry into the elements of the culture (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). To respond to such questions, CL needs to take into account other aspects such as teaching principles when the general frameworks, in conjunction with the teaching techniques, are put into practice.

This study, which explores the potential of CL through project work within the preservice education of Korean teachers of the English language, is unique for two main reasons. First, PBL is employed as a tool to incorporate the principles of constructivism and experiential education. In other words, project-based cultural learning can serve students by involving intercultural experiences and constructing their intercultural knowledge. Unlike conventional CL classrooms in which cultural topics and knowledge tend to be delivered by the teacher, project-based CL classrooms expect learners to choose and construct topics and cultural knowledge according to their interests and needs. Additionally, their primary focus is on content learning even though the project-based module involves language learning while researching and producing project outcomes. This study is designed for and implemented in culture learning but not in ELT. Unlike an ELT classroom integrating cultural elements (J. Choi, 2007; Hsu, 2014; H. Jung & S. Yeom, 2009; H. Kim & S. Lee, 2008), the culture learning course in the study primarily focuses on the development of intercultural knowledge of the Korean English language teachers.

Targeting a pre-service teacher education setting of English, this study intends to answer the following questions concerning intercultural knowledge construction and its experiences through a PBL model.

- 1) Does the PBL module help students develop intercultural knowledge?
- 2) What are the benefits and challenges of the PBL model as perceived by students?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Culture and English

As a set of practices for constructing meanings, culture is mediated by language. Therefore, since it is inextricably and implicitly central to culture (Buttjes, 1990; Halliday & Hasan, 1989), language is viewed as a cultural practice (Pennycook, 1994). Two types of underlying assumptions about culture and language are generally considered. One is a static and fixed form of culture and language under traditions represented from each other and related to birthright (Tsolidis, 2001). Hofstede’s (1980) influential work

to uncover “the secrets of entire national cultures” (p. 44) is an example. Each nation is viewed to have a distinctive, stable, and describable culture that constitutes everything (Hickson & Pugh, 1995). The other is a constant process of a change in culture and language as they interact with other belief systems (Hall, 1997; Kramsch, 2013; Zhu, 2014). The belief systems reflected in the discourses of race, class, gender, religion, and nationality can complicate and even contradict the concept of culture (Pennycook, 1994). Thus, a variety of values and norms exist both between different cultures and within a cultural group.

Both assumptions are valid. Differences in values and norms between cultures are evident at the macro level of influence and apply to entire societies. The difference between Western cultures and Korean culture is an example. In addition, differences in values and norms within cultural groups exist at the micro level of interpersonal interactions. For example, the various belief systems among Korean people that differ according to gender, class, age, and environment exist in the form of subcultures.

Regarding English and culture, Kachru (1985) claims that language has multiple identities in international contexts, reflecting the cultures of its speakers and showing “a repertoire of cultures” rather than “a monolithic culture” (p. 86). Variations in the English language can be categorized according to Kachru’s (1992) three concentric circles of world English variations: the inner, outer and expanding circles. The inner circle refers to countries where English is a native language. The United States is an example. In the outer circle, English is used as a second language, as in Singapore. The expanding circle refers to the increasing number of countries where English is studied as a foreign language, as in South Korea.

In Korea, part of the expanding circle, most English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have three categories linguistically: the native language (Korean), the target language (English), and other languages. Furthermore, the EFL students have three cultural categories concerning national cultures: the source culture (Korean culture), the target culture (e.g., American culture), and other world cultures. In accordance with the presented categories, the Korean government aims to develop intercultural understandings of the source culture, the target culture, and other world cultures since the seventh curriculum (see Section 1). To experiment and learn about intercultural understandings, this study suggests a PBL approach.

## 2. Project-Based Learning and Content-Based Language Education

PBL is a pedagogical method in which learners investigate a topic (or topics), acquire its deep knowledge and produce its related product (Stoller, 2006). PBL in ELT links the use of language to the investigation of topics based on student interests (Fried-Booth, 2002). The approach incorporates concepts from Vygotsky’s constructivism and Dewey’s experiential education. Constructivist

education considers knowledge construction and learning as social practices. Through teachers’ mentoring and students’ peer coaching, knowledge construction becomes possible (Moursund, 2003). Experiential education is a learning process that occurs according to the interests and experiences of students (Dewey, 1938). The role of a teacher is to include inquiry-based learning, and maintain a balance between delivering knowledge and facilitating student-centered learning interests and experiences.

In accordance with constructivism and experiential education, PBL in ELT reflects the principles of student-centered teaching (Hedge, 1993) and experiential learning (Legutke & Thomas, 1991; Thomas, 2000) such as learner autonomy (Fried-Booth, 2002; Guven, 2014), cooperative learning (Farouck, 2016), and critical thinking (Beckett & Miller, 2006; Rochmahwati, 2015). The PBL process begins with topic selection; then, students plan, research, and share their results. The approach has potentials in terms of language skills integration, experiential task-based learning, self-determined action by individuals and groups, and holistic outcomes, e.g., social skills (Moss & Duzer, 1998).

PBL has become attractive to teachers and researchers in second language education including ELT (M. Choi & C. Sim, 2012; Doherty & Eyring, 2006; Guo, 2006; H. Kim & S. Lee, 2008; M. Kim, 2015; Y. Kim, 2014; Y. Lim & Y. Park, 2019; M. Shin, 2018, 2019). Project-based content and language learning classrooms would be exemplary (Dupuy, 2006; Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010). In the classrooms, teachers shift to enabling a learning community of inquiry involving “authentic communication, cooperative learning, collaboration, and problem-solving” (Stoller, 1997, p. 2). Accordingly, the approach can promote student engagement in language and content learning. As a vehicle for integrating language and content learning, project work can complement “mainstream methods” and be used “with all levels, ages, and abilities of students” (Haines, 1989, p. 1). Incorporating project work in pedagogical subjects of pre-service English teacher education (e.g., culture teaching) would be exemplary.

In the same vein, this study intends to develop intercultural knowledge in pre-service English teacher education focusing on the incorporation of project work into content-based education, i.e., a culture learning course. Some studies have attempted to investigate project work in culture teaching (Dupuy, 2006; Kean & Kwe, 2014). Dupuy’s (2006) global simulation would be an example. Global simulation, a simulation in a long-term project, was implemented in a French course for a semester by moving into an apartment building as residents and living their lives.

For the classroom practices, Stoller (1997) proposes a ten-step sequence for activities, such as language intervention sessions tailored to language proficiency levels and learning needs: Step 1 (students and teacher agree on a theme for the project); Step 2 (students and teacher determine the final project); Step 3 (students and teacher structure the project); Step 4 (teacher prepares for the language demands of the information gathering process); Step 5

(students gather information); Step 6 (teacher prepares students with the language for compiling and analyzing data); Step 7 (students compile and analyze information); Step 8 (teacher prepares students with the language needed for the culminating activity); Step 9 (students present final outcome of their projects); and Step 10 (students reflect on the project).

Beneficial features of PBL in content-based learning are investigated (Habok & Nagy, 2016; Y. Kim, 2014; M. Shin, 2018; Stoller, 1997). The following six benefits are exemplified: 1) its focus on “content learning” based on students’ interests and needs rather than focusing on language targets; 2) its student-centered nature in conjunction with the teacher in a role of coach and facilitation; 3) its cooperative atmosphere in which students complete a project involving individual, group and whole class work by sharing information and opinions; 4) its integration of language skills and “the processing of information from varied sources, mirroring real-life tasks”; 5) its focus on “process and project orientation” working toward the final product, such as in oral presentations or web-based project reports; and 6) its potential to improve “students’ language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities” (Stoller, 1997, p. 5).

However, project work has some challenges (Brooks, 2016; Harris, 2014). For example, students who are accustomed to teacher-centered learning environments may feel alienated in PBL, which comprises a strong form of student-centered learning (M. Kim & Pollard, 2017). A traditional instruction considers teachers an authoritative knowledge provider and students a passive learner, whereas PBL expects students to construct knowledge as active, self-directed learners, and teachers to facilitate the learning process. A student role as different as in PBL may confuse and alienate unprepared students (M. Kim, 2015).

### III. METHOD

#### 1. Participants and Research Context

This study involved the teacher/researcher and 11 third-year English education students from a teaching college. The teacher was experienced and relatively competent in the PBL approach. The teacher’s ongoing research areas included the application of PBL in ELT classrooms as well as teacher education programs over the last decade, and the teacher-researcher has been associated with teaching culture through PBL within the pre-service teacher education program since 2009. While using the approach, the teacher has become competent in its application. First, the teacher developed an understanding of the changing role of the teacher in student-centered PBL, in other words, a role as a facilitator of the students’ knowledge construction but not a provider of a store-house of knowledge. A great degree of group work activities to produce projects with the teacher’s assistance throughout the project session is an example. Second, the

teacher managed to conduct the procedures of the unfamiliar PBL approach. In this study, the teacher designed the CL course and implemented eight-week project sessions for medium-sized project production.

In total 11 of the 14 enrolled preservice students participated in this study. All of the enrolled students completed the coursework during the culture learning course and the participant students then agreed to share part of their coursework (i.e., their journals, final outcomes, and reflection notes) with the teacher. All of the participants were preservice students of English education with no or little teaching experiences, who aspired to become a secondary public school English teacher after graduation. Of the 11 participants all were in their 20’s and six were female. The participants’ English proficiency was at the intermediate to upper-intermediate levels, with TOEIC scores ranging from 650 to 950. Half of the participants had overseas experiences in English-speaking countries, including one-year program of study abroad. Regarding their previous PBL experiences, most students learned the approach as a theory but not as practice and so this PBL course seemed unfamiliar to all of the participants.

The research was embedded into the 16-week, three-credit core optional pedagogical course British and American cultures, offered in pre-service teacher education. In accordance with the ongoing focus on intercultural competence in the national curriculum of the English language since the 1990s (see Section 1), this course aimed to develop an understanding of intercultural knowledge by including First culture (C1) and other international cultures in conjunction with Target culture (C2). At the beginning of the course, the demands of the intercultural competence in the national curriculum and its inclusion in the course to prepare the preservice teachers were discussed. Prior to the project work from weeks 1 through 8, the course handled theories of CL, such as the definition of culture and its variables (big C and little c); the changing notion of CL based on EIL perspectives; a variety of verbal and non-verbal communications between C1, C2, and other international cultures; and the sociolinguistic features of English according to degrees of formality. Then, the PBL model devised for this study was embedded from weeks 9 through 16.

#### 2. PBL Overview to Intercultural Knowledge Construction

A PBL approach modifying Stoller’s (1997) PBL model in a seven step activity sequence was implemented in a culture learning course. The students were divided into groups of three or four and developed intercultural knowledge of C1 (Korea), C2 (U.S.A.), and other international cultures (Syria, Sweden, Brazil and Croatia); each group constructed their final outcomes, and then presented orally their outcomes to the class. Table 1 presents the outline of the eight-week project-based sessions of intercultural knowledge construction.

**TABLE 1**  
Outline of Eight-Week PBL Sessions From Weeks 9 to 16

Step	Week/duration	Activity
1	9 (1/3 week)	Preparation
2	9 (2/3 week)	Language intervention (I) and summary of C2
3	10 (1 week)	Language intervention (II) and compiling of data (C1 & other international cultures)
4	11 (1 week)	Language intervention (III) and writing of final projects
5	12-15 (4 weeks)	Language intervention (IV) and oral presentation
6	16 (1/2 week)	Evaluation of oral presentation and final projects
7	16 (1/2 week)	Written reflection on PBL

The course had three hours of class per week. During Steps 1 through 5, the background information and related cultural issues of a cultural topic of C1, C2, and other international cultures were developed. After Step 6 (oral presentation), students answered the questions raised during their presentations. Finally, they reflected on the PBL model through both weekly reflective journals from Steps 1 to 4 and post-project written reflections during Step 7. Through the PBL sessions, intercultural knowledge was constructed in the following sequence: C2, C1, and other international cultures. The students were divided into groups of three or four, two times: first, to develop C1 and C2 contents and second, to develop other cultural content. The teacher provided four language intervention lessons for the next steps: writing summaries; gathering, compiling, and analyzing information; writing the final reports; and delivering oral presentations. Each step is outlined in detail as follows.

Step 1 involved the preparation in Week 9 for one hour and comprised five activities. First, the students prepared themselves for the project work by arranging themselves in groups of three or four, sharing their e-mail addresses and accounts on Korean social networking sites Kakao Talk with group members for out-of-class communication, and creating an account on the free Korean web domain hosting service Daum Cafe to construct their web-based group projects. Then, the teacher provided students with the assessment criteria of PBL, which was the content and structure of the final project reports and the oral presentation. Second, the teacher presented a sample project constructed by previous students that contained the information of a cultural theme on C1, C2, and other international cultures. Each culture was divided into four sections: background information, related current issues, answering questions raised during the oral presentation, and written reflections. Third, the class involved deciding on four cultural themes and four world cultures for research, based on their interests. The class referred to the seven cultural topics (religion, economy, politics, ethnic and racial diversity, education, leisure, and family structures) listed in the textbook *American Ways: An introduction to American culture* (Datesman et al., 2014). As there were four groups in the class, the class chose four interesting cultural themes (racial and ethnic diversity, education, politics, and religion) out of the seven in the book. Then, the class chose four world cultures based on their interests: Syria, Sweden, Brazil, and Croatia. From the four cultural themes and four world cultures, the class

had two types of groups: one group for C1 and C2, and the other for world cultures. Each group in the former dealt with a cultural theme of C1 and C2 and each in the latter handled the four cultural themes of one out of the four world cultures. In order for each group to develop a cultural theme of C1, C2, and a world culture, each group in the latter had three or four members and each member was from a group of the former. The former grouping was as follows: racial and ethnic diversity for Group 1, education for Group 2, politics for Group 3, and religion for Group 4. The latter grouping was as follows: four cultural themes for the Syrian Group, the Swedish Group, the Brazilian Group, and the Croatian Group (see Table 2).

Fourth, the teacher also provided four sample projects of cultural themes produced by previous students for reference. The teacher reminded students of plagiarism with a simple guideline: do not use more than five consecutive words from the sample projects and any source. Fifth, by referring to the sample projects, students determined their final projects and structured their group projects accordingly. Finally, each group outside the classroom created a website of five or six cultures (C1, C2, and three or four other world cultures) with four sections for each of them (background, issues, questions, and reflection).

**TABLE 2**  
Cultural Themes of C1, C2 and Other World Cultures on Four Group Projects

Group	Themes	C1	C2	Other world cultures
1 (n = 3)	Race & ethnicity	Korea	U.S.A.	Syria, Sweden, & Brazil
2 (n = 4)	Education	Korea	U.S.A.	Syria, Sweden, Brazil, & Croatia
3 (n = 4)	Politics	Korea	U.S.A.	Syria, Sweden, Brazil, & Croatia
4 (n = 3)	Religion	Korea	U.S.A.	Syria, Brazil, & Croatia

In Step 2, students constructed knowledge of C2 through the summary practice during the rest hours of Week 9. In other words, the background of the cultural themes of America was developed through the summary of the textbook. This step began with the teacher's language intervention (I) of summarizing the textbook chapters, the cultural themes of C2. First, each group dealt with a chapter of the textbook related to their cultural topic. Each group divided the content of the related book chapter and allocated each part of the chapter to a member. Second, the teacher carried out a summary writing lesson. Using a chapter of the textbook entitled Introduction: Understanding the culture of the United States, the teacher asked students to find the gist of the chapter, such as the title, subtitles, topic sentences, and keywords. Students used this information to summarize the chapter in their own words by using synonyms and changing sentence structures. Finally, students completed the summary practice. In class, all group members read and comprehended the whole chapter, based on the gist (e.g., keyword lists). Each member then summarized their allocated section of the chapter. Out of the classroom, each group combined all the summaries and then edited the complete summary draft via Kakao Talk.

In Step 3, students developed intercultural knowledge of C1 and other international cultures (i.e., the background information and current issues) during Week 10. The teacher provided another language intervention session (II) for gathering, compiling, and analyzing the cultural information. First, the teacher emphasized reliable information sources in which the information tended to be valid, such as the websites run by official organizations. Second, the teacher provided some useful websites: the education ministry of Korea, the national statistical office of Korea, the Korean EFL teachers' associations, the Central Intelligence Agency fact book, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Finally, the teacher taught researching skills by providing web-based English dictionaries such as the Oxford dictionary suggesting, finding appropriate keywords in English and using effectively search engines such as Google. After the teacher's language intervention, the students compiled and analyzed the information: the background information and current issues of C1 and other world cultures.

Step 4 involved the development of writing skills to present the cultural information collected in the previous step. During Week 11, the teacher provided another language intervention (III) to prepare them to produce the final written product. First, the teacher provided writing principles, such as writing general and specific texts, the mechanics of writing, coherence and cohesion, vocabulary, and grammar. Second, the teacher taught them how to write references for information sources, such as books, articles and websites. Finally, the teacher asked students to include visual materials to ensure comprehension, such as video clips and tables. After the teacher's language intervention, students engaged in writing, producing, and up-loading their outcomes to their websites of group project. The students were free to organize their writing concerning the titles and sub-titles as long as they reached the minimum word limit on each culture (i.e., 500 words). For their final outcomes, the word count for each piece of writing reached the given minimum word limit of up to 1,000 words.

In Step 5, students engaged in oral presentations for four weeks, from Weeks 12 to 15, through two activities. One was the final language intervention (IV) for oral presentation. First, the teacher provided a format of public speech and the spoken language features, such as fillers and clustering. Second, the teacher asked students to make speech transcripts based on the written outcomes, including spoken features such as fillers. Third, the teacher instructed the students to cluster the words on the transcripts, and read them with correct pronunciation and intonation. Fourth, the teacher provided instructions concerning other aspects of presentation, including a clear and audible voice and making eye contact with the audience. Finally, students practiced their presentations with group members. The other activity comprised two group presentations: one for C1 and C2, and the other for other international cultures. Each group presentation lasted 30 minutes, consisting of a 15-minute presentation in English and a 15-minute discussion session in Korean for clear communication and knowledge construction. All members of each group presented their outcomes. During the discussion session, the class asked questions from vocabulary definition

to alternative solutions of issues. In their final outcomes, the groups researched on the questions and included their answers or solutions.

Steps 6 and 7 were conducted during Week 16: Step 6 was the teacher's evaluation of the oral presentations and the web-based final projects, and Step 7 was the students' reflective practice through writing reflections on their project websites.

### 3. Data Collection and Analysis

For Research Questions 1 and 2, all of the data sources, i.e., journals, final outcomes, and written reflections, were collected and analyzed. In particular, Research Question 1 (intercultural knowledge development) handled the data of the final project outcomes which the students produced, rather than the assessment of the students' intercultural competence. Embedded in the culture learning course (see Section 3.1), the PBL approach would not solely contribute to the development of the students' intercultural knowledge. Thus, the research question of whether the students developed intercultural knowledge through the PBL module could be answered by the final outcomes and their cultural perceptions while developing the final outcomes. Concerning the language used in the data sources, the background information and the issues of the final reports were subject to an English-only policy (see Step 4). To better support the reflective practice, the other data were either in English or Korean.

First, four web-based projects were collected. Fourteen students were divided into four groups (two groups of four and two groups of three), and each group developed a project on a cultural theme of C1, C2, and other world cultures. Each culture had four sections: the background information, current issues, questions raised during presentation, and post-project reflections.

Second, 45 reflective journals were collected from 11 participant students for five weeks, from Weeks 9 to 13 (see Appendix 1 for a sample of a journal entry). During the eight-week project, the students engaged in reflective journaling by e-mailing weekly entries to the teacher. The journal writing employed a structured reflective journal template that asked what they learned, how they felt, and if they had any questions or suggestions. Referring to Beckett and Slater's (2005) project journal model, the study, focusing on activity and content, designed a list of open questions, including "what did I do?," "what information about the topic did I already know?," "what did I learn?," as well as examples, troubles and questions, and other matters.

Lastly, 11 post-project reflection notes were collected (see Appendix 2 for a sample of written reflection note). Students engaged in the reflection process by writing about their PBL experience. Using an open format, students were asked to include their feelings in the written reflections. The inclusion of their feelings followed Casanave's (2013) suggestion that good reflective writing engages feelings and interests of the writer.

To strengthen the validity of the results, data collection and analysis were conducted through a process of triangulation, in other words, the mixing of data and methods (Denzin, 1978).

**TABLE 3**  
Cultural Content on Four Group Projects: C1 (Korea)

Theme	Background (sub-titles)	Current issues (sub-titles)
Ethnicity (Group 1)	Ethnic homogeneity	1) Crimes by Jeju visitors with visa-free transit 2) Discrimination against migrant workers
Education (Group 2)	Objectives of education, educational ladder, and ELT	1) Decreasing teacher's authority level 2) School violence and bullying 3) Education for disabled students
Politics (Group 3)	Executive, legislative and judicial branches, and election system	1) Korean victims of Japan's sex slavery in WWII 2) Mass demonstration questioning President Park 3) Three alternatives against the Park scandal 4) Crimes by Choi Sun-Sil, the president's partner
Religion (Group 4)	Religious distribution and history, Christianity, Buddhism and nationalism	1) Choi Sun-Sil and Yongsanggyo, a cult 2) Sex crime priest's bleaching of legal system 3) Christian nepotism in politics: Somang Church

**TABLE 4**  
Cultural Content on the Group Project of Syria: Other World Cultures (Syria)

Theme	Background (sub-titles)	Current issues (sub-titles)
Ethnicity (Syrian Group)	History, diverse ethnicity and religions, and in-war demography	Refugees' human rights
Education (Syrian Group)	Educational values, educational history, and educational ladder	Rapid decrease of student attendance, and limited educational support of neighbor countries
Politics (Syrian Group)	Political history, executive, legislative and judicial branches, and civil war	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)
Religion (Syrian Group)	Religious distribution, denomination of Islam, and religious polarity	Syrian civil war

One is that the study used data triangulation by collecting data from multiple sources, such as web-based projects, journals, and written reflections. The other is that the study used methodological triangulation by analyzing the data both qualitatively and quantitatively using QSR NVIVO 11, a software of descriptive data analysis.

The process of method triangulation began with indexing and coding the data according to three primary themes of the study: intercultural knowledge development, perceived benefits, and perceived challenges. Then, patterns of significant emerging themes within the data were identified, analyzed, and reported (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Besides the three primary themes of the research questions, three frequently appearing themes (journal writing activity, prior PBL knowledge, and suggestions) and their subsequent categories were developed. As a result, the coding categories have six major themes, i.e., three primary themes and three other frequently appeared themes, and their subthemes. Finally, the frequency and percentage of occurrence of major and subsequent themes of students' PBL experiences were explored.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 1. Intercultural Knowledge Development in the PBL Model

The students developed their intercultural knowledge through the PBL model. First, all the 11 participants produced the web-based projects of C1, C2, and other world cultures. In other words, all were able to complete the

group tasks of intercultural competence development establishing their own C1, C2 and other world cultures goals and creating the final projects. Based on the four cultural themes (ethnicity, education, politics, and religion), Table 3 explains the overall cultural content of C1 on the four group projects. For example, the background of education in Korea handles objectives of education, educational laddering, and ELT; thus, three related issues are raised—decreasing teachers' authority level, school violence and bullying, and education for disabled students. For the other international cultures, Table 4 demonstrates an example of a project from the Syrian Group and includes details of how they constructed their knowledge of other international cultures. Appendix 3 shows sample PowerPoint slides on Education in Syria: Background and issues. The background contains educational values, educational history, and the educational laddering system in Syria. Two related issues are also raised, namely, the rapid decrease of student attendance and the limited educational support of neighboring countries.

The production of the web-based projects of C1, C2 and other world cultures ascertains Stoller's (1997) claim that PBL in content-based instruction focuses on and improve content learning, in this case, intercultural knowledge development. In addition, the intercultural knowledge building process that is based on the students' interests in cultural content (e.g., current issues) facilitates the production of their final outcomes. This recalls a claim that experiential education (e.g., PBL) occurring according to the students' interests and experiences enhances the knowledge construction process (Moursund, 2003).

**TABLE 5**  
Major and Subsequent Themes on Project Experiences in Entries ( $n = 288$ )

Major themes	Subthemes	<i>f</i>	%
Intercultural knowledge development	Understanding intercultural knowledge	30	10.4
	Developing various cultural knowledge	5	1.7
	Notion of culture	6	2.1
		(41)	(14.2)
Benefits	Language practice	23	8.0
	Metacognitive skills practice	45	15.6
	Student-centered active learning	17	5.9
	Integration of PBL theory and practice	16	5.6
	Activities (language interventions & discussion)	11	3.8
	Authentic and meaningful elements	13	4.5
	Others (e.g., sense of accomplishment)	12	4.2
		(137)	(47.6)
Challenges	Many time-consuming tasks	13	4.5
	Insufficient language competence	11	3.9
	Unfamiliar cultural themes	7	2.4
	Being unaccustomed to student-centeredness	7	2.4
		(38)	(13.2)
Journal writing activity	Reflecting on what they did	16	5.5
	Reflecting on what they learned	39	13.4
	Serving for student-teacher communication	7	2.4
		(62)	(21.6)
Prior PBL knowledge	Previous experiences	1	1
	Knowledge as a theory	4	4
		(5)	(5)
Suggestions	Textbooks for C1 and other cultures	1	0.3
	Longer period of PBL	2	0.7
	Searching skills development class	2	0.7
		(5)	(1.7)
Total		288	100.0

Second, students expressed the development of their intercultural knowledge. For example, the journal entries show that students viewed their “intercultural knowledge development” (41 out of 288 journal segments), and reflected and built their intercultural learning through journal writing, “reflecting on what they learned” (39 entries) (see Table 5). Other themes and subthemes on the PBL experience in Table 5 will be discussed later in the following section. This seemed to result from the structure of the weekly journal, which was based on Beckett and Slater’s (2005) project journal model (see Section 3.2). Three out of the six questions (“what did I do?”, “what information about the topic did I already know?”, and “what did I learn?”) were about the cultural content that the students learned (see Appendix 1 for a sample journal entry).

In particular, students valued three aspects of intercultural knowledge development. One is that students built deep and broad intercultural knowledge based on the four cultural topics. Another is that they have expanded the notion of culture that a cultural theme is connected to other themes; thus dealing with a cultural theme required understanding of other cultural aspects. The other is that students developed their genuine interest in the countries they explored, as well as a sense of connection with the cultures. Some even showed a desire for further research. Excerpt 1 illustrates that in the middle of the course (Week 12) a participant expanded their interest towards the cultural knowledge in the presentation by another group on education in Sweden. Excerpt 2 demonstrates that after the

course, another student developed a broader and deeper understanding of the international culture that they examined, in this case, Syria, by connecting various aspects of the country.

#### Excerpt (1)

There were presentations about Syria and Sweden. In particular, I was interested in Sweden’s schools and teachers. I thought that the country is good for living because of good well-being system. However, teachers in this country are suffering from their bad working conditions and work overload... I want to read a book on the Sweden’s education and compare between Korea and the country. (*Journal 10*, Participant 1, English original)

#### Excerpt (2)

I dealt with Syria as other international cultures. The country was also unknown to me even though many issues from Middle East Asia are currently very topical. The cultural theme of Syria I was responsible for was ethnicity. While researching, I learnt that the culture of Syria is interwoven with ethnicity, politics and religion. So I needed to deal with the country broadly rather than just its ethnicity, and I ran against time. Despite the time limit, I got to know the broad knowledge of Syria, such as history, economics, politics and religion while researching the country widely. (*Written Reflection 10*, Participant 10, English translated)

Overall, the students expressed that they built deep intercultural knowledge, understood the interwoven nature

of culture, and developed genuine interest in the cultures.

## 2. Perceived Benefits and Challenges of the PBL Model

From the analysis of the journals and the written reflections, references to the following six themes on the PBL experience were identified: intercultural knowledge construction, benefits, challenges, journal writing activity, prior PBL knowledge, and suggestions. Most of the data, intercultural knowledge construction (14.2%, 41 out of 288 entries) benefits (47.62%, 137 entries) and Journal writing activity itself (21.6%, 62 entries), valued the project work. On the other hand, 38 journal segments (13.2%) referred to its challenges. Since the study focused on intercultural knowledge development and perceptions through PBL experiences, the data on journal writing activity itself were limitedly discussed. The four subthemes that valued the PBL model most included: metacognitive skills practice, language practice, student-centered active learning, and integration of PBL theory and practice. The PBL's challenges included: many time-consuming tasks, insufficient language competence, unfamiliar cultural themes, and being unaccustomed to student-centeredness.

### 1) Metacognitive Skills Practice

The most frequent subtheme among the positive aspects of project-based culture learning is metacognitive skills practice (15.6%, 45 entries). This subtheme had five sub-categories: critical thinking skills, analytical skills, reflective skills, research skills, and cooperative skills. Critical thinking skills were developed by comparing information from websites, choosing reliable information from websites, acknowledging different views through interactions with group members, and researching information to answer the questions raised during the oral presentation. Excerpt 3 of the journal data demonstrate that in the middle of the PBL sessions (Week 10) the participant critically read the reference sources so as to obtain reliable and comprehensible information. Excerpt 4 of the post-course written reflection illustrates that after the course, the participant reflected on the development of their cultural knowledge from various perspectives, along with the peer feedback they received after their oral presentation.

#### Excerpt (3)

On the Internet including Google, there is a limitation of available information, so I had to research unofficial sites such as Blog or references though it was not official and a little unreliable. I tried to read and compare many materials to improve the reliability of my contents. (*Journal 4*, Participant 8, English original)

#### Excerpt (4)

I was embarrassed when some questions that I haven't thought about while researching and preparing for my presentation on my own were raised in group work.

In the meantime, I guess I have somehow developed some thinking skills like considering beyond my own perspective while research. (*Written Reflection 2*, Participant 2, English translated)

Students also developed analytic and researching skills while browsing many websites related to their cultural topics. Excerpt 5 of the journal data also demonstrates that at the last stage of the sessions (Week 15) the participant edited their final outcomes (education in Brazil) by researching appropriate information. Excerpt 6 of the post-course written reflection illustrates that after the course, the student reflected on the process of raising issues on the cultural theme (politics in Brazil) by browsing many websites, analyzing the collected cultural information, and raising appropriate issues with reliable content.

#### Excerpt (5)

This week is final week of this project. We finalized the presentation for up-loading on the cafe. Also, I spent much time to search appropriate and useful information for questions. I have been responsible for the part of education in Brazil, and it was a little difficult to find more deepen information and data for answering the questions. (*Journal 30*, Participant 8, English original)

#### Excerpt (6)

When I researched Brazil, I found raising issues of the country took a long time and was difficult. In contrast to its background, bringing up an issue of the country needed finding the most current issue in the country, and collecting its reliable information and resources from a considerable amount of information. (*Written Reflection 6*, Participant 6, English translated)

PBL further helped students' cooperative skills, such as negotiating and interpersonal skills through the incorporation of group work. The following excerpt from a post-course written reflection illustrates that the participant developed competence in giving presentations by cooperating (e.g., rehearsing and practicing their group presentation and exchanging feedback in their group), negotiating the time necessary for the rehearsal, and managing the overall process of their group presentation, with their group members.

#### Excerpt (7)

In this week, our group spent much time rehearsing our presentation finally. At first, I thought we didn't need to rehearse because it took much time to do this. However, while practicing the presentation in group, we checked each other's overall presentation from the gestures to loudness or tone of voices, to each material such as visual images, charts, or statistics. Thanks to this rehearsal, I could know that my supporting chart is weak to explain my topic, so I revised it and made my presentation more clear and stable. In addition, in my Brazil group, we arranged time to meet together for the rehearsal before our presentation and distributed each role appropriately. Also, I could make my thoughts and ideas more organized by making a presentation, searching visual images and

revising my scripts. I am confident with my presentation. (*Written Reflection 8*, Participant 8, English original)

These findings are consistent with those of previous studies on PBL's metacognitive skills development (Beckett, 2002, 2005; Beckett & Miller, 2006; Moss & Duzer, 1998).

## 2) Language Skills Practice

Another frequent subtheme among the positive aspects of project work was language practice (23 entries in total). This includes the practice of the four language skills and vocabulary, as well as the integration of language skills.

Excerpt (8)

I read and wrote while preparing PPT. Then, presented to the class what I prepared for. Also I listened to other groups' oral presentations. By doing these, I myself felt that this course integrated four language skills in the actual classroom. (*Written Reflection 4*, Participant 4, English translated)

This echoes the claim that PBL can promote the practice of overall language skills (Fried-Booth, 2002; Moss & Duzer, 1998; Stoller, 1997). Furthermore, the language practice occurred in the teacher-centered language intervention sessions for the writing of project outcomes and delivering oral presentations (see Table 1). Learning about English logic (e.g., general and specific statements) and an aspect of sociolinguistic competence (e.g., register) in writing and speaking are an example. The following excerpt shows the teacher-centered language support contributed to the student's project, specifically, writing and speaking.

Excerpt (9)

I would have been lost for a longer time if the professor hadn't taught how to use key words and provided a list of useful web sites. While researching, the most important thing I learned was searching by using key words appropriately and providing visual materials of the facts such as tables and graphs to support my writing. During the discussion session of the oral presentation, weak logic flows in my presentation were all uncovered for the class questions. I provided related feedbacks repeatedly and accordingly revised my project many times. Through this process, I was able to complete my writing. This is what I learned. (*Written Reflection 10*, Participant 10, English translated)

While engaging in language practice, some even showed their willingness and determination to continue study English, and believed that the ongoing language practice in PBL would be helpful to prepare for the teacher employment test.

## 3) Student-Centered Active Learning

Another factor to the positive perceptions is stu-

dent-centered active learning (17 entries). Specifically, the student-centered approach was embodied in several activities, including the teacher's language interventions, current issues of C1, C2 and other world cultures, the discussion session in the presentation, and questions and answers in the presentation. This factor included autonomous learning, cooperative learning, learning responsibility, and the promotion of knowledge development. The following excerpt from the post-course written reflections demonstrate that students developed projects autonomously and independently involving individual, group, and whole-class activities.

Excerpt (10)

This time was hard but was helpful for learning other culture. In particular, in the discussion session, it was the most valuable part for me. Because I was responsible for answering a lot of questions, I had to prepare thoroughly and understand what I presented deeply, which encouraged me to search and master my part much more. Moreover, the discussion played a role partly as a stimulus to me. In other words, it made me ask more questions and think about the topic more deeply and critically. (*Written Reflection 8*, Participant 8, English original)

The students' active suggestions on the course in their weekly journals is another example. Some students wanted textbooks on C1 and other world cultures, such as those provided for C2. Some suggested that the project-based cultural learning course needed a period longer than the current eight weeks. Others actively suggested alternatives in details related to their difficulties, such as the provision of an extra class about their inadequate research skills. This apparently active student engagement in the course syllabus was a key aspect of student-centered learning, "an emphasis on negotiation, the intertwining of method, syllabus and teaching," as well as "its firm foundations of teacher-student interaction" (Hall, 1999, p. 17).

## 4) Integration of PBL Theory and Practice

Another factor was integration of PBL theory and practice (16 entries in total). This included the following. First, students considered the key elements of PBL theories through their project experiences, e.g., a student-centered approach to group work. Second, students reflected on the approach and its application in their own classes. Finally, their own experiences in the theory would help them in their preparation for the teacher employment test later, which comprises questions about ELT theory and practice. The following two excerpts from post-course written reflections demonstrate that the pre-service teachers became aware that they were in a dual role of student and teacher in the process of interpreting and shaping their PBL experiences.

Excerpt (11)

It seems like I couldn't learn more than any other class. During the discussion session, I learned to revise some

parts of my presentation that I missed. This helped me construct my parts more deeply and widely. Through this process, I learned many that traditional classes couldn't provide. I researched information of my part on my own, learned about the part deeply, constructed it logically, and revised it by consulting group members and the class. This is a seriously meaningful class. (*Written Reflection 7*, Participant 7, English translated)

#### Excerpt (12)

It seems like I couldn't learn more than any other class while I myself had to participate in the class. During the discussion session of the oral presentation, I learned to revise some parts of my presentation that I missed. This helped me construct my parts more deeply and widely. Through this process, I learned many which the traditional lecture typed class of conveying knowledge couldn't provide. I researched information on my part on my own, learned about the part deeply, constructed my part logically, and revised it by asking group members and the classmates. This is a seriously meaningful class. (*Written Reflection 7*, Participant 7, English translated)

With this first-hand PBL experience, students seemed to understand and be equipped to implement the approach such as new principles and classroom practices (Freeman, 1994). Such pre-service teachers' reflective practice combining theory and practice had "a future-oriented trajectory open to learning" (Pennington & Richards, 2016, p. 9).

### 5) Challenges of the PBL Model

Besides PBL's benefits, students considered the project work challenging. The challenging aspects included: many time-consuming tasks (13 out of 38 entries), insufficient language competence (10 out of 38 entries), unfamiliar cultural topics (11 out of 38 entries), and the nature of "student-centeredness" such as autonomous learning (7 out of 38 entries). First, having to complete many time-consuming PBL tasks was a factor that added to their stress (Dolmans et al., 2005). The following excerpt from a written reflection after the course illustrates this issue.

#### Excerpt (13)

In the beginning, I felt this class was stressful and hard because I thought it had many steps and needed much preparation. (*Written reflection 8*, participant 8, English original)

Many tasks were time-consuming, requiring a considerable time to collect the necessary and reliable information from the countless data. Particularly, raising a current issue of their cultural themes was an example. Raising a current issue of their cultural themes is a particular example of this issue. As described above, each cultural theme had its related current theme that the students raised while researching. Raising a cultural issue had many potentials, such as critical reading and writing, and critical thinking skills. Nonetheless, issues were raised involving researching background information and suggesting alternatives.

These tasks were time-consuming.

Second, the students' insufficient language skills, such as public speech, pronunciation, vocabulary, and writing, have led to feelings of overload and, moreover, ineffective conduction of project tasks. The following excerpt from the journal data indicates that in the middle of the course (Week 10), the student prepared and practiced their oral presentation, yet they continued to feel incompetent in their public speaking.

#### Excerpt (14)

I am often worried that when making a presentation, my pronunciation or accent makes audiences difficult to understand. I have sometimes practiced the presentation by recording my speeches or talking in front of mirrors. However, I don't feel confident with or satisfied with my presentation. I always [feel insecure] with my speaking [in] English. (*Journal 4*, Participant 8, English original)

Blumenfeld et al. (1991) stress the importance of students' preparedness for a PBL environment. This includes specific skills to explore information, construct their knowledge, and present their knowledge in writing and speaking of final outcomes. Thus, competence in overall language skills is crucial for PBL. Meanwhile, students were insufficiently prepared in language skills, particularly in writing and speaking. An important point is that all participants were presenting orally in English for the first time. This apparently resulted from the past focus of language education on grammar and reading.

Third, the unfamiliar cultural themes and rare topics that students have researched have diminished their understanding of the cultures. Politics-related terminologies and words are an example, since even in Korean they were confusing. The gap between a country's constitution and the reality of its society is another example. The following excerpt from journal data demonstrates that in the middle of the PBL sessions (Week 11), vocabulary in relation to the cultural theme (politics of Syria) and the different cultural background (the system of politics in Syria) slowed their comprehension and writing.

#### Excerpt (15)

It's extremely tough to write about the background of the Syrian political landscape. First, the terms are so difficult and even those in Korean are hard to comprehend. Plus, the Constitution and its practice are too different to understand. (*Journal 25*, Participant 11, English translated)

Dealing with rare topics and sources were another difficulty. The cultural information about Syria was an example. A student, unable to find the required information, underwent struggles. After considerable time spent in seeking help from people in Syria through social networks, he was able to obtain some.

Finally, the nature of student-centered PBL was little accustomed to most students, which consisted a challenge and resulted in some difficulties, such as with autonomous learning and being responsible for their own learning

process. Excerpt 16 from the journal data indicates that at the beginning of the PBL sessions (Week 10) the student felt challenged from the nature of autonomous learning in PBL that they were unaccustomed to. Excerpt 17 from the written reflection after the course illustrates that the student understood PBL approach in theory prior to the course, and then when they experienced the approach, found its ongoing student-centeredness demanding.

Excerpt (16)

I have never learned about PBL by myself during my schooling, so it was a little difficult to do all things by myself—from researching information and to writing my own drafts. (Journal 2, Participant 8, English original)

Excerpt (17)

I came across project-based learning in the culture learning course. Even though I learned the approach in ELT subjects, I felt strange to a degree during the course. In comparison to other pedagogical subjects, this student-centered approach required relatively more assignments and challenging oral presentations. (*Written Reflection 7*, Participant 7, English translated)

These findings are consistent with those of previous studies (Beckett & Miller, 2006; M. Kim, 2018; M. Kim & Pollard, 2017). Regarding the cultural stances of the approach, student-centered group work is widely used in North American ELT settings (Holliday, 1994) whereas, in most other ELT settings, such as Korea, teachers are generally expected to control the classroom and deliver lectures (Warschauer, 2000). Accordingly, there is a philosophical and cultural mismatch of educational cultures (Beckett, 2005) between the student-centered approach and students' expectation on teachers. The mismatch apparently occurred in the initial stages of this study.

## V. CONCLUSION

To experience and learn about C1, C2 and other world cultures, the present study investigated culture learning through PBL in pre-service teacher education. The results were the following. First, students showed intercultural knowledge construction by 1) producing four projects, each for a cultural topic on C1, C2, and other world cultures; and 2) expressing that they built deep intercultural knowledge, understood the interwoven nature of culture, and developed genuine interest in the cultures. Second, the study found four perceived PBL's benefits: metacognitive skills practice, language skills practice, student-centered active learning, and integration of PBL theory and practice. Finally, the following PBL's challenges were identified: many time-consuming tasks, insufficient language competence, unfamiliar cultural topics, and being unaccustomed to student-centeredness. The findings of the study suggest that PBL can contribute to content-based language learning (e.g., a culture learning course in pre-service Korean English language teacher education)

as a tool with its underpinning principles, i.e., constructivism and experiential education, through a heavy focus on student-centeredness, by deciding and researching cultural themes from their interests, reflecting on cultural information, exercising critical thinking skills in the process of intercultural knowledge development, and constructing their intercultural understandings.

The PBL study can provide some pedagogical implications. One is that providing language development contributes to the successful completion of PBL within EFL contexts (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Alan & Stoller, 2005). For example, the teacher in this study provided the class with appropriate language development through four language intervention sessions between the stages of PBL, i.e., summary of C2; researching on C1 and other world cultures; writing of C1 and other world cultures; and oral presentation of C1, C2 and other world cultures. Based on their language proficiency levels and interests, which the teacher learned from previous teaching experiences and also through communication with the students in their weekly journals, the teacher modified the syllabus and provided lessons on the necessary English skills, i.e., writing and speaking. Considering the challenging tasks of writing and speaking that the students expressed in this study, the teacher's language lessons focusing on the practice of these two language skills was expected to help the students practice the skills.

Another example is the facilitative teacher role appropriate specifically for EFL contexts. The teacher in this study was incorporating a teacher-centered approach (e.g., the language intervention sessions) and this appears significant in an application of PBL, a strong form of the student-centered approach, in the EFL context. The teachers in most EFL settings are expected to exercise authority and be an expert. Thus, the introduction of student-centered work has the potential to alienate students who are unfamiliar with the approach. When students are expected to work and learn independently, they may become confused and frustrated. In this study, incorporating a degree of the teacher-centered approaches in language development, e.g., five language intervention sessions seemingly contributed to the students' completion of their projects. In other words, implementing PBL with a degree of the teacher-centered approach to language development on the learners' language levels and needs seems to be linguistically and culturally appropriate (M. Kim, 2015). The facilitative teacher role in PBL within an EFL context like Korea will be discussed later in this section.

The other is that providing explicit instructions with feasible, manageable tasks is crucial to implement PBL, which is new to students (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). Considering that the student-centered approach is unfamiliar to most students in EFL settings, the approach can alienate students and jeopardize their learnings as shown in the challenges the students expressed. Discussing this issue, Beckett (2002) states that "the teacher may have wonderful and important goals to achieve, but if their students do not see the benefit of what and how they are asked to

learn, their goals cannot be achieved and their educational agendas may be jeopardized” (p. 64). Thus, teacher’s preparation, in which heavy demanding tasks are divided into small tasks and unfamiliar activities are presented in an explicit way, would reduce the possible confusion of a new approach (Doff, 1991). Providing a model web project at the beginning of the course and hands-on lessons on research skills as suggested by students would be an example.

This paper concludes by suggesting some research implications of project work. One is that, considering the limitation of the study, e.g., only eight weeks within a preservice teacher program, the study would expect future research to expand its application over a one-year period. For example, the first semester would focus on the development of relatively small-sized C2 projects and the second semester would expand the scope of the projects in terms of size and content, i.e., C1 and other world cultures. The other is that conceptualizing the changing teacher role as a facilitator needs to be investigated. The teacher in this study played a facilitator role but not an expert of intercultural knowledge. A facilitating teacher encourages student initiation and responsibility for their learning (Underhill, 1999) and the concept of the teacher role as facilitator varies according to the context. Considering some possible issues on the teacher role would help implement PBL in various teaching contexts. The issues include: students’ strong preferences toward teacher-centered learning (Beckett, 2002), low English proficiency classes, and the combination of the teacher as a facilitator of cooperative learning and the teacher as authority in the transmission of language and content knowledge (O’Dwyer, 2006). Through such attempts, there seems to be scope for improvement in PBL applications.

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## APPENDIX 1

### A Sample Journal Entry

#### 1) What did I do?

Checking the presentation and script together finally, and presenting L1 culture about education; rehearsing together and giving or taking feedback about the overall presentation and content; planning what we should do and arranging the schedule (when we meet, the deadline of keyword lists and making presentation, etc.); distributing each roles (who collect the key words or visual images).

#### 2) What information about the topic did I already know?

Brazil had been a colony of Portugal under the imperialism age. As a result, most of the country's social system – for example, schools system, politics, or military service, was ruled by Portugal. Brazil has four educational levels, which is similar to Korea.

#### 3) What did I learn?

In Brazil, the inequality of education is the biggest problem, which leads eventually to the economic inequality in the society. In particular, public schools in Brazil are suffering from the poor quality of education because of the lack of supports from the government. In public schools, many teachers didn't get a teacher degree which is necessary to be a teacher, which has a bad effect on student's learning and lessons.

#### 4) Examples

One survey conducted by OECD asked teachers that they had been trained a teacher program or completed the teacher curriculum – it is essential to be a professional teacher in Brazil – and then reported the surprising results. The results indicated that about 25% of teachers in public sectors didn't complete the curriculum, and this figure is much lower than Korea, where 96.1% of teachers had finished this curriculum.

#### 5) Troubles? Questions?

Finding sufficient supporting visual charts or statistics; speaking with intonation, stress patterns and nonverbal languages is difficult; changing the drafts into spoken scripts, in especially regarding vocabularies. I want to use easy words but at the same time don't like to repeat same words because they were redundant.

#### 6) Others: No, Thank You

## APPENDIX 2

### A Sample Reflection Note

I didn't know the country, Brazil except for its location or short history. However, this activity was helpful for developing my knowledge. Moreover, I could improve the skill to research necessary information and insight for distinguishing whether it is necessary or unnecessary because PBL requires examining much information and then selecting among it. It was writing scripts or drafts which I spent most of time during this project. Firstly, writing drafts had to have a kind of format such as introduction, main body including topic sentences, and conclusion. This demands logical thinking and clear supporting details. In addition, in English, there are many vocabularies to express one meaning, but they are a little different from each other in terms of contexts or implied meanings. It is difficult for me to find the appropriate words in certain contexts, but this activity helps me to extend the knowledge about when, and how one word is used and which the word is expressed with. When writing a script, the expressions used were different from a draft because it was used for speaking and explaining with spoken language. This was another hardship for me, but Professor's materials or detailed guides and many trials of self-correction solved this situation. This PBL activity spent much time for a month, but this changed my mind about PBL method. At the first time, I thought it was time-consuming and inefficient because we had a lot of things to do for a short time. However, after participating in this activity myself, I felt it was useful not only for encouraging students including me to participate in the class actively but also for understanding the lecture deeply by finding information, making a presentation, exchanging feedback, or discussing the topic. Moreover, I want to adapt this method in my future class simply during the lesson or content about culture.

### APPENDIX 3

#### Sample PowerPoint Slides on Education in Syria: Background and Issues

# SYRIAN CULTURE

Lee, Y., Jong, H., Lee, M., and Seo, Y.

## Contents

1. Politics
2. Religion
3. Ethnicity
4. Education

Background

# EDUCATION

Educational Value  
History  
Educational Ladder

Background - Education value


## Arab society



• Syrian Education put emphasis on the transmission of the traditional culture

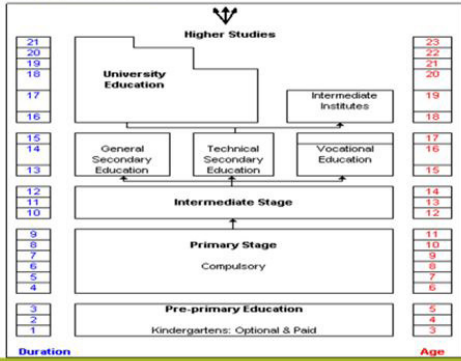
Background - History

## Ba'ath Party



- An educational system was created under the leadership of the Ba'ath Socialist Party.
- The Arabic word 'Ba'ath' means 'revival' or 'reconstruction'.

Background - Education Ladder



Duration	Level	Age		
21	Higher Studies	23		
20		University Education	22	
19			Intermediate Institutes	21
18				20
17	Intermediate Stage	19		
16		General Secondary Education	18	
15			Technical Secondary Education	17
14	Vocational Education	16		
13		Primary Stage	15	
12	Compulsory		14	
11			Pre-primary Education	13
10	Kindergartens: Optional & Paid	12		
9			11	
8			10	
7			9	
6			8	
5			7	
4			6	
3			5	
2			4	
1			3	

ISSUE

# EDUCATION

Educational Emergency

## Issue - Educational Emergency



- About 2400 schools in Syria were destroyed in bombing, 1500 schools are used as shelters for the refugees
- In March, Khalid, seven-year-old, went to school as usual to take exam at 9 am, after school he ran to the playground with his friends, at that time two missiles fell to the school. Five of his friends lost lives and 50 students injured. Khalid has lost his right hand in this incident.