Integrating Self-Generated Online Projects in an ELT Class at a Thai University during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Kornwipa Poonpon

English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, 123 Mittraphap Rd., Muang, Khon Kaen, 40002 Thailand

E-mail: korpul@kku.ac.th

Abstract: This paper reports how self-generated online projects were integrated into an English language teaching (ELT) class at a Thai university and their impact on pre-service teachers’ experience during the unexpected COVID-19 situation. A qualitative approach was used to describe the integration of self-generated online projects as final group projects and report the learners’ opinions towards their online project-based learning. The participants were 58 pre-service English language teachers who took the Linguistics and Language Teaching course at a Thai university during the first semester of the 2020 academic year. The course initially required the students to organize an English teaching camp at a rural school after they had learned ELT theories and approaches throughout the semester. However, due to the COVID-19 spread, the learners’ original project had to be shifted to creating online English teaching. The online projects were designed to be self-generated, encouraging learners to use their English teaching knowledge and skills to design online lessons for rural school students. The project-based multimedia learning approach (Simkins et al., 2002) was adopted to guide the self-generated projects. The learners’ opinion towards integrating the online projects during the difficult situation was elicited using a reflection form and a small group interview. The findings reveal project integration procedures, the challenges the students faced, their ways of dealing with those challenges, and the advantages and disadvantages of the integration. The students used a variety of working strategies to collaborate their work. They admitted that the COVID-19 lockdown, project time limitations, and limited technology skills delayed their work. However, they believed that the online projects enhanced their teaching and digital skills, increased motivation as well as problem-solving and collaboration skills.

Keywords: project-based learning, online learning, pre-service English language teachers, Thai university, COVID-19