

Project-Based Learning (PBL) Through Magazine Making

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What is PBL?

Project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional approach that presents learners with an authentic problem or challenge that involves collaboration, extensive research, and reflection/assessment in order to overcome the problem/challenge. In PBL, the focus is on the process of doing the project rather than the project itself, encouraging a deeper level of engagement, cultivating a deeper knowledge of content as well as a wider variety of skills.

Why PBL for SLA?

Advantages of PBL:

- Student-centered
- Promotes active learning
- Meaningful/Authentic
- Fosters learner autonomy
- Interdisciplinary
- Produces tangible results

In second language acquisition (SLA), PBL can be utilized to integrate language with content and skills. The L2 becomes a means for overcoming a challenge, and as the learner investigates a topic, they will encounter language content (words, phrases and grammar) within a meaningful and relevant framework. PBL can also encourage the use of all four major language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

PBL in motion: Magazine Making (Why?)

Challenging Problem/Question: the task requires creating a magazine that is appealing both visually and in terms of content. Also, the body articles must be written with the target audience in mind, so that the content is both meaningful and accessible.

Sustained inquiry: students must do in-depth research related to their groups' topic of choice. This may involve in-person interviews and conducting surveys in addition to traditional literature review.

Authenticity: the goal was to create and publish a magazine that will address a real issue concerning university life. The authentic nature of the problem makes the learning process more meaningful and relevant to the learner.

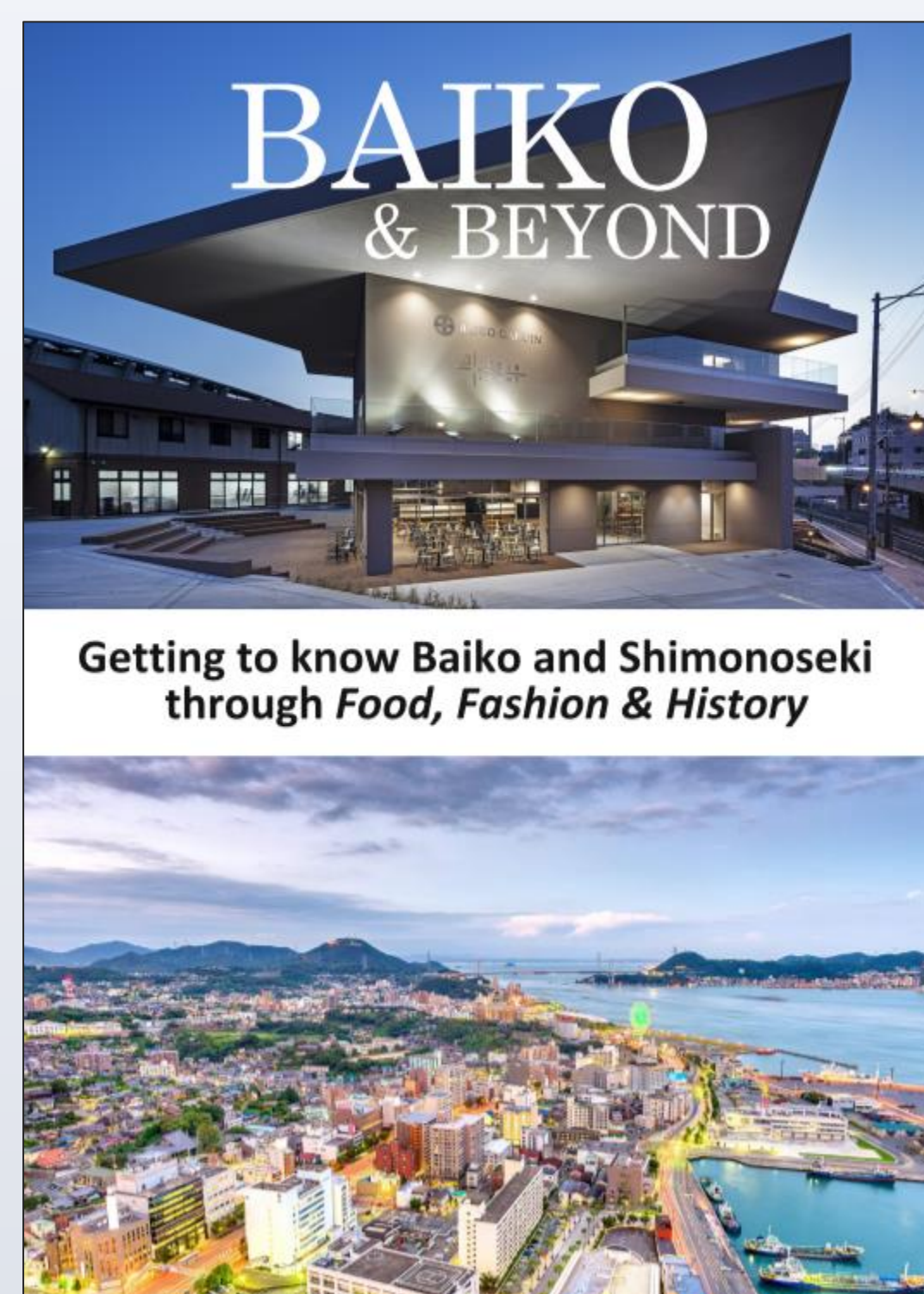
Student Voice & Choice: each group was given the choice to select their own topic as long as it fits within the overall theme of the magazine. They also had full autonomy in terms of layout and design choices. Lastly, each student is assigned a specific role (e.g. grammar editing, layout/design, photos, etc.) within his/her group.

Reflection: throughout the project, each group is required to reflect on and present their experiences and findings on a regular basis. They can monitor and evaluate their experience, using the feedback they receive from their peers.

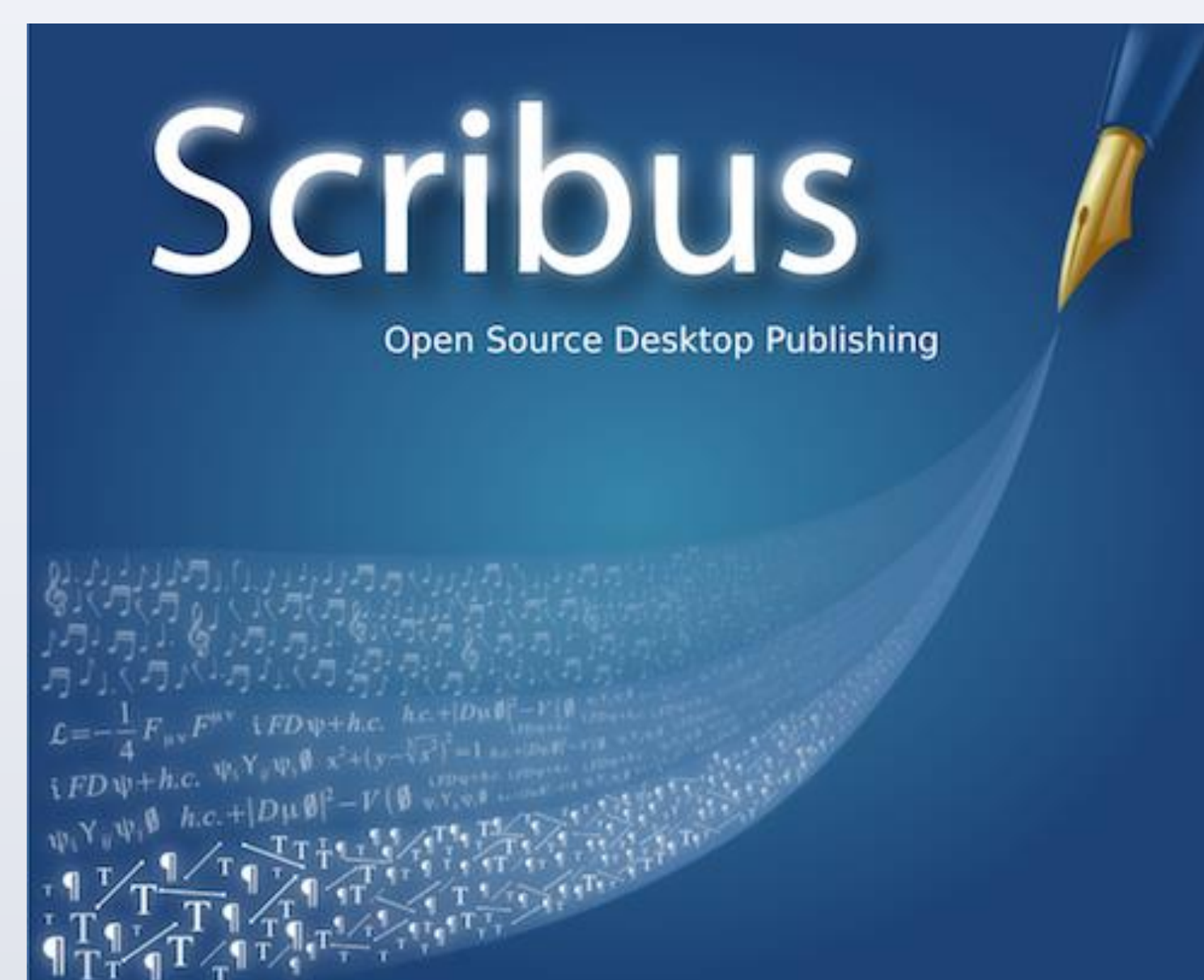
Critique & Revision: during presentations, each group is required to provide feedback in addition to the feedback that's provided by the instructor. Also, the instructor provides continual guidance throughout the project.

Public Product: the goal is to not just create but publish a magazine that will be made available to other students through the cooperation of the university library.

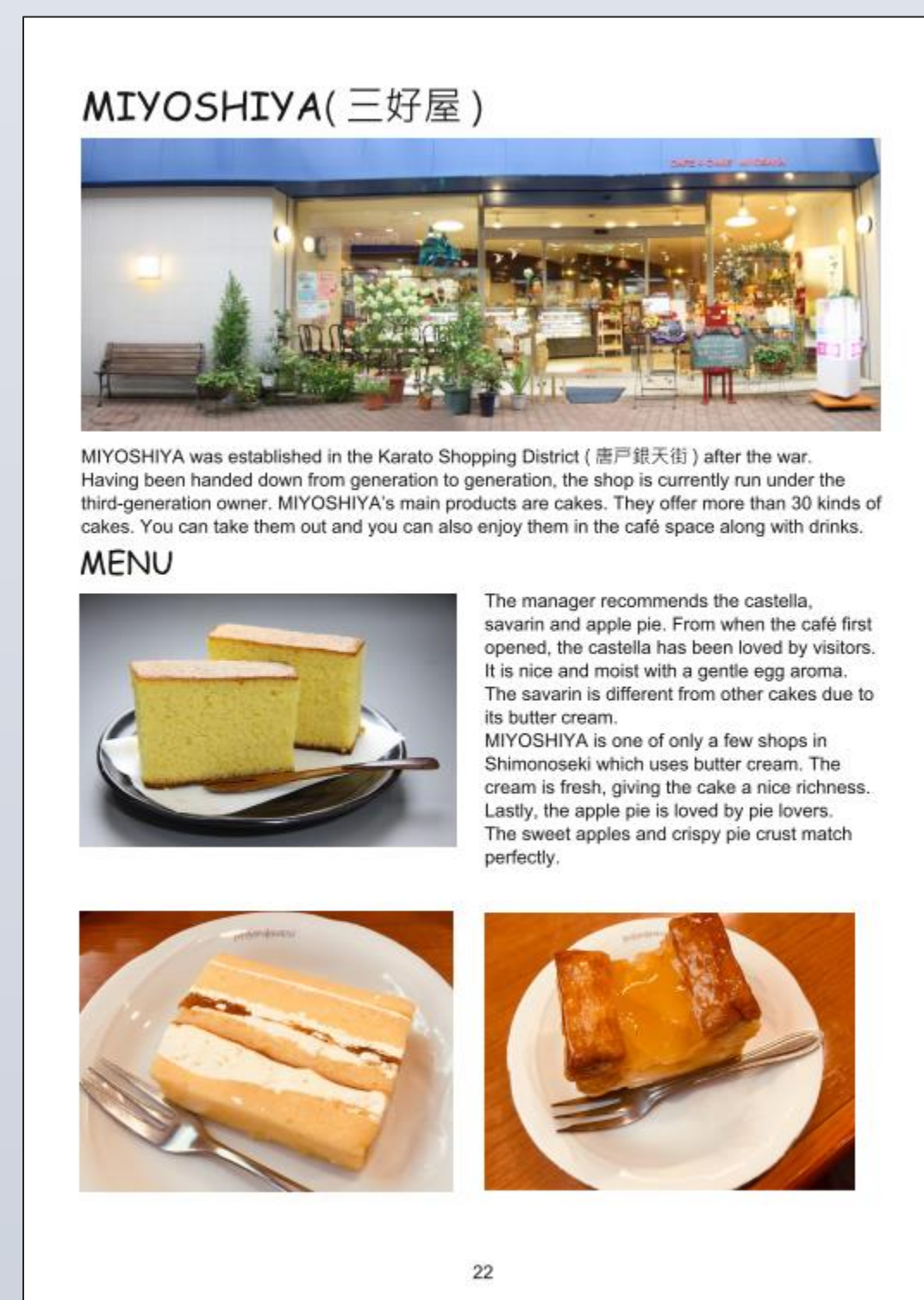
(Larmer, Setting the Standard for Project-Based Learning)



Getting to know Baiko and Shimomoseki through Food, Fashion & History



Open Source Desktop Publishing



MIYOSHIYA (三好屋)

MIYOSHIYA was established in the Karato Shopping District (鹿野地区) after the war. Having been handed down from generation to generation, the shop is currently run under the third-generation owner. MIYOSHIYA's main products are cakes. They offer more than 30 kinds of cakes. You can take them out and you can also enjoy them in the cafe space along with drinks.

MENU



The manager recommends the castella, saffron and apple pie. From when the cafe first opened, the castella has been loved by visitors. It is nice and moist with a gentle egg aroma. The saffron is different from other cakes due to its butter cream.



MIYOSHIYA is one of only a few shops in Shimomoseki which uses butter cream. The cream is fresh, giving the cake a nice richness. Lastly, the apple pie is loved by pie lovers. The saffron apples and crisp pie crust match perfectly.

Akama Shrine

This is Akama shrine, which is located in Shimomoseki city. This shrine was designated as a tangible cultural property of Japan. It is only a two-minute walk from the Karato bus stop. Recently, it has become one of the most popular spiritual places in Shimomoseki as a shrine that provides luck for the easy delivery of babies, better luck, being safety of the family, luck against drowning and the protection of the nation. Akama shrine is also called "Sutenmon" because worshippers can receive power from the Dragon God, a guardian angel of the sea. However, this shrine used to be a sacred temple for Emperor Antoku. Emperor Antoku prayed to Amida Buddha with his little hands put together, but Ni-no Ama said this to the Emperor to comfort him: "There is a city under the waves." Then she jumped into the rapid stream of the Danmura while holding the Emperor against her body, thus ending Emperor Antoku's life at the youngest age among the emperors of Japan. Also, the temple is the set of a horror story called "Mimashiki Houtchi". It became widely known after being chosen as one of the ghost stories in Japan by Koizumi Yagumo.



And there is a tomb of the faira clan next to Houtchi's statue. So the area is filled with an eerie atmosphere.



MENU

This time, I had kikkacha-chai (紅茶), the Taiwan sweets set and almond jelly. Kikkacha-chai served in a glass pot, which had many beautiful flowers inside. On the sweets plate, there were two chocolate waffles, a few almonds and small almond jelly. The unique Taiwan bitter floor of the tea matched with the sweets as well as the taste of the flowers. The almond jelly had the right amount of sweetness and was very smooth. It was the best almond jelly I had ever eaten. The Taiwanese boss which were recommended by the owner were the bishochin (碧石), yamoyamochi (夜夜餅) and pasochu (ぱそちゅ) please try it.



HOURS&ADDRESS
Monday ~ Saturday
AM11:30 ~ PM2:00
Sunday&Public Holiday
AM11:30 ~ PM5:30
Regular Holiday: Thursday
506, Imasuecho
Shimomoseki-cho, Yamaguchi,
750-0064, Japan
TEL: 086-3623-8117
Instagram: hotoke_baiko



Q1: What's your theme for today?
A: Cool looking latte conditine.
Q2: What's the favorite part of your outfit today?
A: Silver and square toe ballet shoes.
Q3: What kind of brand do you like?
A: Nothing. I always buy things that are cheap and I really like.
Q4: Is there anybody whose style you follow?
A: My mother. She is very fashionable and has the same favorite type of clothes.
Q5: What's a characteristic that defines you?
A: In terms of my fashion, I don't follow trends. I follow my own fashion sense. In terms of myself, it is my smile. As I go about my daily life, I try to remind myself to smile. Moreover, I cherish my friends who accept me just as I am.

Magazine Making PBL (schedule)

Phase 1 (prepare)

Duration: 3 weeks

- Set the stage (explain PBL)
- Set magazine theme
- Form groups
- Choose group topics
- Decide member roles
- Scribus tutorial
- Develop research plan
- Present plan

Phase 2 (research)

Duration: 5 weeks

- Research tutorial (Quantitative/Qualitative)
- Conduct surveys
- Conduct interviews
- Literature review
- Collect data
- Analyze data
- Present findings
- Reflect on findings

Phase 3 (create)

Duration: 5 weeks

- Choose layout/design
- Choose titles
- Choose graphics
- Create table of contents
- Write body articles
- Present content
- The editing process

Phase 4 (present)

Duration: 2 weeks

- Compile all the pages
- Final edit (layout consistency)
- Number pages
- Decide paper quality
- Decide
- Print/Publish
- Present in class
- Display to public

Project Details

Course: seminar (research)
Grade level: 4th year
No. of students: 17
No. of groups: 4 (4-5 members per group)
Duration: one semester (15 weeks)

Result: at the end of the semester, a 56-page magazine was printed. A copy was given to each participating student, and other copies were placed in the university library and in other locations for perusal.

Challenges in PBL

Time constraints: the nature of PBL requires for a challenge to be presented which involves an extended time of consideration and deliberation.

Background constraints: the learner may be unfamiliar with the theory and workings behind PBL. It may take a long time for the learner to adjust to such a setting, where they are required to take ownership over their own learning process.

Lack of knowledge/skills: the completion of such projects requires higher-order thinking skills that go beyond rote-learning. Learners must analyze, evaluate and create in order to successfully accomplish the tasks set before them. In addition, the learner needs an L2 proficiency level that's high enough to accomplish such tasks. Lastly, projects such as making a magazine requires one to be familiar with publishing software (Scribus in this case).

Variability: due to the complex nature of the challenges, variability in problems and obstacles that arise is inevitable. This can make the PBL experience very discouraging and overwhelming at times.

Conclusions

In light of the challenges mentioned above, there are many considerations that need to be made before embarking on a PBL project. Despite these challenges, however, advances in technology and the globalization of society has made such types of learning more relevant and feasible than ever. By properly setting the stage and ensuring that the learners are equipped with the foundational skills needed to accomplish such projects, PBL can be an effective means in cultivating language content and skills in an engaging manner in any language classroom.

References

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NOTE: The schedule above is based on a 15-week seminar course that meets for 90 minutes per week.