Creating a BYOD Tour Around Poznan, Poland

A Location-based Project for Teenage Students

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Abstract—This paper focuses on a project that encompasses place-based learning, location-based learning and problem-based learning in teaching of English as a foreign language. It shows how a project of this type can increase student motivation and help teenagers embrace local culture.

It originated when the author of this paper was introduced to the Wandering platform and the Experiencity platform by one of the co-creators of the former, Ms. Talila Yehiel, a museum expert and a designer of tailor-made sites for museum visits. After examining the various options of the Experiencity platform on her own, and upon developing two walks: The Past and the Present: Jewish Heritage Walk in Bielsko-Biala and Karl Korn Walk, the author undertook to test it with her teenage students, designing a completely new location-based activity: Be Active and Explore Poznan.

As recommended by Piaget, the author challenged her students and was a guide and facilitator rather than a lecturer. She made the students work together and find answers and solutions to the problems posed. She also trusted Vygotsky and Dewey in assuming that learners are social individuals and place-based education helps "students connect with their particular corners of the world" (Woodhouse and Knapp, [9]).

The walk demonstrates interaction of teenagers with and in space: it inspects the particular characteristics of a place, it is cross-curricular and intrinsically empirical, and it forms a relation between place, self and community (Woodhouse and Knapp, [9]). It also uses local environment to make students active citizens, contributing to the society (compare [7], p.7).

Keywords—location-based learning, place-based learning, BYOD, project-based learning

1 Introduction: Knowledge Acquisition Model Assumed

The author of this paper believes that cognitive development and knowledge acquisition cannot result solely from independent exploration or peer interaction, as seemingly seen by Piaget, or from social interactions and guided learning, as viewed by Vygotsky in his theory of Zone of Proximal Development. She tends to hold, much like Karpov [5], that both independent exploration and guided learning are equally

crucial when exploring the world and making assumptions about it. This belief formed the general grounds for the project she conducted with her teenage students: one that encompassed placed-based learning, location-based learning and problem-based learning in teaching of English as a foreign language.

1.1 Place-Based Learning Location-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning

In his book from 2004 [7], Sobel defines place-based learning in the following way:

Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts (…) across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances' students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens.

In her previous work with junior and senior high school students, the author of this paper managed to prove the validity of this type of place-based learning, working on a subjective guide to the city of Bielsko-Biala, Poland, and the region [2].

Guidebook project activities included, among others, making a presentation featuring each student's favorite (directly experienced) spot in the city and writing a note on a critical problem the city was facing – in the student's view (to be accessed at https://drive.google.com/open?id=0Bz8PrIlAHKoLcnNzQ1plMFBiRUE). The individualised and subjective approach and students' vested interest in the tasks resulted in the teenagers' fresh outlook on their place on earth, linked them to their hometown, allowed them to explore it and understand it, as well as develop stronger ties with the community. It also made the learners more conscious, caring and active citizens.

Having had that educational experience, the author was not afraid to experiment with a more daring and technologically complex project involving new technologies: a BYOD hike around the city.

It meant employing location-based learning, as seen by Yehiel, Ziv and Lachmish (the latter two being developers of the Wandering platform for location-based learning, discussed e.g. in Barak's and Ziv's article from 2013 [1]): one mediated by mobile platforms and most succinctly explained as "go somewhere and do something there". Incorporating location-based learning meant, among others, that in addition to extensive research on the city, the project was to include its active exploration assisted by mobile devices.

Naturally, problem-based learning (as seen by Hmelo, C. E., & Evensen, D. H. [4]) was also involved. Educational process placed the student in the center of attention. Even though it was the teacher who came up with the broad idea, it was the students who narrowed it down. Studying and learning occurred in a small group of five, and the teacher was a guide, and not a lecturer or the sole source of knowledge. Some crucial aspects of the learning process were: problem-solving and self-directed student learning, and an added value was the project tasks' culmination in an attractive, shareable product.

1.2 The City as an Integral Element of Location-Based Education

The city was a crucial, fundamental constituent of location-based learning. It was meant to make the Wandering Teen (both the designer/creator of the hike, and its addressee) explore his/her identity by carefully examining not only what s/he is able to perceive visually, but also what s/he can hear, smell, touch, or taste in the city, while being open to the unexpected: the adventure of experience.

The city, like a literary work, or in fact any artwork, was to be "read" critically and interpreted. The process is aptly described by four questions asked by the instructors of the What Is Reading the City course (http://www.eucourses.eu/en/courses-available/reading-the-city), taught by Elderberry AB (Hagersten, Sweden), a teacher-training company specializing in urban studies and the use of museums and heritage sites in lifelong learning programs, with which the author of the paper collaborated on an EU Erasmus+ project.

The questions are:

- who "wrote" the city
- who did they "write" it for
- why did they "write" it
- who "reads" it now

Within the author's project, the students were to "re-read", "reinterpret" and "re-write" the already well-known locations, which are thus almost ignored or disregarded. They were to accomplish the titanic task with a particular person in view: a person who, in turn, was to "re-read", "reinterpret" and "rewrite" the city according to their clues.

2 Testing Online Tools Used to Complete the Project

The author was introduced to two online platforms supporting location-based education, the Wandering and the Experiencity, by one of the creators of the former, Ms. Talila Yehiel, museum expert and designer of special tailor-made sites for museum visits. She learned that the then-free-to-use Wandering platform (which, to the best of the author's knowledge, is now freemium), linked with Experiencity, gives one an opportunity to design various place-based activities, such as indoor puzzles, scavenger hunts, place races, posters, interactive images, etc.

Upon examining the platform and experimenting with its various functionalities, the author decided that an interactive hike (called a "route") was an intriguing option, as it allowed for a visitor's personalized interaction with the city and thus, for a very particular "reading" of it.

The author created several stations in the city where she then lived (Bielsko-Biala in the south of Poland), and she designed two walks: The Past and the Present: Jewish Heritage Walk in Bielsko-Biala (http://experien.city/viewExperienceDetailsUser.php?idexp=2794) and Karl Korn Walk (http://experien.city/viewExperienceDetailsUser.php?idexp=2793). Both routes were focused on Jewish Heritage, as being a newcom-

er to the city, the author found it interesting that in the year 1931 Jewish population constituted 20% of the whole population of Bielsko (one of the two towns which were merged into one in the year 1950) and, to a significant extent, Jewish heritage was preserved and protected against damage.

The first walk took the visitor through places as diverse as a graveyard and a wall decorated with street art murals. It invited the tourist to perform certain tasks that allowed him/her to get to know Jewish culture and traditions, and to understand the importance of Jewish heritage for Bielsko-Biala. The latter one, on the other hand, featured a famous Bielsko-Biala's architect of Jewish descent, Karl Korn, whose buildings are among the city's most significant and beautiful landmarks.

While creating the walks, the author was generously assisted by Ms. Yehiel, who explained that each location chosen by the platform user can be turned into a "station" that consists of four elements: the "go", the "do", the "discuss" and the "info". The first of them gives the visitor directions for him/her to reach a particular place. The second one includes a site-specific task to be performed by the explorer: one that makes the experience very personal and hands-on. The "discuss", in turn, is where the findings or creations related to particular tasks are to be shared with the community. The last section, said Mrs. Yehiel, should provide additional relevant information about the venue: it is the creator who decides what complementary facts his/her target audience should be familiar with to fully appreciate the location and to respond to it.

3 Be Active and Explore

3.1 Origination of an Idea

Upon relocating to a different city, Poznan (in the west of Poland), and being offered a subbing job of an English Instructor in a Youth Cultural Center, the author decided to use the two online platforms with her five teenage students (aged 13-17) to design a completely new city-related route: Be Active and Explore Poznan.

Her aim was to determine whether active involvement in designing an interactive BYOD hike around their hometown can make teens more interested in the metropolis, allow them to look at it from a different perspective, or change their attitude to local culture – possibly ignored, not fully appreciated, or seen as irrelevant and/or obsolete. She also intended to determine whether a project of that kind could be successfully used in cross-curricular foreign language instruction.

Furthermore, as the route creation was an element of a course on English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and so it was conducted in a language that was not native to the students, another aim of the project was to work on the improvement and broadening of students' knowledge of English.

Last but not least, the author wanted to examine whether designing a Wandering walk might result in the development of teenagers' ICT competences and other 21st century skills.

3.2 Implementation of the Project

As recommended by Piaget, the author challenged her students to complete project tasks independently of her, becoming engaged agents who take ownership of their learning process. However, she remained by their side as an assistant and enabler, who made her students work together and find answers and solutions to the problems posed. She trusted Vygotsky and Dewey in that learners are social individuals and, to an extent, knowledge can be created through peer interactions, while students should develop bonds with their particular corners of the world (compare [3], p. 91). She was also aware of the fact that a facilitator needs to help students develop critical and creative thinking and provide scaffolding for them to formulate and assess arguments, generate alternatives, form logical associations and make rational, well-grounded judgements (compare [8]).

The project lasted for approximately six months (it's a rough approximation, as the students were simultaneously involved in other activities), and it consisted of several tasks which let the teens examine Poznan and react to it in a variety of ways.

Firstly, the addressee of the walk was invented, and the students brainstormed appropriate locations for the prospective hiker. This encompassed vast, solid research done by the students, and involved an examination of both offline and online resources. After brainstorming and selecting suitable sites, a map of the senses was created. Next, attractive and interactive activities to be performed in selected locations were designed. Then, the locations were reconstructed on the Wandering platform, and a BYOD tour around the city was structured. Finally, the route was advertised online, tested and improved.

3.3 The Persona is Created

In the year 2016, the author completed the Creative Route of Prof. Sadik-Rozsnyai's (a professor of Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Commerciales d'Angers Ecole de Menagement) Creative Box MOOC offered on the Canvas educational platform. One of the discoveries she made during the training was that a product is particularly attractive and effective if it is created with a very specific user in mind. She decided to apply this discovery to her new project, as she assumed that creating a walk for "teens in general" might result in an unexciting and cliché selection of locations. The teens, thought she, would likely choose the most obvious places of interest and possibly copy the existing guidebooks. To avoid that, the author asked the teenagers to define the persona who was to tour their city in a very meticulous, detailed way. She wanted the students to be able to easily visualize the invented character and his/her actions, hopeful that it would make them create a personalized and stimulating experience.

The teenagers proposed a persona who was a 17-year-old Italian teenager named Filippo. Among his interests were: visiting foreign countries, enjoying busy city life, interacting with the locals, appreciating art, playing sports, dancing and tasting local food.

The working name for the hike was "Be Active and Explore". The learners believed that the label would be attractive enough to "Filippo", who would look forward to the opportunity to do what he most enjoyed, while investigating the city.

3.4   Optimal Localizations are Selected

Following the introductory stage presented above, there took place the students' vast study and exploration, as well as fervent discussions about the spots in their city "Filippo" might be interested in.

The teens studied city maps and critically read Poznan-related Wikipedia entries guidebooks, leaflets and brochures in English. They also evaluated distances between possible locations, choosing ones that were relatively close to each other (by the standards of a city with the area of 261.85 km2) for the persona not to get exhausted and overwhelmed.

All the choices were made by the students themselves, and the tasks were designed with teenage curiosity and energy in view.

- Of all the brainstormed venues, seven unalike ones were selected:
- Malta Thermal Baths (a water park with swimming pools, slides, spraygrounds, etc.)
- ICHOT/Gate of Poznan Interactive History and Heritage Museum
- The Unrecognized (an outdoor collection of sculptures created by Magdalena Abakanowicz in 2000)
- The Bamberka Fountain (erected in 1915)
- Stary Browar/Old Brewery (a shopping, arts and business center)
- Kontenery/Containers (an outdoor cultural center for young people)
- Posnania (the largest shopping mall in the region)

Despite the fact that as many as two shopping centers were featured, the students decided on two very different "do's", none of which was actually related to shopping.

3.5   All the Senses Are Activated

Having agreed on the seven locations, the teens were to create their first route, the so-called Map of the Senses, on paper. They were given cardstock paper, felt tip pens, colored pencils, city brochures, scissors, glue, etc., and asked to represent the chosen locations. They cut out or drew appropriate images and numbered them in the order in which they wanted the sites to be visited. Then, they thought how each place appealed to their senses: what could be seen, smelled, heard, tasted, or touched there; what stood out and was the most significant characteristics of the venue. The resulting discussion (in English) was extensive and vibrant. All the students' ideas were listed by relevant locations.

Subsequently, through inquiry questioning, the author prompted her students to invent the most appropriate activity for each location, which would be based on the Map of the Senses created. This involved further creative and critical thinking and

made the teens revise their stereotypes about the city they live in and change their perception of the places they visit often.

Even though the author encouraged her students to take into consideration all types of sensations, most of the tasks were focused on what could be seen: at the water park, the visitor was to take a selfie of him/herself in the pose of a pirate on deck of a "pirate ship". The Interactive History Museum, full of windowpanes, various types of glass (including mock stained one) and showcases, inspired the students to design an activity where the visitor would have to take a photo to show "how the past connects with the present through the glass."

Upon viewing Abakanowicz's Unrecognized: a group of armless and headless figures, the tourist was to recreate a selected one by adding a head and arms to the torso. Having reached the Bamberka fountain, the teen was to remodel the figure of a lady dressed in traditional apparel of Bambergian settlers (who came to Poznan in 1730) and make it contemporary by drawing the sculpture dressed in present-day clothes. Then, he was to take a picture of the sketch and upload it to the Experiencity platform. At the first shopping center, the Old Brewery, the hiker was to locate a huge chessboard and assume the position of the Black King at the beginning of the game. At the Kontenery Cultural Center, where music is always played, the teenage visitor was to invite someone to dance with him and ask another person to make a short recording of the dance, again to be uploaded to the platform. Finally, hearing and touching rather than seeing came into focus. At the end of the long and possibly tiring, albeit intriguing, walk, at the Posnania shopping mall, the visitor was to rest and order a traditional Polish treat, pierogi. Here, eventually, the taste was addressed.

3.6   The Map of the Senses is Recreated on the Experiencity Platform

When the Map of the Senses was completed, the students reconstructed the stations online, in accordance with the platform's prompts and cues.

The four main tabs that the visitor would see at each station on his/her mobile device were the Go, Do, Discuss and Info, as previously explained by Mrs. Yehiel. For the Go, the students directed the visitor to the venues in a variety of ways: sometimes a clue was given or a question asked, where the answer was a hint; the teenagers also used sections of Google maps. In the Do's, they asked "Filippo" to perform the specific activities listed above. The Discuss was to make him upload photos or videos reflecting his "Do's". Lastly, the Info provided him with information that would explain why the particular place was selected, what was unique about it, or why the students decided on a given task, and not any other, to be completed there.

When the stations were created and named, they were "fenced", and the Be Active and Explore route (subtitled as "Poznan for teens") was drafted and can be accessed at http://experien.city/viewExperienceDetailsUser.php?idexp=3696. The Malta Thermal Baths station became "Have a Swim with the Pirates!"; the ICHOT/Gate of Poznan Interactive History and Heritage Museum one was called History through the Glass; The Unrecognized was boldly labelled as "Make a Man!"; the Bamberka Fountain became "A Woman with Yokes"; at the Stary Browar/Old Brewery center, the visitor was "Searching for the Black King"; the Kontenery/Containers made him "Dance

with a Posnanian!"; and finally, the Posnania shopping mall wished him "Bon appetit!"

3.7   The First Draft of the Route is Tested and Improved

Once the city route was drafted online, the link was retrieved, and the product was shared and advertised on the students' English club blog, at youthculturalcenter-no1poznan.wordpress.com

The blog had a significant following and at that time was viewed as many as 524 times by 203 visitors, so the students assumed it was reasonable and effective to ask viewers for comments and suggestions. Indeed, they were offered advice (in English), which was carefully read, responded to and used to revise and edit their route.

4   The Conclusion

The BYOD walk created by the author's teenage students demonstrates interaction of teenagers with and in space: it inspects the particular characteristics of a place, it is cross-curricular and intrinsically empirical, and it forms a relation between place, self and community (compare [9]). It also uses local environment to make students active citizens, contributing to the society (compare [7]).

Place-based, location-based and problem-based learning adopted to complete the project proved fruitful and effective:

- the students conducted an in-depth research on the city in general and on the several selected places of interest in particular
- the teenagers' creative and critical thinking skills, passive and active knowledge of English and ICT skills were perfected
- English instruction was enhanced with exploring and rediscovering the city, as well as drafting an interactive route
- some problems and issues, such as temporary fatigue or lack of motivation, were solved (especially thanks to the support provided by blog viewers and their comments, which proved to the students that their work was important)
- the teens started perceiving local culture and history as significant elements of their heritage, and they understood they were capable of making it attractive for their peers from abroad.

In his article from 2016 [6], Lane-Zucker states:

Place-based education might be characterized as the pedagogy of community, the reintegration of the individual into her homeground and the restoration of the essential links between a person and her place.

The author of this paper believes that by trying to answer Lane-Zucker's questions "Where am I? What is the nature of this place?", her students managed to meet the goals specified in the quotation above.

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