

## University Students as Architects of Their Own Knowledge: Reimagining Project-Based Learning in EFL Classrooms

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### Abstract

In an increasingly interconnected and dynamic world, the development of power skills— such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and adaptability—has become essential for student success. Within this context, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction grounded in Project-Based Learning (PBL) offers a powerful pedagogical approach to foster these competencies. PBL not only enhances language acquisition but also empowers university students to take ownership of their learning, positioning them as active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients.

This paper explores how PBL can be reimagined and adapted to meet the evolving needs of 21st-century university students, particularly in fostering internationalization and global engagement within higher education. Language is framed not merely as a medium of instruction, but as a transformative tool through which students and institutions can shape new realities, broaden perspectives, and transcend academic and cultural boundaries.

At the Universidad Católica de Colombia, English has been strategically leveraged to support the development of linguistic, cognitive, and intercultural competencies among students, faculty, and administrators. This initiative highlights how language learning, integrated with project-based methodologies, can drive meaningful educational innovation and institutional development in Latin American contexts and beyond.

This presentation will demonstrate how the principles of Project-Based Learning (PBL) were adapted to the specific context of the Universidad Católica de Colombia, and will present key findings and outcomes from five years of implementation. The session will highlight pedagogical innovations, challenges faced, and the measurable impact on students' language development and transversal competencies.

### Keywords

Bridging, cultural heritage, rural communities, indigenous knowledge and development.