Tales of the Past: Language Learning and Cultural Preservation Through Historical Sites of Lahore

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Teaching Context
Location: Lahore, Pakistan
Students' Age and Level: 13-15 years old, intermediate level of English and Urdu.
Program: English Access Scholarship program in Lahore, aimed at improving students' English language skills and promoting cultural awareness.

The Problem
Lahore is home to many historical sites that symbolize linguistic and cultural development, including the Badshahi Mosque, Lahore Fort and Shalimar Garden. Unfortunately, due to urbanization and modern educational trends, many students in Lahore are unaware of their cultural roots. This includes traditional foods, cultural items in daily life and the historical significance of these foods and items (Raḥmānī, 2016). Additionally, the English curriculum lacks project-based or service learning components, which limits students' ability to connect language learning with cultural identity. This disconnect hinders both the preservation of cultural heritage and acquisition of language (Rahmani, 2016).

The Solution
To address the problem above, I designed a project that aims to use Lahore's historical sites to provide ESL students with an immersive learning environment, making language learning more dynamic and meaningful. The unique blend of task-based teaching and experiential learning will help students to explore their culture while enhancing all four English language skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Students will work with THAAP (Trust for History, Art and Architecture of Pakistan), a non-profit organization in Lahore, Pakistan, on the preservation of historical sites. Students will explore the history of cultural and food items to create story booklets and work as tour guides, and organize public activities to raise awareness about local historical sites (UNESCO, 2022).

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Pre-Visit Activities

Objectives:
- To provide background knowledge on historical sites (Badshahi Masjid, Lahore Fort)

Resources:
- Videos and reading articles of the selected sites
- Vocabulary lists and worksheets
- Book: *History and Architecture of Mughal Monuments*

Activities:
- Workshop for students about THAAP, exploring the goals of the organization, how they work, and the services they provide.
- Group discussions to assess what students already know about the sites and what they want to learn.
- Students will write one paragraph about what they know and want to learn about the historical sites.

Action (Site Visit and Performing Duties)

Action 1 (required):
- Creating a booklet about the selected site history in both Urdu and English (see Appendix A for a sample of the guidelines).

Action 2 (students choose one among these options according to their interests and abilities):
- Acting as tour guides for THAAP using the booklet they create about the selected site.
- Setting up display corners featuring local cultural items such as handmade jewelry and dresses, with informative and awareness-raising labels at the commercial section of the historical site.
- Setting up a food corner at the food court of the building, featuring traditional food and explaining the connection between these foods and their history.

Post-Visit Activities

Report:
- Students will submit a project report to the organization (see Appendix B for a sample report template).

Presentation:
- Students will synthesize and present their project through a poster presentation (see Appendix C for a sample of the guidelines). In their presentation, students should:
  - Report on what they have learned from this service-learning project
  - Discuss the challenges they faced and suggest possible solutions
  - Create a list of ideas for improving fieldwork after close observation.

Conclusion

Teaching students English through service learning helps them develop a sense of responsibility and enhances their knowledge of the target language. Students will not only learn all four

language skills but also build a stronger connection with their culture and homeland. Most importantly, integrating history and culture into the language classroom broadens students' perspectives and gives them real-world exposure.

References

Raḥmānī, A. (2016). *Lahore: History and architecture of Mughal Monuments.* Oxford University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

UNESCO. (2022). *Heritage and education: Leveraging cultural sites for learning*. UNESCO Publishing.

About the Author

Nisa Ali is an English Access Teacher at the University of Education Lahore, Faisalabad campus. She is interested in promoting effective learning strategies and fostering students' engagement in language teaching.

Appendix A
Booklet Guidelines

Lahore Fort

(شاہی قلعہ)

Access students and teachers at Quaid-e-Azam library and Lahore Fort (photos by Nisa Ali)

1. Early history: ابتدائی تاریخ

2. Famous historical figures featured: مستند ذکر

3. Origin: اصل

4. Structure: ساخت

5. Important Buildings of the Fort: قلعہ کی اہم عمارتیں

Appendix B
Project Report Template Sample

Here is a simple report template that students can use to submit their project to THAAP.

Project Report Template

Title of the Project: [Insert Project Title Here]

Student Information:
- Name: [Insert Name]
- Roll Number: [Insert Roll Number]
- Class/Grade: [Insert Class/Grade]
- Date of Submission: [Insert Date]

1. Introduction
- Briefly describe the project and its objectives.

2. Project Description
- Explain the methodology and tools used.
- Outline the steps and processes followed during the project.

3. Results and Findings
- Present the main findings or outcomes of the project.
- Use charts or graphs if necessary to illustrate data.

4. Discussion
- Analyze the results and their implications.
- Discuss any challenges faced during the project and how they were overcome.

5. Conclusion
- Summarize the key takeaways from the project.
- Suggest any future work or improvements.

6. References
- List any sources or references used during the project preparation.

7. Appendices (if applicable)
- Include any supplementary material, such as data tables, additional charts, or supplementary reports.

Signature of Student: [Space for Signature]
Teacher's Remarks (for review): [Space for teacher's comments]

Appendix C
Poster Presentation Guidelines

Here are the poster presentation guidelines for students who completed a community service project in Lahore Fort:

- **Title:** Clearly state the project title at the top of the poster.

- **Introduction:** Briefly introduce the community service project, its objectives, and significance.

- **Methodology:** Describe the methods and approaches used during the project.

- **Results:** Present the outcomes, including data, statistics, or qualitative results.

- **Visuals:** Use images, graphs, and charts to enhance understanding and engagement.

- **Conclusion:** Summarize key findings and implications of the project.

- **References:** Include sources or references used in the project.

- **Presentation:** Be prepared to discuss your poster and answer questions from viewers.

Make sure your poster is visually appealing, well-organized, and adheres to any specific formatting requirements provided by the organizing body.