

Students' Perceptions and Preferences on Learning Writing Expository Essays Using Problem-Based Learning



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BACKGROUND

One of the characteristics of the teaching and learning today is developing students' critical thinking skills. Some approaches in teaching have been introduced including Problem-Based Learning (PBL). This approach allows for discovery learning in collaborative activities which enable students analyze a real-life problem, find some alternative solutions, and propose the best solution to the problem which build their abilities to think critically.



BACKGROUND

Studies have been carried out to investigate the potential contributions of PBL to students' learning development. However, investigating students' perceptions and preferences on learning by using PBL in EFL writing classrooms is still under-researched since the focus is more on the effects of PBL on developing learning capacity and social skills.





RESEARCH METHOD

A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to discover students' preferences on writing expository essays by using PBL.

The subjects were 43 students of advanced level at ELESP of FKIP ULM.

A questionnaire and in-depth interview were utilized to collect the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



FINDINGS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The subjects of the study perceived that learning in PBL groups helped developed their communication skills.

PBL helps develop my skills in expressing ideas.

A = 35 (81.4%)

SA = 8 (18.6%)

PBL helps develop my skills in explaining things.

A = 40 (93%)

SA = 3 (7%)

PBL helps develop my skills in negotiating.

A = 37 (86%)

SA = 3 (7%)

N = 3 (7%)

FINDINGS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The subjects of the study perceived that learning in PBL groups helped develop their social skills.

PBL helps develop my skills in listening to others' opinions.

A = 38 (88%)

SA = 3 (7%)

N = 2 (5%)

PBL helps develop my skills in respecting differences

A = 35 (81%)

SA = 8 (19%)

PBL helps develop my skills in being responsible with group task

A = 35 (81%)

SA = 8 (9%)

FINDINGS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The subjects of the study had positive perception on the problems used in PBL.

The problems are real-life issues

SA = 31 (72%)

A = 12 (28%)

The problems are debatable

A = 34 (79%)

SA = 9 (21%)

Each problem requires more than one solution

A = 35 (81%)

SA = 8 (19%)

FINDINGS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The subjects of the study had positive perception on the impacts of working in PBL groups to their comprehension.

Working in PBL group helps me analyze the causes of a problem

A = 32 (74%)
SA = 11 (26%)

Working in PBL group helps me generate possible solutions

A = 38 (88%)
SA = 5 (12%)

Working in PBL group helps me propose the best solution to a problem

A = 37 (86%)
SA = 2 (5%)
N = 4 (9%)

Working in PBL group helps me provide reasons to support my argument

A = 38 (88%)
SA = 3 (7%)
N = 2 (5%)

FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEW

The interview was conducted to selected subjects based on their responses on the questionnaires: those whose responses were dominantly “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”, those whose responses were “Neutral” in more than 3 items, and those whose responses were “Disagree” in more than 3 items.



What are the benefits of working in PBL groups for you?

Subject 1, Subject 2 (whose responses in the Q were SA and A on the items about working in PBL groups):

S1: By working in PBL groups, I can understand the issue easily because we work together. When I don't understand, my friends in the group explain it to me.

S2: I think the group discussion makes us to have the same perception about the problem. We talk about the same problem so we can find the solution. You know, it is not easy to find the solutions if we're alone.

Subject 3, 4 (whose responses in the Q were N on the items about working in PBL groups):

S3: Well, I think PBL is good for understanding a problem and give solution but I prefer to work alone because it will save much time. I also can focus better if I work alone.

S4: I think PBL is good if it is offline because we can discuss easily. But for online class, it is not good because sometimes internet connection is bad. Sometimes I cannot hear my friends' voice or they cannot hear me clearly.



Do you think working in PBL groups help develop your critical thinking skills? How do you know?

Subject 1 and Subject 2 (whose responses in the Q were SA on items about PBL groups and developing critical thinking skills):

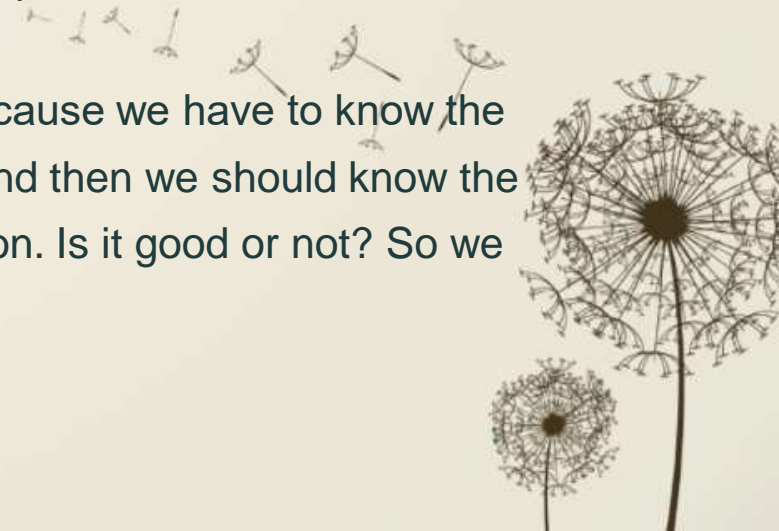
S1: Yes, Ibu because we analyze a problem by discussing the causes and the effects. We should understand the causes why people dirt the rivers or why they burn forests. Then, we also propose the best solution which means we have to criticize any alternative solution and choose which one is the best for us.

S2: Yes, because we have to think about the problem which is unsolved yet so we have to understand the aspects and think carefully before we propose a solution. Like giving sanction for people who dirt the rivers. Is it really applicable or not? We have to consider that so I think we learn to think critically.

Subject 3 and Subject 4 (whose responses in the Q were “Agree” on items PBL groups and developing critical thinking skills):

S3: Yes, I think so because we should analyze the problem and consider why people do that, and we should think deeply before giving solution because not all solutions can be applied.

S4: I think yes Ma'am because we have to know the causes of the problem, and then we should know the effects if we give a solution. Is it good or not? So we need to think carefully.



Do you think working in PBL helps you generate the best solution? How?

Subject 1 and Subject 2 (whose responses in the Q were SA):

S1: Yes Ma'am because we discuss about some solutions and decide which one is the most applicable. To do this, we have to read sources in the internet and consider some aspects like the law and people's behavior. After that we can decide te best solution.

S2: Yes, because we discuss in the group and everybody gives opinion that make the discussion complete. Then we can decide which solution is the best according to us after we read sources and discuss.

Subject 3 (whose responses in the Q were N):

S3: I think for problem 3 that is wetland conversion, I am not sure whether my group make the best solution. It is because the problem is complicated and my group is a little bit confused to decide. But we hope our solution is the best because we have tried to read some sources and discuss.



DISCUSSION

The findings showed that the subjects had positive perceptions on working in PBL groups. They mentioned that doing problem-solving activities in small groups helped them develop their communication skills, social skills, and improve their essay particularly on the quality of thesis statement, argument, and evidence that support their argument. Studies show that collaboration in small-group discussion facilitates students' learning since it allows for better understanding on learning material through exchanging ideas and evolves students' critical thinking skills (Pollock et al., 2011) and increase students' engagement, learning, and performance (Jones, 2014).

Studies also reveal that using PBL is beneficial to facilitate students in developing critical thinking skills (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006; Jonassen, 2011; Sockalingam & Schmidt, 2011). As highlighted by Beaumont (2010), English language teachers need to help their students develop the skills in critical thinking and develop their English proficiency as well.



DISCUSSION

This study also revealed that the subjects had positive perceptions on the problems used in the PBL. As mentioned before, this study utilized real-life issues. As proposed by Dole et al., (2015) and Jonassen (2011) proposing real-life issues to be solve din PBL classrooms can induce alternative solutions that allows for the development of argumentation skills.



CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it is concluded that ...



THANK YOU





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