

The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Approach as A Learning Method to Enhance Writing Skills of French as A Foreign Language Learner

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Abstract

Nowadays, most of the educational institutions in Sri Lanka are in the process of converting their classrooms in to learner centered. The teaching and learning approach of Problem-based learning (PBL) is one of learner centered learning method which engages the teams of students in active learning. This approach was especially emerged in science based institutions and currently it is using in the fields of studies related to Humanities especially in Language studies. The French language is taught at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka for the absolute beginners. When learning a foreign language, the students are expected to communicate accurately and fluently at any real-world situation. Writing skill is one the main four language competencies that any language learner needs to master throughout their language learning process and it can be developed using PBL exposing the students to a real-world problem and allowing them to find a solution for this problem using their high thinking skills and interdisciplinary and independent learning (Barrell, 2007). According to a discussion made with the French undergraduates of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, it was identified that the undergraduates meet a written difficulty when they were asked to compose impromptu dialogues. Therefore, the PBL method was experimented on French as a foreign language learners of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka to identify the effectiveness of this approach on enhancing the writing skills of undergraduates on dialogue writing. This study was conducted for 15 weeks during the first semester of the final year French undergraduates. A census survey has been carried out by using 15 students in the final year French undergraduate programme and they were grouped in to two as PBL experimental and controlled group based on their grades of the individual pre-test writing conducted in the classroom. Then the experimental group was given PBL tasks and trained during the semester along with a lecturer and the controlled group was trained using traditional teaching method. On completion of the 15 weeks, both the groups were post tested giving a composition of a dialogue based on a real world situation to evaluate their writing skills. The qualitative data were gathered using questionnaires, observations and students' performances of their writing task and were analyzed and the quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS. The findings showed that there is a significant difference

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of the performances of the PBL experimental group as they have achieved to compose an exceptional dialogue in their post-test when compared to the controlled group.

Keywords: Problem-Based Learning (PBL); French as a foreign language learner; Writing skills; Teaching and learning