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PIBSI 32

SEMINAR INTERNASIONAL

Optimalisasi Pemanfaatan Potensi Bahasa
dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa, Sastra, dan Kebudayaan Indonesia,
serta Komunikasi Sosial-Politik pada Era Globalisasi

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Drs. D.B. Putut Setiyadi, M. Hum

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Pendidikan Bahasa, Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah
Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan
Universitas Widyadharma Klaten
Bekerjasama dengan Penerbit Kepel Press
2010

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Desain Sampul : Zoed-Han

Setting & Layout : Suji, Marwan

Cetakan pertama: November 2010

KP 016.11.10

Diterbitkan pertama kali oleh Penerbit Pendidikan Bahasa, Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah,
Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Widya Dharma Klaten

bekerjasama dengan

Penerbit Kepel Press

Puri Arsita A6

Jl. Kalimantan, Ringroad Utara, Yogyakarta

Telp. (0274) 884500

Anggota IKAPI Yogyakarta

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ISBN 978-979-3075-80-8

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EVALUATING SPEAKING COURSE AS REFLECTED TO THE STUDENTS' PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Didik Rinan Sumekto

English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher
Training and Education, Widya Dharma University

Abstract

Evaluating Speaking Course as Reflected to the Students' Problem-Based Learning (PBL). This paper is aimed at revealing the evaluation on speaking's (1) performance in classroom; and (2) adopting the students' problem-based learning. Communication in the classroom is definitely embedded in meaning-focused activity. This activity requires a teacher in classroom to tailor his or her instruction carefully to the needs of learners and teach them how to listen to others, how to talk with others, and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context. Learners will learn how to communicate verbally and nonverbally as their language store and language skills development. In designing activities, a teacher should consider all the skills conjointly as he or she interacts with learners in natural behavior, for in real life as in classroom. The following activities appear to be particularly relevant to eliciting spoken-language production. For instance, a teacher provides learners with opportunities to learn from auditory and visual experiences, which enable them to develop flexibility in their learning styles and also to demonstrate the optimal use of different learning strategies and behaviors for different tasks. To support the speaking ability, media of teaching speaking can be adopted from the following aids, such as aural, visual, material-aided, and culture awareness.

The expected outcomes of a problem-based learning (PBL) activity are (1) acquiring knowledge and skills that can be transferred to solve similar problems on an individual level and (2) constructing a shared knowledge and promoting mutual understanding on the group level. The instruments used in a PBL activity are tools—whiteboards, computers, as well as domain-specific tools like experimental instruments, places—discussing rooms, library, and laboratory, and documents—learning materials and learning records. The community of a PBL activity is broad and consists of the learners who are involved in or have influence on the activity in some forms. In PBL activities, learners may have different expertise and different learning interests. PBL promotes learners' confidence in their problem solving skills and strives to make them self-directed learners, even such confidence does not come immediately, it can be fostered by good instruction. A teacher who provides a good learning circumstance in the classroom with the positive teacher-student and student-student interaction, gives learners a sense of ownership over their learning, develops relevant and meaningful problems and learning methods, and empowers learners with

valuable skills that will enhance learners' motivation to learn and ability to achieve.

Keywords: Teacher-student and student-student interaction, speaking's performance in classroom, and problem-based learning (PBL).

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

English language now serves unchallenged as the main international academic language. Indeed, national academic systems enthusiastically welcome English as a contributor to internationalizing, competing, and becoming "world class." But the domination by English moves world science toward hegemony led by the main English-speaking academic systems and creates difficulties for scholars and universities that do not use English. It is the world's most widely studied second language. This gives English a significant advantage in many non-English-speaking countries simply because of the number of speakers and the fact that English is by far the most widely distributed language. There are, for example, more students studying English in Indonesia than are studying English in the United States and more speakers of English in India than in Britain. Further, English has an official governmentally recognized status in more than 70 countries. Colonialism provided stimulus for the widely spread of English, as well as other European languages as early as the 18th century—to North America, South Asia, and the Caribbean—and later to Africa, other parts of Asia, Australasia, and the South Pacific.

The international role of English and its growing role in academic life worldwide have many implications. The curriculum is increasingly dominated by the major English-speaking countries, and in a globalized world this means that curricular developments are expressed in English and increasingly come from the United States and a few other countries. This development shows the power both of the English language and of American higher education practices and ideas. Academic programs offered in English have become widespread in many non-English-speaking countries. It is not surprising that English is the medium of instruction. Non-English-speaking countries often use English as well. Most observers see the impact of English in primary, secondary, and even higher education worldwide as a positive trend—contributing to globalization and enhancing an international academic culture. A global academic environment needs a common medium of communication, and English is the only possible language. While English brings new ideas to sometimes moribund academic institutions worldwide, there are significant downsides to the new hegemony of English (Altbach, 2007: 2 – 3).

In facing the consequence of problem-based learning (PBL), learners may have different expertise and different learning interests and the problem to be solved may be complex. Not all learners study the same topic together and to the same degree. Tasks are assigned to different learners who will have different responsibilities for performing various tasks. Meanwhile, different members of the community including tutors and experts also divide responsibility in influencing the object of the PBL activity.

PBL-specific rules are used to regulate the behaviours in the interaction among learners, tutors and experts, to use instruments, to measure outcomes, and so on. The PBL activity comprises various forms of actions, such as exploring the problem, identifying learning issues, searching and collecting learning resources, interviewing experts, discussing and reasoning, generating and evaluating hypotheses and solutions, etc. These actions are carried out by learners either individually or collaboratively within or outside of classrooms. Each action is goal oriented and has expected an outcome. That is, the motive of the overall activity can be decomposed into a set of sub goals. These goals are achieved through performing actions, which results in intermediate outcomes, such as that the problem is defined, necessary information is collected, or a preliminary solution is generated, etc. The intermediate outcomes become parts of conditions for performing further actions. These conditions will trigger operations of actors on the object by using instruments at hand (Miao, 2000: 1 – 4).

B. Perspective of Learning Speaking

Recently, speaking is used for many different purposes, and each purpose involves different skills. When we use casual conversation, for example, our purposes may be to make social contact with people, to establish rapport. Or to engage in the harmless chit-chat that occupies much of the time we spend with friend. When we engage in discussion with someone, on the other hand, the purpose may be to seek or express opinions, to persuade someone about something, or to clarify information. We use speaking to give instructions or to get things done. We may use speaking to describe things, to complain about people's behavior, to make polite requests, or to entertain people with jokes and anecdotes. Speaking a language is especially difficult for foreign language learners because effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions. Diversity in interaction involves not only verbal communication, but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as pitch, stress, and intonation. In addition, nonlinguistic elements such as gestures and body language or posture, facial expression, and so on may accompany speech or convey messages directly without any accompanying speech (Richards & Renandya, 2002: 201 – 204).

1. Stages of Learner Language Development

Brown (2000: 227 – 229) emphasizes that there are many different ways to describe the progression of learner's linguistic development as their attempts at production successively approximate the target language system. Learners are so variable in their acquisition of a second language that stages of development defy description. There are four stages of learner language development:

a. Presystematic

In this stage, the learner is only vaguely aware that there is some systematic order to particular class of items and usually a stage of random errors may appear here. The learner makes rather wild guesses at what to write or to speak inconsistencies, for example: "Lafayette cans cook", "Lafayette can to cook", and "Lafayette can cooking". All expression may be written or spoken by the same learner within a short period of time, it may indicate a stage of experimentation and inaccurate guessing as well.

b. Emergent

This second stage of learner language development finds that the learner growing in consistency in linguistic production. The learner has begun to discern a system and to internalize certain rules. These rules may not be correct by target language standards, but they are nevertheless legitimate in the mind of the learner. This stage is characterized by some "backsliding", in which the learner seems to have grasped a rule or principle and then regresses to some previous stage. In general, the learner is still unable to correct errors when she or he is pointed out by someone else. Reflecting to this stage, here is the following conversation between a learner (L) and a native speaker (NS) of English done:

L : I go Manado.

NS: You're going to Manado?

L : (Either he or she does not understand the question) What?

NS: You will go to Manado?

L : Yes.

NS: When?

L : 2009

NS: Oh, you went to Manado in 2009.

L : Yes, I go 2009.

c. Systematic

The learner is now able to manifest more consistency in producing the second language. The rule that is stored in the learner's brain is still not all well-formed, they are more internally self-consistent and of course, the

learners more closely approximate the target language system. The most salient difference between the second and third stage is the ability of learner to correct his or her errors when he or she is pointed out-even very subtly-to him or her. Reflecting to this stage, here is the following conversation between a learner (L) and a native speaker (NS) of English done:

L : Many fish are in the lake. These fish are serving in the restaurants near the lake.

NS: (smiling) The fish are serving?

L : (smiling) Oh, no, the fish are served in the restaurants!

d. Stabilization

This condition, herewith, the learner has relatively few errors and has mastered the system to the point that fluency and intended meanings are not problematic. This fourth stage is characterized by the learner's ability to self-correct. The system is complete enough where attention can be focused to those few errors that occur and corrections be made without waiting for feedback from someone else. At this point, learner can stabilize quickly, allowing minor errors to slip by undetected, and thus manifest fossilization of his or her language.

2. Interaction as the Key to Improving EFL Learners' Speaking Ability

The functions of spoken language are interactional and transactional. The primary intention of the former is to maintain social relationships, whereas that of the latter is to convey information and ideas. In fact, much of our daily communication remains interactional. Being able to interact in a language is essential. Therefore, language instructors should provide learners with opportunities for meaningful communicative behavior about relevant topics by using learners' interaction as the key to teaching language for communication (River, 1987; Richards & Renandya, 2002: 208).

Communication in the classroom is embedded in meaning-focused activity. This requires teachers to tailor their instruction carefully to the needs of learners and teach them how to listen to others, how to talk with others, and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context. Out of interaction, learners will learn how to communicate verbally and nonverbally as their language store and language skills develop. Consequently, the give-and-take exchanges of messages will enable them to create discourse that conveys their intentions in real-life communication.

3. Accommodating Small talk among Students

The ability to get along with people in society may correlate somewhat with how well a person can engage in brief, casual conversation with others or in exchange of pleasantries. Talk of weather, rush-hour traffic, vocations, sports events, and so on may seem "meaningless," but such talk functions to create a sense of social communion among peers or other people. So, at the initial stage, adult EFL learners should develop skills in short, interactional exchanges in which they are required to make only one or two utterances at a time. For example:

Student A: I hate rush-hour traffic.

Student B: Me, too.

Or

Student A: Boy, the weather is lousy today.

Student B: Yeah... I hope it'll stop raining.

As learners get more experience, they will be able to use some of the simple exchanges and know how to open conversations.

4. Using Interactive Activities

Teachers must arouse in the learners a willingness and need or reason to speak. One possible way of stimulating learners to talk might be to provide them with extensive exposure to authentic language through audio visual stimuli and with opportunities to use the language. Likewise, teachers shall integrate strategy instruction into interactive activities, providing a wealth of information about communicative strategies to raise learners' awareness about their own learning styles so that they can tailor their strategies to the requirements of learning tasks (Richards & Renandya, 2002: 208 – 209).

In designing activities, teachers shall consider all the skills conjointly as they interact with each other in natural behavior, for in real life as in the classroom, most task of any complexity involve more than one macro skill (Nunan, 1989; Richards & Renandya, 2002: 209). Effective interactive activities shall be manipulative, meaningful, and communicative, involving learners in using English for a variety of communicative purposes. Specifically they shall (1) be based on authentic or naturalistic source materials; (2) enable learners to manipulate and practice specific features of language; (3) allow learners to rehearse, in class, communicative skills they need in the real world; and (4) activate psycholinguistic processes of learning. Richards & Renandya (2002: 209) exposure that based on these criteria, the following activities appear to be particularly relevant to eliciting spoken-language production. They provide learners with opportunities to learn from auditory and visual experiences, which

enable them to develop flexibility in their learning styles and also to demonstrate the optimal use of different learning strategies and behaviors for different tasks. Media of teaching speaking can be adopted from the following aids:

a. Aural: oral activities.

Aural materials such as news reports on the radio will be fine-tuned to a level accessible to particular groups of learners. These materials can be used in some productive activities as background or as input for interaction. In practice, students are directed to listen to taped dialogues or short passages and afterwards to act them out in different ways. One example which may be used in the microteaching practice is jigsaw listening. A story is recorded into several segments on an audiocassette tape. Teachers either have each student listen to a different segment or divide the class into small groups and make each group responsible for one segment. After each student (or group) has listened to a segment, students are provided with a worksheet or comprehension questions based on the story. Then, students work together in groups on an information-gap activity. They negotiate the meaning of the story and answer questions, which motivates students to speak.

b. Visual: oral activities.

Due to the problem of the lack of opportunities in foreign language settings to interact with native speakers, the need for exposure to many kinds of scenes, situations, and accents as well as voices is particularly critical. This need can be met by audiovisual material such as appropriate films, videotape, and soap operas. They can provide (a) the motivation achieved by basing lessons on attractively informative content material; (b) the exposure to a varied range of authentic speech, with different registers, accents, intonation, rhythms, and stresses; and (c) language used in the context of real situations, which adds relevance and interest to the learning process (Carrasquillo, 1994; Richards & Renandya, 2002: 209). Then, Richards & Renandya (2002: 209) emphasize while watching, students can observe what levels of formality are appropriate or inappropriate on given occasions. Similarly, they can notice the nonverbal behavior and types of exclamations and fill-in expressions that are used. Also, they can pay attention to how people initiate and sustain a conversational exchange and how they terminate an interactive episode. Subsequent practice of dialogues, role-playing, and dramatizations will lead to deeper learning.

c. Material-aided: oral activities.

Storytelling can be prompted with cartoon strips and sequences of pictures. Similar material input, such as hotel brochures, can be used for making reservations; menus can be used for making purchases in the supermarket or

for ordering in a restaurant. In fact, language input for oral activities can be derived from a wide range of sources that form the basis for communicative tasks of one sort or another, which will help learners deal with real situations that they are likely to encounter in the future.

d. Culture awareness: oral activities.

Culture plays an instrumental role in shaping speakers' communicative competence, which is related to the appropriate use of language. Teacher can present situations in which there are cultural misunderstandings that cause people to become offended, angry, and confused. Then, thought-provoking information and questions can follow each description or anecdote for in-class discussion. Students can be asked to analyze and determine what we are wrong and why, which will force them to think about how people in the target culture act and perceive things, and which will inevitably provide a deeper insight into that culture. This kind of exercise can strike a healthy balance between the necessity of teaching the target culture and validating the students' native culture, which will gradually sharpen students' culture awareness. Ideally, the flexibility and adaptability of these activities are essential if the communicative needs of learners are to be met. With the limited time available in class, it is necessary to follow open language experiences with more intensive structured situations, dialogues, and role-playing activities. These will give students both the chance and the confidence actually to use the language (Richards & Renandya, 2002: 210).

C. Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Problem based learning (PBL) is an innovative pedagogical strategy. It poses meaningful, contextualized, authentic situations, and provides resources, guidance, and instruction to learners as they develop domain knowledge and problem-solving skill. In PBL, learners take charge of their own learning. They define problems and learning goals. They come to understand how specific actions relate to their goals and learn how to coordinate their efforts towards achieving these goals. Successful, engaged learners continually develop and refine learning and problem solving strategies. They construct effective mental models of knowledge, they articulate their ideas to others, and they are fair-minded in dealing with contradictory or conflict views. PBL is viewed as an innovative and increasingly popular instructional method. The new and improved version of PBL will retain the best features of PBL as it has been implemented in conventional settings, but will offer instructional possibilities not available before the introduction of computer mediation. However, existing systems are limited in the sense that they focus mainly on providing

and maintaining shared information resources and shared workspaces. These systems support communication and collaboration among the learners distributed in time and space, but we argue that the PBL specific support in these systems is insufficient. Generally speaking, the mediational role of cultural factors and social factors in PBL processes are insufficiently addressed.

In problem-based learning (PBL) courses, students work with classmates to solve complex and authentic problems that help develop content knowledge as well as problem-solving, reasoning, communication, and self-assessment skills. These problems also help to maintain student interest in course material because students realize that they are learning the skills needed to be successful in the field. Almost any course can incorporate PBL, and most faculty and students consider the benefits to be substantial. They identify the central features of PBL, provide some guidelines for planning a PBL course, and discuss the impact of PBL on student learning and motivation. While the content and structure of PBL courses may differ, the general goals and learning objectives tend to be similar. PBL begins with the assumption that learning is an active, integrated, and constructive process influenced by social and contextual factors. PBL is characterized by a student-centered approach, teachers as "facilitators rather than disseminators," and open-ended problems (in PBL, these are called "ill-structured") that "serve as the initial stimulus and framework for learning". Instructors also hope to develop students' intrinsic interest in the subject matter, emphasize learning as opposed to recall, promote group work, and help students become self-directed learners. Learning is "student-centered" because the students are given the freedom to study those topics that interest them the most and to determine how they want to study them. Students should identify their learning needs, help plan classes, lead class discussions, and assess their own work and their classmates' work. Being able to articulate such thoughts helps students become more effective problem-solvers and self-directed learners. Initially, however, many students are not capable of this sort of thinking on their own (Patrick, 2009: 41 – 48).

1. Introduction: What is Problem-Based Learning?

PBL is a curriculum model that emphasizes the use of task-based problems to engage students in active and multidisciplinary learning. Through problem-based learning, students learn how to solve problems that are ill structured, open-ended or ambiguous. Problem-based learning engages students in intriguing, real and relevant intellectual inquiry and allows them to learn from these life situations (Barell, 2007; Patrick, 2009: 41). The pedagogical value of PBL includes: exposing students to real- world challenges, higher order thinking skills, interdisciplinary learning, independent learning, information mining skills, team work and communication. During this self-directed learning,

students work together, discussing, comparing, reviewing and debating what they have learnt (Wilkerson, 1996; Patrick, 2009: 41).

Figure 1
Iterative Process in Problem-Based Learning
(Queen University, 2000; Ali Muhson, 2009: 174)

The main characteristics of the approach include students taking responsibility for their own learning, learning how to build on prior knowledge and focusing on the process of knowledge acquisition (rather than on the products of such processes). The PBL approach also emphasizes self and peer-assessment, communication and interpersonal skills (Boud, 1985). Biggs (2003) observes that PBL encourages deep learning as students learn for understanding and seek meaning, whereas the traditional teacher-centered approach promotes surface learning with little understanding. Harland (2002) believes that students learn new skills and new ways of thinking through PBL. Williams, et al (2003) suggest that students appreciate the active participation in the PBL learning process. This will enhance their personal growth and increase their confidence and responsibility as learner. PBL also encourages collaborative learning among students. In small groups works, the learners' exposure to alternative points of view are real challenge to initial understanding. They evoke their problem-solving methods and conceptual knowledge and express their ideas and share responsibility in managing problem situations.

PBL gives a name and an established body of theory to a form of education which embodies the best characteristics of traditional design teaching and allows them to be applied to the whole curriculum within a single theoretical framework, thereby achieving integration at both the theoretical and application levels. PBL has been called 'the most important innovation since the institutionalisation of education for the professions', however the method had been invented elsewhere and was therefore not a true innovation. Nevertheless, the application of PBL represents a significant change and challenge which are innovations in themselves and can provide an environment for stimulating innovative behaviour in staff and students.

In PBL, students are expected to define their own learning goals and to pursue actively the accumulation of knowledge and skills. A problem from practice acts as a starting point development of a PBL problem. The main difference between practice-based problems and PBL is that PBL problems are abstracted from the reality of practice. That is, solving the real-practice problem is not the point; each problem serves as a generic problem, and the process of learning about problems and solutions to it are the salient educational agenda. Many of the problems from practice challenge experienced practitioners, and students are motivated by the experience of dealing with real practice problems, notwithstanding that they are abstracted. To this extent PBL is comparable with project work, case studies and studio teaching approaches.

Problem-based learning is an educational philosophy of the post-modern era and is successful, particularly in professional education, in the sense that growing numbers of institutions are embracing this educational approach. The specific format varies from one application to another. In some cases the traditional lecture format is completely eliminated. In other cases lectures are employed next to problems, as one of the means to challenge students. Although group learning is not essential to PBL, in most established PBL courses learning is characteristically enhanced by small group work, where students co-operate in defining their own learning objectives.

Group discussions about practice problems activate prior knowledge, and learning is cross linked with existing knowledge, fostering the development of a thinking structure that is relevant to practice. Despite apparent differences, all PBL approaches share some basic principles, partly didactic and partly related to their professional orientations, and application of these principles has led to some characteristics shared by most PBL versions.

It is possible to apply PBL methods in a single discipline within an otherwise traditional curriculum, however the benefits of integration of knowledge and skills from different domains favours a thematic curriculum structure. Lecturing is usually not consistent with integration and does little to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. The small

group format therefore often surfaces as a natural alternative, with a range of interpersonal dynamics which provide opportunities for integration, co-operation, motivation and acceptance of responsibility for learning (Glaser, 1991, 129 – 144).

D. Discussion

It is imperative that teachers establish classroom norms that make their students feel comfortable in this new learning environment. For instance, some mistakes shall be viewed as learning opportunities rather than as indicators of lack of ability. In addition, teachers need to find the appropriate balance between allowing students to discuss issues on their own and intervening in group interactions. Teachers shall also encourage students to develop classroom norms and ground rules for group work, including establishing attendance policies, the schedule of due dates, and the consequences for rule violation. The day-to-day structure of a PBL course is quite different from the structure of traditional lecture courses. The first few class meetings in a PBL course include brainstorming sessions in which issues central to the course are identified. Alternatively, the teachers can create an extensive list of topics and ask students to focus on those topics that seem most interesting. Based on the students' input about course topics, the teachers develop ill-structured problems. Students then work on the problems in groups of three to eight members, depending on the number of students in the course and the number of available teachers.

Regardless of how topics are selected, the teachers present the problems to student groups before providing any formal instruction on the topic. Problems be introduced with "minilectures" that provide some context for the problem and identify areas of potential difficulty). During class time and outside of class students work with their groups to solve problems. Throughout each class the teachers must ensure that all students are involved in the problem-solving process and must familiarize students with the resources needed, for example: library references, databases to solve the problems, as well as identify common difficulties or misconceptions. With multiple groups exploring different problems or even examining similar problems, the task of coaching groups may be too much for one teacher. Thus, the teacher may want to consider using teaching assistants who are familiar with PBL methods and techniques to assist groups.

Assessment needs to fit the philosophy of active learning rather than passive-reproductive learning. It may be preferable, and more rigorous, for assessments to follow the PBL philosophy and to require the individual to analyze a problem, search for and then apply relevant information (Reynolds,

1997: 272). Unfortunately, assessment of PBL is poorly addressed in the research literature. Most studies compare students who have undergone PBL curricula with those who have not by using traditional measures, which tend to be almost exclusively content-oriented. Results of these studies vary, but most indications are that PBL "does no harm" in terms of traditional, content-oriented outcomes (Albanese & Mitchell, 1993; Vernon & Blake, 1993: 553). Yet, if the primary goal of PBL is to have students cultivate the habits of mind evidenced by professionals in a field or discipline, faculty need to consider process oriented objectives, and the means by which to assess them. Process-oriented objectives are those that relate to how students of any disciplines think about learning Speaking and solving problems within a certain field. Because content-oriented objectives are usually emphasized, those seeking to implement PBL may struggle, initially, with defining, highlighting to students, and then assessing process-oriented objectives. In fact, those who have researched the process-oriented outcomes of PBL have found dramatic results. PBL assessments shall be authentic, which is to say that they shall be structured so that students can display their understanding of problems and their solutions in contextually-meaningful ways (Gallagher, 1997: 347). Clearly, multiple-choice assessments and even short-answer or essay questions that require rote repetition of facts will be of little value in assessing the extent to which students have internalized holistic approaches to complex problems. A critical part of assessment in PBL is the feedback students receive from their peers in which students rate their group members using a numerical scale based on "attendance, degree of preparation for class, listening and communication skills, ability to bring new and relevant information to the group, and ability to support and improve the functioning of the group as a whole". This peer rating constituted up to ten percent of students' final grades.

Overall, PBL is an effective method for improving students' problem-solving skills. Students will make strong connections between facts and skills by actively working with information rather than by passively receiving information. Although active learning requires additional work on the part of students and faculty, Kingsland (1996: 75) observed that students find PBL courses satisfying. The learning experience are so valuable because it prepared them to handle, anticipate and prevent some of the miscommunications and difficult situations emerging on every project.

PBL promotes students' confidence in their problem solving skills and strives to make them self-directed learners. These skills can put PBL students at an advantage in future courses and in their careers. While such confidence does not come immediately, it can be fostered by good instruction. Teachers who provide a good learning community in the classroom, with positive teacher-student and student-student relationships, give students a sense of ownership

over their learning, develop relevant and meaningful problems and learning methods, and empower students with valuable skills that will enhance students' motivation to learn and ability to achieve (MacKinnon,1999: 52).

1. Students Instruction and Assessment

Students are assessed through a group oral presentation and a written report about their project. The group oral presentation consists of both the individual and group assessment. Students are assessed on the information presented, speech delivery and the use of English while the written report is assessed on a group basis. To ensure fairness in grading, the teacher reminded the class that 'free riders' would receive a grade lower than other group members.

As part of the presentation, you may wish to enact what happened during your face-to-face encounter at the outlets. In groups of four or five, students brainstormed among themselves the problem based on the assignment. They have to define the problem to tailor it to a specific audience. Students with the help of the teacher examines the problem and clarifies what it is they know and do not know about customer service. They also formulate possible hypotheses and identify learning issues they intended to investigate. They then submit a Memo Report on their proposed project, to seek approval from their teacher to proceed with their project. The groups then employ research strategies to collect relevant information. Students discuss their findings and peer taught what they have learnt. The group members then develop an outcome for the problem and present their findings to other groups in their Group Project Presentation, where their peers and the teacher evaluate their project. Students reflect on the way they have learnt in their groups through an online survey.

2. Monitoring the progress of students

To enable the teacher to keep track of students' progress, each group has to provide an informal oral progress report of the group assignment. The purpose of the informal oral progress report is to enable the teacher to keep track of the progress of students. To provide a comprehensive progress of their PBL project, students have been instructed to answer the following questions: (1) What are the tasks that have been completed for the project?; (2) What are the remaining tasks?; (3) What problems did your group experience in the PBL project and how were they solved?; and (4) What had the group learnt from the PBL project?

After each group had completed the progress report of their project, they are given the opportunity to ask or clarify any issues in regard to the PBL assignment. Through the progress report, the teacher is able to track the progress of individual groups and to provide guidance on data collection. In

addition, the teacher also provides suggestions on how to organize the group presentation and written report.

3. Observations by teacher

The following points are observed by the teacher:

a. PBL promotes independent learning among students

Through the PBL assignment, there is no doubt that students are engaged in self-directed learning. They analyse the problems, find solutions and organize a trip to the shop to obtain information for the assignment. They also manage their own learning which includes planning, monitoring, problem-solving and finding solutions to the problem. Students are expected to learn from shared knowledge and accumulate expertise by their own study and research, just as real practitioners do.

b. Students adopt a creative stance to problem solving

To provide an effective solution to the problem, students have to think of ways to disguise themselves as a mystery shopper or customer to collect information for the project. They also have to brainstorm on ways to assess the quality of customer service.

c. PBL also plays a great role in fostering collaborative learning

It is observed that as students discussed how to solve the problem in small groups of four or five, they begin to gain better conceptual knowledge through the brainstorming of ideas. The PBL assignment provides a platform for students to express their ideas and to share responsibility in managing problem situations. Different views on a problem are observed, leading students to ask new questions. This helps to facilitate greater interpersonal communication and helps to develop the group dynamic. In PBL, new information is acquired through cooperative learning.

d. Heightened the awareness of Japanese students to good English usage

The Power of Problem-based Learning (PBL) in the EFL classroom communicates with other English speakers from other countries. This has increased their sensitivity to good English usage when communicating with other students (Patrick, 2009: 43 – 46).

E. Conclusion

Recently, a teacher may gradually observe that students are generally enthused and interested in the problem-based learning (PBL) circumstances.

Students analyse the problems, find solutions and organize a trip to the site to obtain information for the assignment. They also manage their own learning through planning, monitoring, problem-solving and finding solutions to the problems. As Students engage in these activities, they retain some information more effectively than studying from the textbook only. In addition, students also have to brainstorm on ways to assess the quality of their education processes and outputs. The PBL approach is more intellectually stimulating as compared to learning some subjects through the textbook. PBL also plays a great role in fostering collaborative learning. As students work on problems in small groups of four or five, their analysis and resolution results in the acquisition of knowledge and problem-solving skills. The group nature provides a platform for interpersonal and group dynamics to be developed. In PBL, new information is acquired through cooperative learning. Students are expected to learn from shared knowledge and accumulate expertise by their own study and research, just as real practitioners do. To prepare students for the real workplace, the future schools or colleges language program shall aim to develop human resources with the ability to understand different academic performance, cultures and societies. Each student will be able to adapt to the learning circumstances they have learned about and recognize their own problems in the circumstances. They will also gain the problem-solving skills necessary to analyze and research domains from language and cultural angles.

Therefore, Most teachers may feel happy with the respective curricula as they have evolved, and the report of the respective external review committees has been highly supportive. The new curriculum in each case is firmly established, as clearly demonstrated by unsuccessful attempts in each case to alter the new structure. Attempts to re-establish the authority of the teachers in both cases, particularly in design, over what is taught and how it is taught, have been accompanied by strong pressure for master classes. These attempts, however, are inconsistent with the objectives of integration and relevance, and are opposed in principle to the spirit of PBL. The return to teachers for giving up their dominating role is they have the satisfaction of watching students' growing enthusiasm and independence. Additional satisfaction comes from high levels of recognition and accreditation, and general support from the profession for the relevance of the abilities of emerging graduates to current demands of professional practice.

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