

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**PBL IN AN EAP CLASSROOM: AN INSIGHT STUDY  
ON STUDENTS' LANGUAGE SKILLS**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this dissertation thesis is my own except for citations and summaries that have been duly acknowledged, and it is not being submitted for any other academic award.

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I hereby approved that the work in this dissertation thesis is fully own by my supervisee as the above name except for citations and summaries that have been duly acknowledged, and not being submitted for any other academic award.

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## ABSTRACT

Current language teaching methodologies and recent educational changes in Malaysia have exposed the students to independent or autonomous learning style. In Malaysia, Problem-based Learning (PBL) is gaining popularity and the acceptance among academicians and students has led to its successful implementation (Abu Hassan et al., 2004). Hence, the objective of the study was to explore students' perceptions and attitude towards the implementation of PBL curriculum instruction in an EAP normal setting classroom. It also aimed to increase understanding of the PBL effectiveness on learners' communication skills, vocabulary knowledge, and writing performance. In language classrooms, PBL is believed to create a conducive environment for the language skills to grow (Steinemann, 2003). This is significant in suggesting that communication skills, vocabulary, analytical and critical thinking abilities are better acquired in PBL setting than in traditional classrooms (Zamnah, 2005). This study adopted a predominantly quantitative approach in which the data was later corroborated by qualitative approach to ensure the validity of the data collected. The collaborative problem-solving process within an EAP classroom was observed as a case study. The population of this study comprised of first semester students of *Asasi Undang-Undang (Law Foundation Programme)* from a local government university i.e. *Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Kuantan City Campus* in Pahang. The study utilized multiple sources of evidence including pretest and posttest, direct observations, presentation assessments, reflective journals, semi-structured interviews and questionnaire based survey to enable triangulation of the data. The findings of this study indicated that the students had positive attitude towards learning second language through Problem-based Learning (PBL) instruction. On top of that, it was evident that PBL was effective in developing the students' communication skills, vocabulary, and writing skills through PBL approach. These results were consistent with previous research indicating that the implementation of PBL in language learning process significantly increased the students' language and generic skills. In terms of pedagogical implications, it was evident that students need to be exposed more to the use of PBL to minimize their dependency on class instructors. Giving the students opportunities for self-directed learning will promote positive changes in their effort of learning English as a second language. Besides, in promoting such independent learning environment, it is important for the facilitator to clarify about PBL, its underlying principles and characteristics in which later would enable them to become familiar with the PBL processes. Effective communication during PBL sessions is significant to ensure that the students feel emotionally, socially and intellectually supported. This will also be resulting in positive relationship development between the students and the facilitator.

## ABSTRAK

Kaedah pengajaran bahasa semasa dan perubahan terkini pendidikan di Malaysia telah mendedahkan para pelajar kepada gaya pembelajaran secara berdikari atau autonomi. Di Malaysia, 'Pembelajaran Berasaskan Masalah' (PBL) adalah semakin popular dan penerimaan di kalangan ahli akademik dan pelajar telah membawa kepada kejayaan pelaksanaannya (Abu Hassan et al., 2004). Oleh yang demikian, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka persepsi dan sikap pelajar terhadap pelaksanaan pengajaran kurikulum 'Pembelajaran Berasaskan Masalah' (PBL) dalam persekitaran normal bilik darjah 'Bahasa Inggeris Bagi Tujuan Akademik' (EAP). Kajian ini juga bertujuan meningkatkan pemahaman tentang keberkesanan PBL pada kemahiran komunikasi, pengetahuan perbendaharaan kata dan prestasi penulisan pelajar. Di dalam kelas bahasa, PBL dipercayai dapat mewujudkan persekitaran yang kondusif untuk perkembangan kemahiran bahasa (Steinemann, 2003). Ini adalah penting dalam menunjukkan bahawa kemahiran komunikasi, perbendaharaan kata, kebolehan pemikiran analitikal dan kritikal adalah lebih baik dipelajari di dalam kelas PBL berbanding di dalam kelas tradisional (Zamnah, 2005). Kajian ini menggunakan pakai pendekatan yang kebanyakannya kuantitatif di mana data kemudiannya disokong oleh pendekatan kualitatif untuk memastikan kesahihan data yang dikumpul. Proses menyelesaikan masalah secara kerjasama dalam bilik darjah EAP telah diperhatikan sebagai kajian kes. Populasi kajian ini terdiri daripada pelajar semester pertama Asasi Undang-Undang dari universiti kerajaan tempatan iaitu Universiti Teknologi Mara, Kampus Bandar Kuantan, Pahang. Kajian ini menggunakan pelbagai sumber bukti termasuk ujian pra dan pos, pemerhatian langsung, penilaian persembahan, jurnal reflektif, temu bual separa berstruktur dan soal selidik untuk membolehkan triangulasi data. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pelajar mempunyai sikap yang positif terhadap pembelajaran bahasa kedua melalui arahan 'Pembelajaran Berasaskan Masalah' (PBL). Lebih utama, adalah jelas bahawa PBL berkesan dalam membangunkan kemahiran komunikasi, perbendaharaan kata dan kemahiran menulis pelajar. Keputusan ini adalah selaras dengan penyelidikan sebelumnya bahawa pelaksanaan PBL dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa meningkatkan kemahiran bahasa dan generik pelajar dengan ketara. Dari segi implikasi pedagogi, ia adalah jelas bahawa pelajar perlu lebih didedahkan kepada penggunaan PBL untuk mengurangkan pergantungan mereka kepada guru kelas. Dengan memberi peluang kepada pelajar untuk pembelajaran sendiri, perubahan positif dalam usaha mereka mempelajari bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua dapat digalakkan. Selain itu, bagi mewujudkan persekitaran pembelajaran sedemikian, adalah penting bagi fasilitator untuk menjelaskan secara terperinci mengenai PBL, prinsip-prinsip asas dan ciri-ciri yang membolehkan mereka menjadi biasa dengan proses PBL. Komunikasi yang berkesan semasa sesi PBL adalah penting untuk memastikan bahawa pelajar disokong dari segi emosi, sosial dan intelek. Ini seterusnya akan membina hubungan yang positif antara pelajar dan fasilitator.