TEACHING WRITING THROUGH PBL IN AN OUTCOMES-BASED ESL SETTING

A CREATIVE PROJECT
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ABSTRACT

CREATIVE PROJECT: Teaching Writing Through PBL in an Outcomes-based ESL Setting.

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This study uses Problem-based learning to teach the skill of writing to intermediate-level students at an Intensive English Program, in a mid-sized Midwestern university. A seven-week instructional unit was designed to test the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning method for teaching the skill of writing. The instructional unit was tested for efficacy in meeting the outcomes while creating greater student empowerment, understanding of the materials, generating student involvement and enhancing students’ critical thinking and problem solving skills. The study also tested the effectiveness of the suggested model, which was followed to design the instructional unit. The effectiveness was gauged by examining student involvement, understanding of the materials and performance at writing, which was measured through the essays written by the students in class.
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Much work has been done using Problem based learning in the field of medicine (Erdman, 2010) and education; specifically in subjects such as chemistry (Woods, 1996), history, geography, introductory science courses (Allen, Duch & Groh, 1996), etc. Little has been done using PBL as a teaching and learning method in language teaching. The purpose of this project was to design an instructional unit for teaching writing skill in an Intensive English Program at a mid-sized Mid-western university using an adapted model for Problem-based learning. The instructional unit was tested for efficacy in meeting the outcomes while creating greater student empowerment, understanding of the materials, generating student interest and involvement and enhancing students’ critical thinking and problem solving skills.

1.1. Research aims and objectives

The aim of this research was to test the effectiveness of Problem based approach for teaching the skill of writing to intermediate–level students at an Intensive English Program. The aim was also to test the effectiveness of the adapted model that was followed to design the seven-week instructional unit/lesson plans. The effectiveness was gauged by greater student involvement, greater understanding of the materials and better performance at writing essays.

1.2. Rational and significance of the study

Problem based learning has been used extensively for various other academic arenas, but there are not enough examples available of PBL being used in language instruction. Further, Lim and
Lew (2012) found that learners in a polytechnic institute in Singapore found it harder to adapt to PBL in their English class compared to Mathematics and science class. It was the researcher’s interest to see how well PBL can be adapted for teaching the skill of writing to intermediate – level students in an outcomes based Intensive English Program (IEP). If successful, the designed instructional unit and lesson plans could then serve as models for the IEP faculty to implement this approach in other levels of writing and perhaps in other skills like listening, speaking, reading etc.

1.3. Research questions/ hypothesis

Q.1. How well does the suggested and adapted model fit for implementation in a language-teaching situation: specifically for teaching the skill of writing?

Q.2. From instructor and student self-reported perspectives, were the students involved and engaged in the entire process?

Q.3. Did the students feel independent and more responsible for their learning?

Q.4. Did greater student independence also result in greater student understanding of the materials (as gauged by student self-report perspective and their performance at writing specific essays)?

Q.5. Were the objectives of the course still met using the problem-based approach?

1.4. Contextual Background

The Intensive English Program in a mid-sized Midwestern university is a place where international students come without taking a TOFEL exam and are given a chance to learn academic English language skills in English such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and
grammar in preparation for studying at a US University. These students first take a placement test and are placed in their respective level based on their proficiency in English. There are seven levels in the Intensive English Program and students have to successfully pass through these levels in order to pursue their academic degree at the University. There are set outcomes for each skill and each level that are clearly stated in the faculty handbook to guide the faculty as to what the students need to know in each level in a particular skill. Teachers are free to use any teaching method to teach those outcomes. There are specific rubrics that are used to grade the students. The final student grade is a combination of the course grade and the program’s standardized, level-specific, final exam which is not set by the teacher, but by an exam committee. There are two seven-week sessions in each semester, and one seven-week session in the summer. There is a final exam after each seven-week session, which determines whether the student will pass on to the next level. Student population generally consists of students from Asian countries like China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc. For the present study, a Problem-based Learning approach was used to design lesson plans and to teach the set outcomes for the skill of writing to intermediate level students in the Intensive English program.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Problem-based Learning

Before talking about the benefits of using Problem-based learning as a teaching and learning approach, it is important to define the concept within the current study. Very often people use Problem-based learning and Project-based learning interchangeably because they overlap in various ways (Hoffman, 2013). Project-based learning has been defined as the model or approach that organizes learning around projects. These projects serve the purpose to motivate and engage students as they are involved in the process of exploration and investigation of topics that are of their interest and they can see the connection of what they are learning with the real world (Clarke, 2009). The key feature is research and investigation and students seek answers to questions they have either formulated themselves or in collaboration with their teacher (Katz & Chard, 2000). Clarke (2009), gives the six A’s of Project –Based learning as authenticity, academic rigor, applied learning, active exploration, adult relationships and assessment practices.

Problem based learning, as is referred to for the current research project, also provides a structure for discovery to the students for internalizing learning leading to greater comprehension (Delisle, 1997). It is focused, experiential learning, which is organized around the investigation and solution of real life problems (White, 2001; Trop & Sage, 1998; 2002). A critical feature is collaboration, which has several learning advantages like distribution of the cognitive load, distributed expertise, enhances reasoning and higher order thinking skills which results in a shared cognition (Faidley, Evensen, Salisbury-Glennon, Glenn & Hmelo, 2000; Kelson & Distlehorst, 2000). Problem-based learning enables students to adapt and participate in change,
which can be a kind of training for the international students in the Intensive English Program who themselves have to go through an adjustment period; it also helps students to adopt a holistic approach to problems and situations; students are able to appreciate diverse opinions, this will be beneficial especially in an international ESL setting where we have people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. There are studies that have applied PBL to include diversity and address the problems of race in the classroom (Greeson, 2005). This can be an additional element that could be touched upon in the Intensive English program setting using PBL. In Problem-based learning, students also learn to identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning and become self-directed learners, which can be a huge change for the students coming from Eastern countries; not only that, students also get to develop their communication skills, which the ESL learners need (Karthikeyan, Venkatraj & Baskaran, 2009). In short, it is an approach that has multiple learning benefits for students and can be a very good approach for teaching language in an international school setting.

Project-based and problem-based learning are two terms that are often confused and used interchangeably due the various similarities that exist between them, like, collaboration, problem-solving, knowledge construction and self-evaluation (Levin, Dean & Pierce, 2001; Lambros, 2004). As similar as they may seem, there is difference between the Project based and the problem based approach. What is being referred to as the problem-based learning for this study, involves open-ended situations and ill-structured problems (White, 2001; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004; English & Kitsantas, 2013). In problem-based learning the form of knowledge is contingent and constructed (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). In this particular approach, students have a prompt or a problem and work towards its solution and they can come to the solution of the problem in any way possible (Lambros, 2004). The problem can be student initiated or
teacher directed (Greeson, 2005). Hence, the present study included problems that were teacher directed but the students could initiate and work on a problem of their interest if the instructor approved it.

Another reason for using Problem-based learning is that the roles of the student and teacher are clearly defined in this approach. The students are active participants and independent critical inquirers and they own their learning experiences. Activities in Problem-based learning focus on the development of strategies to facilitate team and individual learning (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). Trop and Sage (1998) describe these roles in PBL with the help of a diagram:

![Figure 1: The role of teacher and student in PBL](image-url)

Teacher designs and engages students in a problem-based inquiry

Empowers students as investigators of the problem

Teacher coaches from the sidelines as learners move toward generation of possible solutions

**Teacher’s Role**

Motivated by the problem

Students are hooked by intriguing problematic situation

And are engaged by the process

Students are empowered to investigate required information

They apply knowledge & skills & develop as self-directed learners and problem solvers

**Students’ Role**
As indicated in the diagram above, the teacher is like a facilitator who aids the learning of the students or a coach who corrects, redirects ideas, and assists learners in their organization and resolution of a problem (Duek, 2000). Being a facilitator involves three modes: hierarchical (direct learning process, exercise their power, decide the objectives) cooperative (share the power over learning with the students enabling them to be self-directed), and autonomous mode (respect the autonomy of the students giving them freedom to do things their way). These modes tend to overlap, are not discrete or hierarchical. Being a facilitator a teacher has to acknowledge and use prior knowledge, recognize that she/he is also a learner, ensure that team concerns are heard, be responsive to team concerns, and appreciate shared risks. Some non-verbal strategies that can be used are scanning the members, using gestures, picking up non-verbal cues to know whether students are bored, involved, puzzled, etc. verbal strategies are also very important and these include questioning: use open and reflective questions; supporting and valuing the ideas of students; summarizing; returning and deflecting questions so that the students take the responsibility of finding the answers themselves; suggesting alternatives; monitoring progress; reflecting back by repeating what the student said to seek understanding and clarification; using reflection to help the team to consider the content and process. Students can be asked to respond individually to certain reflective questions or asking them to write a reflective piece about their experience (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). All the above discussion reveals that the role of the facilitator is not an easy one to accomplish. For this reason the student and teacher reflections become necessary in order to assess the effectiveness of the role of the teacher as well as the amount of learning that takes place. Reflection was a key component in the present study as a measure of student empowerment.
Another important role of the teacher is giving feedback, which involves commenting on the team process and progress, group interaction and overall cohesion. Feedback should be clear and positive feedback. Materials designed by the teacher should be such that discourage plagiarism. Assessment approaches used should also be such that ensure maximum reduction of plagiarism (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). For this reason I used real life problem situations which required the students to go and talk to someone about it for their major assignments. This minimized the chances of plagiarism.

In Problem based learning, the role of the student shifts from the role of a passive listener and observer to overlapping and dynamic roles. Each student is responsible to his or her teammates. Students actively construct knowledge and compare it with previous knowledge; they collaborate with their classmates and work in teams or groups. Students are active problem solvers; contributors and they take risks in problem-based learning. Their individual role may be of a practical real-world problem solver, expert or decision maker, self-directed learner, communicator, advocate, participator in a community of learners, scientist or scholar, apprentice, explorer, creative and critical thinker, mature adults and resource manager. The roles of the team are divided broadly into three categories such as task roles, maintenance roles and personal roles. To be specific these include, facilitator, researcher, encourager, timekeeper, recorder, checker and wildcard (assumes the role of any missing member) (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004).

As much as the role of the teacher and the student is important in this approach so is the Problem design. Problem design is the center of PBL method and it demands considerable attention. While designing the problem some of the cognitive domains of Bloom’s taxonomy should be kept in mind. There are six levels in this taxonomy. Savin-Baden and Major (2004) list
the verb examples associated with each level that represent intellectual activity and say that these verbs could be used to state the problem scenario.

- **Knowledge**: arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recall, recognize, relate, repeat, reproduce, state.
- **Comprehension**: classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate.
- **Application**: apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.
- **Analyze**: analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.
- **Synthesis**: arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set-up, write.
- **Evaluation**: appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose, compare, defend, estimate, evaluate, judge, predict, rate, score, select, support, value.

It is suggested one should not be too focused on this taxonomy although it can be a good starting place while designing a problem for the first time (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004). It should be kept in mind however that the center of PBL is critical thinking and the students get engaged in it almost as soon as they are introduced to the problem. Approaches like Problem based learning have been said to promote independent inquiry in students and they take up a stance towards the knowledge they gain. Jonassen (2004), points out that in order to solve any kind of problem, learners need to have a stance that must be supported through evidence; moreover, argumentation is not just an important cognitive skill, it is also pervasive in western culture, and is all the more necessary in academics. The following diagram reveals the critical outcomes for
level-4 writing class in the Intensive English program. Problem-Based Learning fits very nicely with these teaching outcomes and it should be incorporated into the teaching and learning of these outcomes to make it a more meaningful experience for the learners.

- Find appropriate websites for sources; cite sources using APA
- Effectively summarize and paraphrase texts  (*Knowledge and comprehension skills*)
- Effectively incorporate credible sources into writing to support ideas and/or arguments.  (*Application, synthesis and evaluation skills*)
- Write a multi-paragraph cause and effect essay  (*Application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation skills*)
- Write a multi-paragraph persuasive essay  (*Application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation skills*)
- Write a 50 minute timed-writing essay with a length of 250-350 words about a specific prompt

**Figure 2: Critical outcome for Level-4 Writing class**

While talking about the roles and the problem design, it is also important to keep in mind and carefully plan the assessment procedure that would be followed. These decisions need to be made no matter which approach is used for teaching. The kind of assessment that is best suited for PBL is ongoing and continuous assessment as it provides students with feedback on their progress and an assurance that their team is on target (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004; Trop & Sage, 2002). This kind of on-going assessment was followed for the present study as well. It is important to extend the range of those providing feedback. To incorporate that element into my design, I planned to have a peer evaluation of the essays and the introductions that the students wrote in class as a practice and they shared it with their peer who evaluated it using checklists in their textbook (see Appendix IV for the weekly overview of in-class and out of class activities).
Students can also be encouraged to assess themselves. The recommended grading system for PBL is the criterion-reference grading in which a specific criteria is set against which the students are evaluated. This is said to give students an incentive to help each other and collaborate (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). The Intensive English Program has a rubric that is followed for grading writing, which provides set criteria to evaluate the students. The same rubric was used for grading student performance on the midterm and on the research assignments. Assessment included group presentation as well. Both formative and summative assessment was followed (Trop & Sage, 2002).

2.2. Model for Problem based learning

A variety of models have been designed and adopted by PBL researchers. Delisle (1997) shares a PBL process as outlined by Barrows and Tamblyn (1980). Savin-Baden & Major (2004), discuss several modes through which PBL can be incorporated into the curriculum. Trop and Sage (2002) share their instructional template for a PBL unit where the teacher is like a coach, the unit has embedded instruction and assessment.

For the present study I have adapted the model used by Karthikeyan et al. (2009). The model used by these researchers was applied to the teaching of Grammar in India and it consists of four specific phases involved in the PBL process. Each phase has a clearly outlined role of the teacher and the student. But it lacked the element of assessment/feedback and reflection, which are highly stressed by other researchers. The model used for the present project is an adaptation of the model used by Karthikeyan et al. (2009) in the sense that the element of feedback and reflection which are deemed essential have been added to it (Appendix I).
Reflection has been stressed by many PBL researchers, and it can be written or oral as used by an Australian teacher who interviewed the students at the end of the project asking them about what they learnt about history through the project (Boss & Krauss, 2007). Asking students specific questions about their skill development and factors involved in the success of the task can help the students reflect on their learning experience in a better way. Faidley et al. (2000) stress that time should be reserved at the end of each session to reflect on the group processing dynamics where the students comment on their own contribution to the group. The peers also comment on their group mate’s performance before evaluating themselves. But students need to be trained for self-evaluation and reflection as some students find it hard to evaluate their performance. They used a Learning Team Survey which focused on the behaviors and attitudes that are important to group learning as well as behavior observation checklists. No matter what kind of survey or reflection tool is used, it should be able to answer the research questions and help the learners get into the habit of reflecting on their learning. Reflection tools for the teacher and student participants have been carefully drafted with the purpose of answering the research questions in the present study (Appendix VI – XI).

2.3. Why PBL?

With all the above discussion about Problem-based learning, it is important to mention that why this approach is being followed. As briefly mentioned earlier, there are many benefits of using PBL in a classroom. The first important benefit is that the teacher does not have to work harder than the students since it is a shift from the teacher-centered, lecture based classroom to a more student-centered (White, 2001), discussion based classroom. Other benefits are all related to the student learning. Instead of being talked at, students get to discover for themselves, which encourages participation, motivation and they are likely to remember what they find out
themselves compared to what they would hear in a lecture. Students learn life-long problem-solving skills through PBI (Lambros, 2004). One benefit is that PBL promotes self-regulated and self-directed leaning (SDL) (English & Kitsantas, 2013). In fact, SDL in problem-based learning has been studied by many researchers (Dolmans & Schimdt, 2000; Hmelo & Lin, 2000; Evensen, 2000). In PBL, students learn both content and thinking strategies as well as engage in self-directed learning (SDL). In short, PBL helps students to develop flexible knowledge, effective problem-solving skills, SDL skills, effective collaboration skills, and intrinsic motivation (Kelson & Distlehorst, 2000; White, 2001; Hmelo-Silver, 2004). It makes them independent responsible learners (Dolmans & Schmidt, 2000). The particular features of PBL that promote self-directed learning are: the student centered nature of PBL, using existing/prior knowledge to identify and solve a problem, identifying deficits in knowledge and generating suitable learning issues, independent research endeavor, applying new knowledge to the problem and collaborative reflection on self-directed learning (Hmelo & Lin, 2000). And one way to understand and assess SDL is through self-report data in the form of student reflection as used in the present study (Blumberg, 2000).

Keeping in mind the benefits of PBL to the students, it has been used by several researchers and practitioners and in particularly in the medical school (Duek, 2000; Dolmans & Schmidt, 2000; Erdman, 2010). Duek (2000), used PBL with medical students. Students believed that it is the faculty’s job to provide important knowledge to the group. Lastly, they said that learning from each other was not helpful. It is important to keep in mind that these students were a mixed group, some were white, some Hispanic, Asian and some black. Perhaps it was hard for them to get along and interact. An important concern for my research was that the students who would participate in this study would also be Asian students and these students are used to
teacher centered, lecture-based classrooms. Asian students are reported to prefer conformity, structured classrooms, low participation in class, modeling, and to be given large amount of written information (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004). It was anticipated that the students would express attitude and concern similar to Duek’s study in the beginning, perhaps with the passage of time they will get adjusted. Not only that, motivating Arab females to participate equally in class can be quite a task. Based on my previous experience with Saudi students, males have contributed more to the class discussions and both genders have insisted on staying segregated. For this reason I felt that it is good to introduce PBL approach to the students first and let them know what is expected of them in this approach. This problem was also used to make the students write about it: Why is there gender segregation in some cultures and why is it not there in other cultures? This was another opportunity to address diversity related issues using a PBL approach.

To sum up the above discussion, PBL has been used extensively in the field of medicine (Faidley et al. 2000), online courses (Savin-Baden, 2007), for teaching history (Boss & Krauss, 2007); and Karthikeyan et al. (2009) have used it in India to teach grammar because of the various benefits of this approach to the students. My concern was to see if PBL is useful to teach writing in an outcomes based ESL classroom.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research was to see whether Problem based learning can be applied to teach language, in particular the skill of writing, in an ESL classroom and also to see if it still is a good approach to meet the outcomes set for level 4 writing in the IEI.

3.1. Materials Created

A PBL model by Karthikyan et al. (2009) was adapted for this study. Various in-class and out of class activities were carefully designed by the researcher incorporating the essential components of Problem-based learning. Appendix IV gives a weekly overview of the in-class and out of class activities that were planned for the seven weeks. The researcher designed the problem situations as prompts for the learners to investigate and be able to write their research based essays. Appendix XII contains all the problem situations about the cause and effect essays and argumentative essays that were given to the students to investigate and write about. The research-based long essay topics were intended to be a group assignment were two –three students could do research work together, but they were each required to write their own individual essay based on the shared sources and it allowed each of them to take a different and individual stance on the problem situation. The reason for making it a group work in the initial stage was to help them collaborate, brainstorm and discuss the topic/ the problem together and perhaps interview someone as a group if needed. Some essay topics were such that gave the opportunity to the willing students to be able to talk to certain people holding professional knowledge and insight into the problem situation. Some topics allowed the students to go out and
explore the environment, like the topic on graffiti. These were all real life problem situations and the learners were invited to consider these situations, choose one that was of interest to them or come up with one of their own interest and investigate the causes of the problem and solutions if there were any possible. In other situations they were invited to form an opinion and argue in favor or against the situation.

3.2. Sample population

The sample population consisted of around 6 international students who came to learn English at the Intensive English Institute at Ball State University. These students came from China, Saudi Arabia, and Korea.

3.3. Sample strategy

Convenient sampling was used for this study. The participants were informed through the consent form about this research.

3.4. Research instruments

(i) **Teacher reflection form.** It was a semi-structured questionnaire. Some items consisted of a rating scale and others were open-ended. This form consists of a number of questions that helped the researcher see how the students responded to the role of the teacher as a facilitator, how the students responded to the problem; whether the students were engaged, motivated or bored. It also helped me see whether the outcomes were met using the PBL method. It was revised with the consultation of the research advisor (Appendix VII).
(ii) **Student reflection form.** This form was also semi-structured and consisted of questions similar to the teacher reflection form, but there were additional questions that allowed the students to share their experience in terms of the responsibility they took being involved in the group work, what was their participation, how did they feel as learners and they were also allowed to share their opinion about their learning through this method. It had some items with a rating scale and others that were open-ended. It was revised with the consultation of research advisor (Appendix VIII). Later three versions of it were creative with respect to each major outcome. (Appendix IX, X & XI). These surveys had questions, which allowed the participants to self-report their understanding of the materials, their involvement in the task, level of motivation and confidence. The participants were further allowed to self-report how responsible and independent they felt as learners. (See Appendix IX-XI for further details).

(iii) **Consent form.** A consent form was designed to receive the consent of the participants for this research. It explained the purpose of the study and informed them about data anonymity. (Appendix II A).

(iv) **Student performance.** At designated points during this research, some student classwork in the form of essays was collected. One ungraded, long (around 300-600 words), cause and effect essay and two timed essays (cause and effect; and argumentative) were taken for the study. The ungraded essays were given to the designated administrator from the intensive English program, who made copies of them for the researcher and had the names removed for the purpose of anonymity. These were used to compare the performance of the students during the period of seven-weeks and to check whether the students had mastered/achieved those
outcomes. Performance grades were not used in this research for any kind of analysis. However the ungraded essays of the participants were rated out of a 100% each for the purpose of research analysis using the IEI level 4 writing rubric, only after the students had passed on to the next level.

3.5. Analysis

The analysis was carried out after the seven-week session was over and after the student grades were officially recorded with the University. Data was collected in the spring and the analysis was done in the summer when the students had passed to the next level.

3.6. Research Procedure

At the start of the session, students were informed about the research project. The information about this research project was listed in the syllabus, the recruitment script and the consent form, so that the students were aware that the assignments, assessments, readings and activities were a part of the research project and remained the same for participants and non-participants alike. Whether they participated or not, was the choice of the students and they were free to withdraw their participation at any time. They were told that they would be asked to fill out the consent form if they were willing to participate, each time the data was collected, to make sure that the participation was voluntary and to allow the students a chance to withdraw if they wanted to.

Students were introduced to the PBL approach and were given an article to read so they could understand its learning benefits. Students were told that this approach involved investigation and discovery and was being used to make the students independent learners and it
would enable them to be more involved and in-charge of their learning, resulting in a better understanding of the materials. They were required to work in groups to solve a problem; each member had to be given a specific task and had to contribute towards solving the problem. Then after the completion of the task they were required to complete a reflection form. One example of the task that the students were involved in was meeting the outcome of APA referencing and in-text citations. The students were divided in groups and chose to present one aspect of APA referencing (books, newspapers, journals) and the general rules to the class. The teacher provided the handout and the link to the website. The students had to understand it and present it, also prepare a practice activity for the students. This enabled them to read about APA and try to understand it themselves instead of listening to a lecture about it. For the cause and effect essays, the students first read about it at home and then discussed what was a cause and effect essay in class, its methods of organization and the use of transition expressions. The students also read two sample essays at home and the discussion was followed in class. The students came with questions about the organizational structure, were able to see how the introduction and thesis statement was constructed and later they were given an opportunity to write a practice essay, which was not graded. However they received feedback on that essay so that they could avoid their organizational mistakes in future. Later timed-essays and the research essay were graded for their course work. The same procedure was followed for teaching and learning of the argumentative essay.

The researcher filled out a reflection form after teaching each of the three main outcomes. Student participants also filled out the survey when the outcome of citing sources using APA was taught, when the cause/effect essay and argumentative research essays were completed. This way they were able to reflect on an entire unit. Students were also advised to keep a log while
grouping and surveying, so that they could keep a record of their participation and learning in the
group, the techniques or strategies they used, etc. This helped them answer specific questions in
the reflection form. At some point in week 2-3, student performance at one practice timed-essay
and the long cause and effect essay was collected and given to the designated Associate Director
for making copies of the student essays with their identity removed so that the student
performance could be checked to see if the course outcomes were met and students displayed
better understanding. The cause and effect survey was filled after the participants completed their
long research essay. The students were required to cite at least two credible sources in this essay
as supporting details. The same procedure was followed for the argumentative survey which was
completed by the participants after they had finished writing their long research-based
argumentative essay which required them to cite three credible sources to support their argument.
In the last week the students’ last argumentative timed-essay was also taken for the purpose of
tracing the student progress over the seven-week period and to evaluate the learning that had
taken place. All these copies remained locked in the office and the researcher had access to them
only after the session was over.

3.7. Anticipated Results

It is hoped that students will come to a better understanding of the materials through a process of
investigation and discovery that is a part of the PBL approach. I also anticipate students being
scared and uncomfortable about their roles as PBL learners as most students come from eastern
countries where they still follow the traditional lecture based teaching method. According to the
study by Lim and Lew (2012), the adoption of PBL for English classroom resulted in many
challenges faced by the learners and it was easier for the learners to adapt to PBL in Mathematics
and science classes. This study revealed that PBL could be a struggle for learners in an English
language classroom. It was hoped that this struggle would be overcome and that the method would more effectively help to meet the outcomes.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data obtained from this study was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, hence both types of analyses were required. First, this chapter presents the a quantitative analysis of the participants’ responses in the three surveys, namely the APA citations survey, the cause and effect essays survey and the argumentative essays survey. Student performance essays are discussed in the later part of the chapter both quantitatively and qualitatively.

4.1. Quantitative Data and Analysis

This section gives the quantitative results and analysis of the study the data from the three surveys is discussed quantitatively in the form of tables consolidating the participant responses to key questions on all three surveys. The tables contain the means of the participant responses on the likert scale as well as a visual representation of the responses on the likert scale in the form of a bar graph. In the tables only statistical data is represented, the relevant qualitative data of the surveys is discussed in along with the student essays in the qualitative section. The tables represent the data from the surveys that helped in answering the research questions particularly. Some tables only contain data from the cause and effect survey and the argumentative survey, as those questions on the survey did not apply to the teaching and learning of APA citations. For instance, the questions about ‘connecting information to the topic’ and ‘contributing additional ideas/re-evaluation of ideas contributed’ were not a part of the student APA survey, hence the tables 5, table 7 and table 8 do not include data from the APA survey.
Table 1: Role of the teacher as reported in the APA citations, cause and effect and argumentative essay surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>APA Citations</th>
<th>Cause and effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graph</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Graph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpfulness</td>
<td>1 4 5 6 6 7</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4 5 5 7 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency</td>
<td>3 5 7 7</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>4 4 5 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of encouragement</td>
<td>2 5 6 6 7 7</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>4 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of clarity</td>
<td>1 3 5 5 6 7</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3 3 5 7 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachability</td>
<td>2 4 6 7 7</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>4 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the participants’ views regarding the role of the teacher in the three major tasks. The table also contains a visual representation of the students’ responses regarding how helpful, encouraging, competent, clear and approachable the teacher was, according to the perception of the students, on the three major tasks of APA citations, cause and effect essays and the argumentative essays. Each column in the bar graph is representative of one participant’s response (the bar graph also shows the number of participants that responded to that item) and the numbers above them stand for the value on the 7-point Likert scale; where 1 has the least value and therefore is the most negative response to that item and 7 is the most positive response. The value 4 represents the neutral position on the scale. The table also gives the means of the Likert scale values that were marked by the participants on the survey to indicate their opinion about the teacher’s role on that task.
According to graph in table 1, 4 out of 6 participants reported that the teacher was helpful for the APA activity and the mean is 4.48 ($SD = 2.14$). In the opinion of the participants, the teacher’s helpfulness increased for the cause and effect activity and therefore the mean of the likert scale values representing the opinion of the respondents is 5.60 ($SD = 1.34$). This is where the students received much scaffolding and practice before the long essay task; hence the teacher became more helpful in their opinion. During the seven-week session the learners had reported in class that they found the cause and effect essay easier in comparison to the argumentative essay. Since the cause and effect essay was reported to be easier to understand by the students in comparison to the argumentative essay, the helpfulness of the teacher in the opinion of the participants was decreased ($M = 5.33$). Perhaps the students viewed the teacher not so helpful in making them understand the argumentative essay. Participants’ opinion on the level of clarity of the teacher also followed a similar circular pattern where 4 out of 6 participants considered the teacher to be clear and the mean is 4.50 ($SD = 2.17$). The teacher was viewed to be clearer for the cause and effect essay task, so the mean for the participants’ responses on the likert scale is 5.00 ($SD = 2.00$). Since the concepts of the argumentative essay are harder to understand, the teacher was viewed to be less clear; therefore, the mean for teacher’s clarity on the argumentative essay task is 4.33 ($SD = 1.15$). The values representing the participants’ opinion of the teacher’s competency, encouragement and approachability kept decreasing. This may be due to the fact that the students were expected to be more and more independent as the session progressed. There appears to be a direct relationship between the role of the teacher as viewed by the students in terms of clarity and helpfulness that she offered and the task difficulty - the more difficult a task was the less helpful and clear the teacher was reported to be.
Table 2: Clarity of direction for the three tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of clarity in directions</th>
<th>APA citations</th>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graph</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Graph</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 gives the descriptive statistics for the participants’ opinion regarding the clarity of the directions for the three tasks. This data is important in evaluating the role of the teacher as a facilitator, whether she was able to explain the task in a clear manner. The table contains a visual representation of the students’ responses. Each column in the bar graph is representative of one participant’s response and the numbers above them stand for the value on the 7-point Likert scale where 1 has the least value and therefore is the most negative response to that item and 7 is the most positive response. The value 4 represents the neutral position on the scale. This visual representation helps to see the concentration of the participants’ responses on the 7-point Likert scale regarding clarity of task directions. The table also shows the means for the Likert scale values selected by the participants to indicate their opinion. This table also mirrors the pattern that was traced in table 1 for the teacher’s approachability and competency. In table 2 the task directions for APA citations activity were considered to be clear by 3 participants who gave the value 6 on the Likert scale ($M = 4.60; SD = 1.95$), but in the following two tasks, a majority of the students were neutral as far as the clarity of the task directions were concerned. Hence the mean of the student’s responses on the likert scale continues to drop, $4.40 (SD = 1.52)$ for the cause and effect essay task and $3.67 (SD = 0.58)$ for the argumentative essay task. Perhaps the teacher was not able to make the task and the expectations clear to the students. Another explanation could be that the students were expected to be more independent and responsible for their learning, by reading on their own about the two types of essays and being prepared for the
class discussions. These two types of essays, namely cause and effect and argumentative essays, were totally new to the learners were slightly complex compared to the compare and contrast essay they had learned previously. The complexity of the essay type and the new method of learning may have resulted in some confusion on the part of the students.

Table 3: Students' view of their role as learners in the three tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>APA citations</th>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graph Mean</td>
<td>Graph Mean</td>
<td>Graph Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of confidence</td>
<td>2 3 4 4 7</td>
<td>4 5 5 6 7</td>
<td>4 5 6 6 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of comfort</td>
<td>3 4 4 6 7</td>
<td>3 4 5 7 7</td>
<td>4 6 6 6 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of responsible</td>
<td>4 5 5 7 7</td>
<td>4 5 6 6 7</td>
<td>4 5 6 6 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of involvement</td>
<td>4 4 6</td>
<td>3 4 6 6 6</td>
<td>4 6 6 6 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of being</td>
<td>1 4 5 6 7</td>
<td>4 4 6 7 7</td>
<td>4 4 6 6 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>challenged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level on independence</td>
<td>4 4 5 5 7</td>
<td>3 3 5 7 7</td>
<td>3 4 6 6 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 summarizes the student’s responses on their role as a learner on the three tasks. The table shows the students’ perceptions on their level of confidence, comfort, responsibility, involvement, level of independence and how much they felt challenged while they were involved in the task of doing presentations on APA citations, writing a cause and effect essay and writing the argumentative essay. The table also contains a visual representation of the students’ responses on the likert scale, which marks the level of their comfort, confidence, involvement, etc. The table contains the means of the students’ responses on the 7-point likert scale and the visual
representation shows the concentration of the participants’ responses on the likert scale, where value 1 is the least and the most negative response to that item and 7 is the most positive response. The value 4 represents the neutral position on the scale. Table 3 also reflects the circular pattern that was traced in table 1 and 2. Here, in table 3, the circular pattern can be seen in the responses of the participants for reporting their level of confidence, level of being challenged and the level of independence on the three tasks. The students felt more confident and challenged for the cause and effect essay task that was perceived as easy by the students in comparison to the APA citations and argumentative essay the means for both of which are lower in comparison to the mean for cause and effect essay task. The participants’ comfort level and the level of involvement kept increasing in the seven-week session as is evident from the data in table three. The mean for level of comfort is 4.80 ($SD = 1.64$) on the APA citations task, for cause and effect it is 5.20 ($SD = 1.79$) and for argumentative essay task it is 5.33 ($SD = 1.15$). The level of student involvement follows the same pattern. This may be due to the fact that as the session progressed the students felt more comfortable with the PBL approach and became clearer regarding their role as independent learners and hence they became more involved in their learning process. Data in table three regarding the level of responsibility assumed by the participants reveals that the students were taking full responsibility of their learning. The concentration of the participants’ responses in the visual representation for the level of responsibility clearly shows that a majority of the students felt responsible for their learning. The above data helps in concluding that problem based learning approach and model that was followed for this seven-week session helped in creating more involved and responsible learners.
Table 4 shows the percentage for students’ reported involvement on the three tasks. The participants worked in pairs for these tasks. The first two tasks in the table show only 50% involvement that means only half of the students participated in the pair work; the others merely relied on their friend or their partner. This can be acceptable for the APA citations task where they had to do a presentation. Perhaps one of the students did most of the work where as the other person did not. This is one of the drawbacks of assigning pair/group work. Participants reported a 50% participation and involvement in the cause and effect essay task as well.

Considering the nature of the task assigned, it was not possible for the students to complete the essay without being involved in the process of writing either by writing a thesis statement, organizing the essay, collecting sources, etc. The percentage of student participation increased towards the end of the seven-week session. This is where the students were becoming more independent and more involved in debates in the class and in their effort to convince their reader about their argument. This is suggestive of the fact that despite being hard, argumentative essays are able to better involve the students as one cannot convince or persuade another person without deeply thinking about the topic under discussion. Something specific to the nature of the argumentative essay is that the writer has to own the discussion and form his/her opinion and then endeavor to convince the other person about it. This becomes a very personal kind of writing but is very objective at the same time, as the writer has to back up his/her stance with research and expert opinion. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that the student involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>APA citations</th>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Percentage of student involvement in the three tasks
increased for the argumentative essay task or perhaps the participants had become independent and self-directed by then.

Table 5: Type of involvement in the essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing information</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing the thesis statement</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing the method of organization</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table five shows the percentage of the students who reported that they were involved in synthesizing information for their essays, writing the thesis statement and choosing the method of organization. The involvement of the participants was 100% for synthesizing information and writing the thesis statement. These tasks were hard for the students considering the nature of the argumentative essay. Hence the participants found it hard to synthesize information from different sources to make a strong argument (involvement score was 0%), but were partially okay with writing a thesis statement for the argumentative essay, as the involvement score was 50% only. The data reported above does not accurately reflect the students’ involvement in these essays. The students wrote individual research based essays for both these tasks. Both the tasks required the students to choose a method of organization, as they could not write an essay without first choosing which method would best suit their purpose. Writing a thesis statement is a very important component for both these essay types and synthesizing information was equally important and necessary for a research-based essay. Hence the students were involved in all these three type of tasks related to writing the essay so the above data does not clearly represent
the type of participant involvement on the task. An evaluation of participants’ performance on these essays would be necessary to fully gauge the type of involvement on these essays.

Table 6: Better understanding of the materials through PBL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>APA citations</th>
<th>Cause and Effect Essay</th>
<th>Argumentative Essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows the self-reported, perceived, results for achieving a better understanding of the materials through the problem based learning approach. The above table shows that the level of student understanding kept decreasing as the seven–week session progressed. These results represent how the participants perceived their learning and are not a true reflection of learning in these tasks. In order to confirm this data it is necessary to evaluate the participants’ performance on timed essays that they wrote in class for this course. This data reflects a lack of confidence in themselves and a certain doubt about their learning using this new teaching and learning method. The participants’ performance on the essays will be discussed in detail as a part of the qualitative data and analysis.

Table 7: Connecting information to the topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table seven shows the percentage of participants who reported that they were able to connect their information to the essay topic. The data in the table clearly shows that a majority of the participants were able to make this connection. The ability to make this connection can be explained as a result of the three-step process. First the participants had to understand the essay topic, then they had to gather relevant information and lastly they had to build a connection by applying that information or using it in their essay in a logical and relevant manner. Knowledge, comprehension and application are the first three stages in Bloom’s taxonomy of higher cognitive thinking. Achieving these stages is fundamental for moving towards the higher skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Table 8: Contributing additional ideas and re-evaluating ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New ideas</td>
<td>Re-evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows the ratio of the participants who reported that they were able to contribute new ideas and re-evaluate the ideas they had contributed both of which are listed as higher order thinking skill on Bloom’s taxonomy. The table above shows that the percentage of participants who contribute new ideas and re-evaluated the ones they had contributed was higher for the cause and effect essay task. On the contrary fewer participants took the risk of contributing new idea and re-evaluating the ones they had contribute. These results can be explained in terms of the task difficulty and the confidence level of the students. The students felt more confident engaging themselves in analysis, synthesis and evaluation procedures for cause and effect essay.
as they had achieved complete comprehension of the related concepts but for the argumentative essay the students were not so confident that they had grasped those basic concepts of refuting the opposite opinion and presenting a counter argument. The data gain reflects a lack of confidence on the part of the participants regarding their performance on the task. But writing a good argumentative essay entails an evaluation of the opposite opinion and providing evidence in favor of ones stance, backing up ones opinion with research. There is an element of re-evaluation involved. It would be necessary to consider the performance of the participants on their essays to see if they were really not successful in displaying higher order cognitive thinking for the argumentative essay or that they were just not confident in reporting that.

Table 9: Learning techniques used by the students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning by doing</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagrams or mind maps</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking or explaining to a friend</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note taking</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking questions</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 summarizes the variety of learning techniques reportedly used by the participants in the two essay tasks. Table 9 does not have information on the learning techniques used by the participants for the learning the APA citations as the participants did not indicate so on the survey. From the above table it is clear that the techniques of reading and asking questions were the ones that were most used. Learning to identify a technique that can help one learn in a better
way is vital to becoming an independent and self-directed learner. The table also shows that the use of these techniques varied for the two essay tasks. For instance, it was easier for the learners to organize their cause and effect essay through a diagram showing the cause/effect relationship but the same concept was not applicable to the argumentative essay hence they did not use it, instead they began to read more in order to learn and understand the topic and the nature of the argumentative essay itself. This ability to adapt the choice of a learning technique to suit the task at hand requires a great deal of thinking and understanding the nature of the task on the part of the learner.

Table 10: Assessment of the learning experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>APA Citations</th>
<th>Cause and effect</th>
<th>Argumentative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graph</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of being Challenged</td>
<td>3 3 4 6</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of being Engaged</td>
<td>4 4 5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of retention</td>
<td>3 4 5 5 6</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of understanding</td>
<td>3 4</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of independence</td>
<td>2 4 4 5</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 summarizes the quantitative data for the students’ assessment of their own learning experience in the three tasks. The table also contains a visual representation of the students’ responses. Each column in the bar graph is representative of one participant’s response and the
numbers above them stand for the value on the 7-point Likert scale where 1 has the least value and therefore is the most negative response to that item and 7 is the most positive response. The value 4 represents the neutral position on the scale. The table also gives the means of the Likert scale values that the participants marked to indicate their learning experience on that particular task. The mean for being challenged is the highest for the cause and effect essay task 4.33 (SD =1.53). The mean value for the level of being challenged and the mean value for being engaged seem to follow a circular pattern. The mean value for the level of engagement is 4.33 for APA activity, is high for the cause and effect essay task 4.50 (SD = 2.12) but dropped for the argumentative essay activity 3.00 (SD = 1.00). This circular pattern partly repeats for the level of understanding where the means changed from 4.00 to 5.50 for the cause and effect essay and then again to 5.00 for the argumentative essay. The responses of the participants about their learning experience on these three tasks seem to directly relate to the level of task difficulty. Learning APA citations was considered hard and boring by the students, therefore the responses to the level of engagement, challenge, understanding and independence were low for the APA activity in comparison to the cause and effect essay task, where all these means increased. This is due to the fact that the students find writing a cause and effect essay easier and they received a great deal of practice opportunities in class before they wrote their long cause and effect essay, hence it was less threatening and the means increased. But argumentative essays are considered hard by the students especially making a counter argument is a hard concept for them to understand. Perhaps for this reason the means for “challenge”, “engagement” and understanding dropped for the argumentative activity.

It is important to note that the level of retention reported by the learners kept increasing as the seven-week session progressed. The highest Likert values reported for APA activity were
5.5 & 6 out five participants and the mean for these values was 4.60 ($SD = 1.14$). The values for retention for cause and effect essay on the likert scale were reported to be 3, 6 and 7 out of three participants and the mean for these values was 5.33 ($SD = 2.08$). The reported values for retention were the highest for the argumentative essay 4,6,7 and the mean therefore 5.67 with a standard deviation of 1.53. Perhaps the argument can be made that problem-based learning with its problem-solving and student-centered approach was successful in making the learner take responsibility or their learning and hence it lead to a better understanding and retention. The basic idea behind making the learners discover their learning through problem solving tasks was that what they would discover themselves and teach themselves, would result in not only a better understanding but also better retention. As the learners were able to understand their role and responsibilities better in this PBL method, their understanding, retention and independence increased.

### 4.2. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the student essays

This section contains the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the student performance at writing essays over the period of seven weeks. First, the results of the student essays are presented quantitatively which is followed by a detailed qualitative discussion of student essays. The data consists of two timed essays written by the participants and one long cause and effect research based essay. The first timed essay was taken in the second week of class. The students wrote five timed-essays for this course. The second timed essay taken for this study was the last timed- essay, which was written by the students in the last week of class and was an argumentative timed- essay.
Table 11: Essay scores of participants based on the Intensive English Program Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Participant</th>
<th>(Week 2) Timed – essay 1</th>
<th>Long Cause and Effect Essay (Week 4)</th>
<th>(Week 7) Timed- essay 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 shows the essay scores for the six participants of this research. A glance at the scores reveals that the participants scored the lowest in the second week of class. This was their first practice cause and effect essay, which was not included in their course grade, but this essay was graded using the Intensive English Program rubric for the purpose of this research. Except for participant 4, all the other participants failed to meet the length requirements for this cause and effect essay. They only managed to meet 50% of the length requirements. These participants were not familiar with the way to write a good paragraph, having one main idea, and supporting details and a concluding sentence. At this stage the paragraphs produced by the participants contained more than one idea, consisted of only 2-3 sentences and therefore did not have supporting details. This practice essay was meant to familiarize the learners with the organizational structure of writing a cause and effect essay. The learners had read two sample essays in the textbook and discussed them in class with the instructor before writing this first essay. From this essay the instructor was able to assess the current ability and proficiency of the
learners and gave them feedback. The first feedback was focused on writing a good comprehensive paragraph with one main idea and supporting details. After that the focus was on writing the essay. The learners received feedback regarding how to write an effective introduction with a hook, background information and a thesis statement; relevant body paragraphs with supporting details and a good concluding paragraph.

The participants wrote two more timed-essays and discussed the outlines of their long cause and effect essay that shows the scores in column 3 of the table above. The table shows a huge progress made by the learners in their long essay. The introduction to the essay was stronger with the use of an effective hook, the thesis statement was clearer. The body paragraphs were well organized and contained one main idea with sufficient evidence and examples in support of the thesis. The evidence and supporting details consisted of direct quotes, expert opinion, real life situations/examples and analogies. The ideas became clearer and there was unity in the essay. Despite certain grammatical and spelling errors, the students used strong verbs, vivid and precise description. Most importantly the students were able to establish the cause and effect connection in details. There were several factors that played a role in this amount of improvement. One of those factors could be the time factor. This was not a timed-essay. The learners had two weeks to complete this essay. This gave them time to plan and re-think some of the ideas. There was less stress involved. Further, the students wrote two drafts of it and were allowed to improve it based on the instructor’s feedback. Moreover, the students had written two more cause and effect essays in class since their first practice essay, and had received feedback on their errors. Extra time and feedback were important factors that contributed towards the higher score in the long cause and effect essay. This can also be argued based on the fact that participant 2,3 and participant 6 did not score higher than their long essay, on the last
timed-essay. Other participants scored even higher on the last timed essay. The higher scores on the last timed-essay seemed very encouraging. But two of the participants (student 1 and 4) scored higher on the last time-essay compared to the long essay, because they choose to write on a cause and effect essay topic again. Perhaps by the end of the seven-weeks they had completely mastered the form and structure of a cause and effect essay and felt not so confident while writing and argumentative timed essay or perhaps they did not like the argumentative topics given to them that day. But they certainly made a huge progress from the time when they first attempted an essay for this class.

Out of these participants, three attempted another cause and effect essay and three attempted an argumentative essay for their last timed-writing. Among those who attempted the argumentative essay, were participant 2 who scored 90% on the long essay but scored 86% on the argumentative time-essay, participant 5 who scored 91% on the long cause and effect essay and 97% on the timed argumentative essay; and participant 6 who scored 91% on the long essay and 81% on the argumentative essay. The fact that half of the participants did not attempt the argumentative essay when given a choice even after 3 weeks of instruction on that topic was suggestive of the fact that they found the cause and effect essay easier to write and would choose it over the argumentative if were given the choice. It is not sufficient to comment on the lack of confidence of these students without analyzing the performance of the participants who did attempt the argumentative essay. Perhaps then one could decide whether it was a lack of confidence or the lack of ability on the part of those students who chose not to attempt the argumentative essay.

Despite the grammar and spelling errors, participant 2 managed to score that much on the argumentative time-essay as the paragraphs were well organized, having a topic sentence,
supporting details and a concluding sentence. The ideas and arguments given were also stronger in comparison to the previous timed essays. The connection between ideas was logical and clearer than before. Transition expressions were used effectively. The student showed awareness of the conflicting viewpoints but was able to defend his/her argument by effectively refuting the opposite opinion. This showed a huge development in the student’s expression and thought processes. The student was able to build a cause and effect relationship to refute the opposite opinion in some paragraphs, and rationalize his/her opinion in others. In short this was the best timed-essay produced by the learner in seven weeks.

Participant 5 seemed to be an exceptional case that not only chose to attempt the argumentative essay as their last timed-essay but also scored highest points on that essay (97%). This last essay was the most revealing essay of the student’s potential. The student wrote on the topic “Is it okay to cheat in examination?” The student started off the essay with an interesting hook saying that cheating was a “universal act of the world” meaning to say that it was a universal experience and most graduate students experience this. The student gave some background information about why various students cheat and then gave a clear thesis that cheating was okay neither in examination nor in real life. The essay contained three well-organized body paragraphs. The student was aware of contradicting ideas and was able to refute the opposite opinion with effective and strong arguments. For example, the student wrote that most students cheated as they had less time to prepare for the exam. The student was able to refute this argument by stating that there were 24 hours in a day and 365 days in a year, which was ample time for anyone to study. The student claimed that the students should use their time to study and ask the teacher until they understand. The paragraph was ended with a very fine concluding sentence: “They should know that study(ing) is not their choice but their
responsibility.” The student was able to grasp the concept of having a counter argument in the essay. The concept of counter argument and refuting the opposite opinion is considered difficult by most students in level 4 but this student was able to understand it and produce it effectively in class. The entire essay flowed smoothly, ideas were connected logically and the student was able to illustrate his/her point through good examples and analogies. Hence the student scored a 97% on this timed-essay. Reading this essay was evidence enough of the student’s understanding and achievement of the skill of persuasive writing. The performance on the essay was consistent with the participant’s responses on the argumentative survey. On the survey the student mentioned that he/she was able to connect information to the topic and re-evaluate the ideas she or he had contributed. The student was also able to think of and contribute additional ideas. The student also understood the topics and materials in a better way and was able to use the information in the essay correctly. The student mentioned that he/she would remember what was learned and was in-charge of his/her learning.” While being so good at the long essays and the argumentative timed-essay, the student amazingly displayed a lack of confidence in their attempt at APA citations and in understanding the cause and effect materials. The essays however did not support that as the student had done well.

The last participant worth the discussion here was participant 6. This participant made a huge progress over the seven weeks and was only able to score 54% on his/her first timed writing. The student scored a 91% on the long cause and effect essay. The student worked hard to improve in this class and even reported that in the cause and effect survey that they completed after writing this essay. The student reported being able to understand the topic and materials in a better way “because (he/she) study hard.” The student was also able to use information in the essay correctly “because (he/she) study hard.” The learner further reported that he or she would
be able to remember most of what was learned.” These remarks are suggestive of the fact that the learner was taking responsibility and the charge of their learning. As mentioned earlier, some of the students did not attempt argumentative essay when given a choice to choose between the argumentative and the cause and effect essay. This learner perhaps was not scared and did attempt the argumentative essay. Not only did the essay have a clear introduction with a clear thesis statement, the essay also had three well-organized body paragraphs. There was clarity in the essay because the ideas were arranged in a logical manner. The student was able to establish cause and effect relationships in events to support his or her argument. This was evidence of the fact that the student had mastered the concept of making cause and effect connections and was now applying that knowledge to write a persuasive essay. This was another illustration of previous knowledge aiding present problem solving. Another way it could be described is as building further on previous knowledge. The student was aware of the conflicting arguments and was able to address and refute them in the essay. From 54% to 81% in timed-writing was a huge improvement.

This chapter discussed a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the participants’ responses in the three surveys along with analyzing their progress at writing essays in the seven-week session. The next chapter consists of a discussion of the key issues that emerged from the analysis and a discussion of the data in light of the research questions.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results in the light of the previous studies, the issues that emerged and the research questions that guided this project. The role of the PBL teacher as viewed by the teacher and the learners, and the role of the learners as viewed by the teacher and the learners are discussed as well. Apart from that, the influence of task difficulty on the students’ responses and their level of confidence are also explored.

5.1. Role of the PBL teacher as facilitator

The PBL teacher saw that her role was that of a facilitator and a coach. She wanted the students to take full responsibility of their role as learners and be as independent as possible. Hence the students were provided with the materials to study, understand on their own and were encouraged to ask questions about the materials in class. The teacher did not deliver lectures contrary to the student’s expectations. As a result the student’s disappointment with the teacher’s role was also reflected in the teacher’s survey about her own role. For the APA survey she suspected that the learners found her “somewhat helpful, somewhat competent, somewhat encouraging and somewhat clear but very approachable.” She was aware that the students would not find her very helpful or competent. This is what was mostly reflected from the student data. The reason was that the learners were not used to this kind of teaching method and expected more reliance on the teacher.
5.2. Circular Pattern

A circular pattern could be traced in most of the students’ responses. This was not unusual as most students find APA hard, cause and effect essay easier and the argumentative essay harder in comparison to the previous kind of essays that they have learned. This kind of pattern was evident from the students’ responses to the surveys regarding their level of confidence and their view of the teacher. For the APA task, 80% of the participants reported being “scared” and 60% of them reported being “uncomfortable” as well. When the responses to the cause and effect survey were analyzed it was found that the ratio of participants (80%) who were scared for the APA activity were now “confident” while writing their long cause and effect essay. The number of learner participants that reported being uncomfortable for APA (60%) were comfortable during the cause and effect activity. It was interesting to note how the student responses were reversed for these two activities. But for the argumentative essay task the participants’ level of confidence dropped to 60%. It appeared that the students’ level of confidence and comfort was directly related to the task difficulty. One student responded in a survey “sometime if I don’t feel scare, I write a good essay, but sometimes I couldn’t.” This comment of the student also shows how the level of comfort or discomfort can affect student performance.

This circular pattern also extended to the role of the teacher in these three tasks. Initially, the teacher was “not very helpful” and “not very competent” or clear. For the cause and effect essay the teacher rose slightly in the students’ estimation by becoming “very helpful, very competent and very clear” for most students and fell in their estimation again in the argumentative task where she was “not approachable and not clear.”
5.3. How the learners viewed themselves

An argument can be made that the level of task difficulty somehow influenced the students’ responses. This was not only true for how they viewed the role of the teacher but also true for how they viewed themselves as learners. Most students reported being “scared” or “not so comfortable” for the APA task but were a little more comfortable and confident for the cause and effect essay task but not very sure of themselves in the argumentative essay task. The student viewed APA as difficult although they were given a handout that was prepared for them with specific examples, they were also given an APA worksheet in class to practice but they found it intimidating, hence, at least two students reported being scared. On the other hand cause and effect essay task was less threatening for them as they had read and discussed two sample essays in class, attempted a practice essay that was not graded, they were given feedback on their mistakes and had also attempted timed cause and effect essays in class before the were assigned their long cause and effect essay. It can also be argued that the amount of scaffolding that was provided to the students for the cause and effect essay, helped in reducing their stress and raising level of comfort and confidence in self. Mostly the students reported being responsible and in-charge of their learning, and dependent on self except for two students.

5.4. Dependence on self and level of understanding

Dependence on self was also directly related to improving the student’s level of understanding as was evident from the surveys and students’ performance on timed essays. For instance one student reported on the APA survey that she/he was able to connect new information regarding APA to previous knowledge about APA citations. Student also reported being able to understand and use APA in a better way. The reason was explained as “I think it is
similar and arrange in similar way, just learn the process.” The student reported using the APA citations better than before.

Another student reported that he/she planned the APA presentation “myself, with little bet of my teacher.” The student reported to have understood APA in a better way and when asked why, the student reported, “because there are examples that makes APA easy to understand.” The student further reported being able to understand cause and effect essay materials and tasks in a better way and was also able to use the information correctly in the essay. She/he would remember what they learned and the student felt completely in-charge of his/her learning.” Same information was reported in the argumentative survey.

The students were made responsible and in-charge of their learning, and they learned from their own mistakes. They made an error, received feedback and next time they did not repeat the same error. In this manner they took one step at a time and were able to make a huge progress by the end of the session. But this would not have been possible without timely feedback.

5.5. Feedback

In this method of teaching and learning, the role of the teacher was of a facilitator who aided learning and self-discovery on the part of the learners. While the teacher was monitoring student progress and performance at the tasks, she provided feedback to make sure that the learners progressed in the right direction. Prompt and timely feedback is at the heart of PBL, which was attributed not only to improve student’s progress but also raise their confidence level.
5.6. Exceptions

However two students, in particular student 4 and 5 were not very confident and suffered from boredom in their cause and effect as well as argumentative essay-writing task. It was quite surprising to have come from these two students who were considerably better in their expression and writing ability when compared to the rest of the class. Boredom was easier to explain for them as one might think that it was too easy for them and they felt less challenged. Student 5 mentioned once that he/she got tired of writing the same kind of essays.” The teacher understood the student’s point of view but providing enough practice opportunities in class was important to see the breakthrough results towards the end of the session. But lack of confidence was not expected from them as they were very good writers. Moreover student 4 reported not being able to use the information correctly in the essays and not being able to understand the materials. The evidence from the student’s essays did not support this claim. The student did well in his/her essays but perhaps was a shy and a quiet learner with low self-esteem and lacked confidence in their ability.

Student 5 however was very sure about his/her learning for the argumentative essay. He/she was confident, responsible, comfortable, engaged, challenged and dependent on self. In addition, the student also reported being able to understand the materials in a better way and was able to use them correctly. Generally students in level 4 consider persuasive essays difficult in comparison with the cause and effect essay. This learner however was challenged, engaged and comfortable for this activity. This was not very unusual keeping the potential of this student in mind. He/she reported being bored earlier but the difficulty of argumentative writing provided a challenge that this student needed and hence was also engaged in the activity.
5.7. Pair/group work in a writing class

One of the issues raised by student 4 in the surveys was the idea that pair or group work was not needed or suitable for a writing class. Like the students in Duek’s (2000) study, this student could not see the benefit of learning from others or using the strengths of their peers. The idea this student had in mind was that in a writing class students should just write and the teacher should explain and give examples. This student considered discussion and consultation among students as something that was suitable for a speaking class only. Perhaps this student had not experienced an integrated skills writing classroom before. The present PBL plan integrated reading, writing, listening and speaking by incorporating the idea of a flip classroom where the students read at home and discussed issues and questions in class. The class was also structured in a way that provided opportunities for peer evaluation. Students were able to give feedback to their friends as to what other ideas could be incorporated in their essay. This was meant to strengthen the argument in the student’s essay by collaborating with peers. In the group or pair work the students were given an opportunity to draw from each other’s strengths and do a combined research on a mutual topic but write their own essay from their own individual point of view. It is however understandable that while peer evaluation and group/pair work might strengthen and help most students, it might be threatening for others.

5.8. Higher order thinking and PBL

It is customary to give reference to Bloom’s taxonomy when discussing or measuring higher cognitive thinking. It would be easier to discuss the student’s progress when seen in terms of Bloom’s taxonomy of higher cognitive thinking. It includes knowledge (recall of information, discovery, observation, listing, or naming), comprehension (understanding,
translating, paraphrasing, summarizing and discussing) and application (problem solving, manipulating, designing, and experimenting). Next are analysis, synthesis and evaluation. All these features lead up to a creative work and the presence of these processes was evident from student essays.

Before discussing the essays, it is important to mention that these students were not able to write a well-organized body paragraph in their first week of class. Their paragraphs had more than one main idea, did not have enough supporting detail and no concluding sentence. Most of their paragraphs consisted of only two or three sentences. The instructor had to instruct the students how to write a paragraph with a topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding sentence. Based on the instructor’s feedback along with taking responsibility of their learning, the amount of progress made by the students was commendable. The student progress was gauged through their timed essays that were written in class and a long research based essay that they wrote over two weeks.

Since Knowledge and recall of knowledge is the base of higher order thinking, the surveys and the student essays revealed that the participants were able to activate their previous knowledge about essay writing and APA and build further on that knowledge. As one of the participants remarked for APA “it is similar and arrange in similar way, just learn the process.” The students also used their knowledge of compare and contrast essays to provide supporting details in the paragraph. The learners were able to not only activate their previous knowledge but also applied it to current problem solving tasks by building connections. For instance one student reported that the previous information from other courses that helped the student in writing was reported as “adjective clause of grammar class.” Hence they were not only applying previous knowledge to new learning but were also combining and synthesizing information as was
reported by the students that they were “able to connect the information to the topic and reconsider the ideas” they had contributed.

As mentioned earlier, the students were not initially able to express their ideas clearly and logically. They could not produce coherent and well-organized paragraphs. These students were able to make a huge progress over the period of seven weeks where their essays not only improved in length but also in the development of their argument. The students were able to use reasoning ability and questioning techniques to engage the reader. Their introductions improved in the sense that they used an interesting hook, some background information and a clear thesis statement. They were able to use expert opinion, from newspapers and research articles to provide supporting details along with using definitions and the technique of compare and contrast that they had learned in the previous level. Their essays used more logical thinking and would gradually lead to a conclusion. They were able to justify their opinion, support their argument and provide a counter argument. They were also able to compare and contrast different ideas, which provided evidence of their ability to analyze and evaluate different kinds of approaches to the topic. These learners were also able to reevaluate their ideas that they had contributed. The students recalled their previous knowledge, understood new concepts, applied their knowledge, synthesized previous and new learning and evaluated ideas while creating well-organized essays. The timed essays and long essay produced by the students were proof enough of gradually developing and using these levels of higher order cognitive thinking.

5.9. PBL and student involvement

The current PBL instructional unit was designed in such a way that the students were involved in doing research work. They were asked to find out though reading and discussions
with their instructor and peers how to do APA citations, what is a cause and effect essay? What is an argumentative essay? The instructor did not directly answer these questions but the students were asked to take the initiative and find out what they could for a discussion. The data revealed that the students used a variety of sources for research like websites, journal articles, books and newspapers to do their essays. They also fulfilled the role and responsibility given to them in their respective groups. They were involved in the process of thinking through the topic and planning the organization of their essays. Although some students denied it in their surveys, it was not possible for them to have written an essay without thinking about it and planning its organization. The trick of the trade is that when the responsibility rests upon the student s/he has to get involved.

5.10. PBL and greater student understanding

The seven-week instructional unit was designed in a manner that encouraged students to discover things for themselves as much as possible. The instructor was present as a facilitator of that investigation process and as a resource to confirm their findings. Through self-discovery and prompt feedback the learners were able to grasp the important concepts that were required at this level. A majority of the participants also reported in their surveys that they were able to understand the topic and the related tasks and materials in a better way and were also able to use their information correctly “Because they studied hard.” The participants were able to connect their information to the topic and re-evaluate their ideas that they had contributed: “I thought coed school is same as single gender school, but after I wrote essay, I know the single gender school is better than coed.” All this discussion proves that the process of engaging the students in problem solving tasks where they had to discover things for themselves, turned out to be a technique that resulted in greater understanding of the materials. The instructor could focus on
providing feedback and reinforcing the student learning through class discussions instead of delivering lectures. Their timed essays discussed above were another proof of their greater understanding.

5.11. PBL and self-directed learners

The participants of this study became self-directed learners by choosing for themselves the learning techniques and learning methods that best helped them to understand the concepts and related materials. The learners took initiative of their learning and understood that they were responsible for their learning. The seven-week PBL plan used for this study made the learners self-directed in this way and also gave them the opportunity to choose their problem for the long research essay.

The seven-week instructional unit designed for this project gave the topics of research to the students and told them what they had to learn and find out. Some problems or activities could not change like finding about APA citations, cause and effect essays and argumentative essays; but the long research essay topics had a choice. The students were allowed to pick one of the topics designed by the instructor or choose another one that they would like to work with. In that sense the learners did have learner autonomy and the right to choose what they wanted to research and learn about. The students were asked to read about the cause and effect essay and argumentative essay at home if they wanted to understand it. They were required to read the sample essays at home to be able to participate in the class discussion about them. In this way the students had to take responsibility of their learning. Another reason for making the learner learn this way was that this independent way of learning would also prepare these learners for their future academic courses where instructors often expect the students to read an article prior
to having a discussion over it. Another way that PBL helped these learners in becoming self-directed was by choosing a learning method. Since the learners had to learn on their own they had to discover strategies that would help them learn. The data revealed a variety of strategies used by the participants that ranged from reading, asking questions, to learning by doing, talking or explaining to a friend, making diagrams and mind maps, to note-taking. The fact that these learners were able to figure out these strategies that worked for them was another step taken towards self-discovery and becoming a self-directed learner. Hence PBL can be considered an effective way of turning dependent students to independent learners.

The responses of the students in the surveys also revealed that the majority of the participants felt very responsible, and dependent on self for their learning. Initially the students were scared about this kind of learning but the felt very responsible and dependent on self at the same time. Later, their confidence level increased and they felt more challenged and involved. Therefore it can be concluded that PBL helped the learners feel more in-charge and responsible for their learning which resulted in greater understanding of materials and learner independence.

5.12. PBL and course outcomes

While implementing PBL in an outcomes-based classrooms, the greatest concern was whether it would still help in the achievements of the course outcomes. This approach could not be considered successful in this language-teaching environment if the outcomes were not met. Although some students reported that they were not able to use APA citations correctly or did not understand how to use them yet majority of they were able to use it correctly in the paper with a few minor errors. The students timed essays were a further proof of their mastering the
outcome of writing a cause/effect and argumentative essay. PBL was successful in helping the learners achieve all the outcomes without a doubt.

5.13. PBL suitable or not for a writing class

A study by Lim and Lew (2012) discovered that PBL was not suitable for a language classroom. Prior to conducting the present research, the researcher asked a colleague to pilot test this seven-week instructional unit. The teacher and the students were confused most of the time as they did not have any background in PBL. The instructor was not able to implement the PBL unit and help the students achieve the outcomes. Hence he concluded that PBL was not suitable for a language classroom, specifically at this level but perhaps may be suitable for higher-level learners. The findings of this study indicate a more nuanced result. PBL was not only suitable for this level but also suitable for the writing skill. It not only helped in meeting the outcomes for this level but also made the learners independent and self-directed. The students did object initially that the instructor’s job was to teach them instead of learning from their peers, and some objected to group work just like the students in the study done by Duek (2000). Perhaps later they were able to see the benefit of it all that all these elements fit together to complete the picture. Discovery, discussion, collaboration, peer evaluation and feedback, all played their own role in the process. When some students commented that they had learned a lot in this class, it was evident that the entire process now made sense to the students.

5.14. The adapted PBL model

The last thing left to talk about is the use of the PBL model that was adapted for the purpose of designing the seven-week instructional unit. The model was successful in preparing the learners to take on their role of independent and self-directed learners by first introducing
them to the basic concepts and benefits of the PBL method itself. The model’s effectiveness was also evident from the fact that all of the outcomes for the course were met while engaging the learners in the process of problem solving and investigation and improving their writing ability.
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This chapter briefly discusses the limitations of the present study, a summary of the research findings and recommendation for future research.

6.1. Limitations of the study

One major limitation of the study was that the researcher was not familiar with the students when the activities and tasks were designed. The seven-week instructional unit was designed months ahead of the beginning of the actual session. It would have been beneficial to incorporate the student interests into the essay topics to make the tasks more meaningful for the students. Another limitation of the study was the limited number of participants. Since the participation was voluntary and the students were allowed to withdraw from the study whenever they felt like, the participation for all the surveys was not the same; in fact it kept decreasing after the APA survey. The lack of significant number of participants for the entire study made it difficult to trace the individual student’s changing perspectives about their role as learners and their perception of the role of the teacher. The lack of significant number of participants also made the analysis and generalization of the data difficult.

6.2. Research Findings

The present study showed that PBL could successfully be used in a language-teaching situation and more specifically for teaching writing. This approach to teaching and learning is also suitable for an outcomes-based ESL setting. Nevertheless, it required a great deal of effort,
planning and a deep understanding of the concepts involved on the part of the instructor. The instructor needed not only understand the concepts of PBL but also to possess a deep understanding of the course outcomes and carefully plan the course such that PBL lead itself to the achievement of those outcomes or the course objectives. The success of PBL also depended on prompt feedback and proper scaffolding for the task. Feedback had to be timely and ongoing for the students to stay on the right track and learn from their mistakes. Another reason for the success of PBL with the students of this research could be attributed to the fact that the concepts of PBL were first introduced to them. The student were given an opportunity to know a little about this new teaching and learning approach and learn about their own role in this method along with the ways in which it could benefit the learner. This initial discussion was important to be able to make the transition from the traditional teaching and learning method that the learners were familiar with to this new approach. Some learners in this study were not very motivated or were bored. The learners in this study were involved in the process of investigation and discovery. They became self-directed and independent learners. This helped the learners to achieve a greater understanding of the concepts and the related materials. The learners also reported in the surveys that they would be able to remember the concepts and materials that they had learned through this teaching and learning approach. The achievement of the course outcomes and the overall improvement at writing was evident from the essays the learners had written in class. While PBL was successfully implemented, and lead to the achievement of the course outcomes for this particular group of students, it is still hard to make any major generalizations considering the small number of participants of this research. Perhaps a larger sample population would help in confirming some of these research findings.
6.3. Recommendations

Despite the success of the seven-week instructional unit, there were still some areas pointed out in this instructional unit that could be improved for future implementation and research on PBL. The most important of them is that the learners need to be instructed about PBL prior to its implementation. The learners must be able to see how this approach is different from the traditional teaching method but also has a great advantage to the student. It is important that the students are mentally prepared to make the transition from the traditional way of teaching and learning to PBL. This is a double-edged sword. The teacher must also be well acquainted with PBL. One cannot implement a PBL unit without understanding what it is, how it works and why it works they way it does. Moreover one cannot just randomly pick a PBL plan and teach it. It may need to be slightly modified and personalized according to the learners and the instructor. For instance, the topics may not interest the learners of a particular class; hence the teacher may need to pick the topics that are in line with the interests of his or her learners. It is important for the teacher to be aware of the needs and interests of the learners as well as how those can be best geared towards the implementation of PBL.

If an instructor wants to design their own PBL materials, it requires careful attention to detail and time for planning. A PBL unit cannot be planned in a period of two days but a PBL based lesson plan is possible to plan in such a short period of time. In cases where not enough time is available to the instructors, they can have frequent small PBL lesson plans, which can also serve as a transition between traditional learning and PBL for the learner to make the complete shift to PBL easier in the later stages.
As mentioned earlier, the problem/task or activity needs to be designed with great care incorporating the interest areas of the learners. If the learners are not interested in the topic they won’t be motivated to do any investigation or discovery. In order to keep the student motivation and involvement levels high their interests should be accounted for. Moreover, higher-level learners can be allowed to work on a problem of their choice or interest apart from the ones designed by the teacher. This is another way of ensuring self-directed learning. But the problem has to be genuine so to make that certain the students can be given the freedom to choose their problem yet get the instructor’s approval for the topic before beginning their work.

One suggestion made by the student in the class was that the writing class should include a variety of writing tasks apart from writing cause/effect and argumentative essays. One way to make the class more interesting is to have some free writing opportunities for the students where they are allowed to write what comes to their mind. Or write about real life conflicting situations with their family or friends and how they managed to resolve the conflict. Such writing tasks would be genuine and also meaningful to the students, they would be able to see the connection between persuasive writing in class and how to deal with arguments politely in their life outside the class.

A student pointed out that group work was not suitable for a writing class. Although this is not true, it has to be accepted that different people have different learning styles. Some people best learn in pairs and groups and some people prefer to work alone. The learners’ preference must be respected. Hence if some people prefer to work alone they can be given an option to work alone. Although they would miss the opportunity of a group discussion and peer evaluation which can help in brainstorming new ideas and add more ideas to ones writing, if some learners feel comfortable working alone it is important for lowering their affective filter.
For future research, it would be interesting to implement the same instructional unit with slight modifications, incorporating the interests of the students, and see if the findings of this study hold true with a larger group of participants as well.
REFERENCES


Erdman, L.W. (2010). Use of problem based learning to enhance critical thinking skills in Baccalaureate nursing students. (M.A. Thesis) Ball State University, Muncie, IN.


### Appendices

#### Appendix I. PBL Model Adapted from Karthikeyan et al. (2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1: Introduction</th>
<th>Students’ Role: try to overcome barriers to the transition from conventional learning to PBL.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: Outcome/concept mining</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructor needs to have a deep understanding of all the outcomes addressed; consider the mental functions addressed and should be able to think through the problem as what does it allow students to do? What are their prior learning experiences that could be accounted for? The problem creation should be authentic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Introducing the concept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator’s role: to explain the concept and approach of PBL to the students so that they can appreciate the advantages of PBL approach.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2: The Problem</th>
<th>Student’s Role: understand the trigger/problem and be mentally prepared to meet the problem.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: Problem construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>While designing the problem the instructor must keep in mind that it should be authentic and generate student interest and motivation. Keeping current political/social issues and student interests can help develop problem that would be current, interesting, timely and engaging. Problem should be such that allows them to use prior knowledge and build on it and also create opportunities for collaboration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Announcing the problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator’s Role: introduce the topic in the form of a trigger. Elicit related information from the students and to provide initial sources related to the problem.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Phase 3: Grouping and Surveying</th>
<th>Student’s role: Develop a rapport with group members, take responsibility of a task assigned to each group member; explore the known and the unknown of the problem; investigate minute details.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator’s role: divide the students into groups by adopting strategies. Provide access to resources. Extend a conductive environment for learning.</td>
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<td>Stage 2: Plan the assessment methods. Ideally, an observable authentic scenario in which learners can demonstrate proficiency. The instructor needs to keep in mind what is being measured, provide scaffolding and breakdown the problem if necessary. Think about the questions whether assessment should involve students, and what kinds of assessment to use.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Phase 4: Monitoring and coaching</th>
<th>Student’s role: have a healthy and constructive discussion among peers and generate possible solutions to the problem. Take full responsibility of the role given.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator’s role:</td>
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<tr>
<td>monitor the progress of the students and provide support as needed. Avoid controlling and directing their efforts in solving the problem and provide constructive feedback during the activity. Encourage independent study circles and study visits.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Phase 5: Assessing the performance</th>
<th>Student’s role: Share the findings with the class; assess the performance of the facilitator, self and peer.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator’s role:</td>
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<tr>
<td>provide students with opportunities to share their findings; extend follow-up activities; use assessment tools such as a rubric to assess performance and give feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Phase 6: Reflection</th>
<th>Student’s role: Write a daily or weekly reflection to keep a record of his/her</th>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitator should plan the questions that will help the students conceptualize and...</td>
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</table>
recognize their performance or evaluate themselves and also the teaching/learning approach. Facilitator should also write a weekly or daily reflection about the activities and her own and student performance and involvement. Think of things that went wrong and how they could be improved. How did she find this learning/teaching approach? Should also be able to evaluate the performance of the teacher and other group members. Think of things that went wrong and how they could be improved. Also mention what they think about PBL, is it helpful, useful, etc.
APPENDIX II A. Consent to participants in Research

Project name: Teaching Writing through PBL in an outcomes based ESL setting

Investigator: Sunaina Asher

E-mail: sasher@bsu.edu

Research Supervisor: Dr. Mary Theresa Seig

E-mail: mtseig@bsu.edu

IRB contact information: Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, 765-285-5070. E-mail: irb@bsu.edu

Introduction: You are invited to consider participating in this research study. We will be investigating the use of Problem based learning as a teaching and learning approach to teach writing to level four students in the IEI. This form will describe the purpose and nature of the study and your rights as a participant in this study. The decision to participate or not is yours. To be a student participant you must be placed in level 4 writing class of IEI or be a teacher participant of level 4 writing class. All participants must be above 18 years of age. If you decide to participate, please sign and date the last line of this form.

Explanation of the study: We will be looking at the PBL (Problem-Based Learning) method and its effectiveness in teaching writing skill to ESL students in outcomes based classroom and compare it to the class where the writing skill is taught without using PBL. It will be investigated whether the suggested model for PBL and the PBL method are effective and can be applied to teach language as well as it has been used to teach other subjects. It will also be investigated whether it still helps meet the outcomes and results in greater student understanding, autonomy and empowerment as it is proposed to do. Students and teacher participants will fill out a reflection form a several occasions about the activities and tasks used in this PBL approach. You will not write your names on that form. Student performance might be collected at some point and will be made anonymous with the help of the Associate Director before it is used for research. Student grades are not being used for analysis in this study. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be the group that uses Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to teach or to learn the skill of writing in level 4.

Data Storage and retention: The data will be stored in a locked office cabinet and will be used for analysis only after the session is over. The data will be kept till the researcher graduates (approximately till July 2015).

Risks /benefits: There are no risks involved in this study. Student participation will not affect their grades in any way. There are no direct benefits involved to the students/teachers other than what they will learn academically through PBL.

Confidentiality: All of the information will be confidential and will only be used for the research purposes. Your identity will be anonymous. No one will know your identity. In case of any publication of this data, your name and identity will not be used. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet and will be used only after the session is over.

Your participation: Your participation in this research is voluntary. You will not be paid for participating in this study. If you have any questions regarding this research you can contact the researcher by e-mail.
**Investigator’s statement**

I have fully explained the study and have discussed the activities.

Signature of the investigator: ________________ Date: _______________

**Participant’s consent**

I have read the form and I agree to participate in this study

Signature: ________________ Date: _______________
APPENDIX IIIB. Recruitment Text

I would like to inform you about a research project being carried out in lever 4 writing class. The researcher is a graduate student at Ball State University. This is her last year. She needs to complete a project in order to get her Masters degree.

She is doing a research on Problem based learning. It is an approach to teaching and learning. The researcher will be looking at the learning experience of the students who have been taught 141 outcomes using PBL method. The researcher has designed a kind of survey to collect your feedback about different learning activities done in class. All students will be filling out the survey as a part of the course. The surveys of only those students will be included in the research who wish to participate. Should you agree to participate you will be required to sign a consent form, so that the researcher can have access to one of your long essays and one of your 50-minute timed writings along with the surveys that will give the researcher feedback about your learning in class about APA, cause/effect and argumentative essays through the use of PBL approach. Your grade in class will not be harmed by your participation in this research. All assignments, assessments, homework, readings and activities remain the same for participants and non-participants alike. Your feedback will help the researcher analyze how the new approach helped improve your learning experience.

You can contact Mr. Boltz (Assistant Director IEI email: pboltz@bsu.edu) or Dr. Seig (research supervisor, email: mtseig@bsu.edu) with any questions about this project or Dr. McMillan if you have any questions about your grade.

If you agree to participate in this project, please read the consent form and ask any questions if you have before signing the consent form.
APPENDIX III. Sample one day PBL Lesson plan for level 4 writing (Introduction to/Practice of Argumentative style)

Job interview

Phase 2 (Problem or trigger):

Students will be asked if they have a vision about where they want to be/work after they graduate?

1. Job application: once they share their ideas they will be asked to write a job application for the post in the company/institution they like. Students can be asked: Q.1. When you want to apply for a job there what would you do? (students should be able to mention the need of writing a job application)

Q.2. Which post will you apply for?

Q.3. Prepare a list of your abilities and talents. Use them to convince the person concerned or make a resume mentioning all your qualities and talents, qualification and all. (teacher will facilitate and monitor as the students make their resume (Phase 3))

Phase 2 Grouping:

2. Job interview (divide the class into two groups making one group the manager and the other the interviewee then make them switch. The manager has to resist and deny the job providing counter arguments and the interviewee has to convince and make sure that they are hired.)

Q.4. You have applied for a job that you like. You have been called for an interview. How would you convince the manager that you are the best person for this job? How will you make sure that they hire you?

The person who is able to convince the other or win in the argument is the winner

H.w. Students are to read about the argumentative essay, the technique of introduction and the methods of organization. It will be discussed in class the following day.
APPENDIX IV: Weekly overview of in-class and out of class activities

**Week 1:**
- Introduction, needs analysis
- Find out about intellectual property. What is plagiarism?
- Read an article about PBL to understand what it is. What is summarizing and paraphrasing. What is synthesizing? What is a cause/effect essay? Read sample essays

**Week 2:**
- Introduction to PBL as an approach (PBL Phase 1) that would be followed, students will do informal presentations on topics given for homework
- PBL Phase 2: Grouping and surveying.
- Research assignment related to student’s interest. (topics would be such that encourage independent study visits related to diversity issues and they will also write a reflection) Research on APA.
- Group of two or three students will prepare an APA presentation; read sample essays

**Week 3:**
- (PBL phase 2: announcing the problem) Discussion on cause/effect essay. Give them topics to do a research essay. Practice writing in class (PBL Phase 4); Peer evaluation using checklists; Midterm (PBL Phase 5)
- Final draft of cause/effect; Revise draft 1 of cause/effect; read about argumentative essay; read sample essays

**Week 4:**
- Group presentation and write a study reflection; First draft of the cause/effect assignment; intro to argumentative essay;
- Revise draft 1 of argumentative essay; read about argumentative essay; read sample essays

**Week 5:**
- Argumentative research essay assignment topics; practice writing opportunities in class (PBL Phase 4); peer evaluation using checklists
- Write an argumentative Research assignment based on independent study visits; reflection
- Revision of the first draft; reading sample essays from the book and counter-arguing

**Week 6:**
- Draft 1 of argumentative paper; feedback and submission of draft 2; practice writing counter arguments
- Revision of the cause/effect and argumentative essay; final exam (PBL Phase 5)
APPENDIX V. Teacher Reflection Form - Draft 1 (adapted from Delisle, 1997)

What were the students’ responses to my less prominent role?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

How did I feel about my role as a facilitator?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Were the students comfortable with their role as PBL learners?  Yes  No

Did the students respond to the problem? How did they respond?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Did they share personal experiences related to the topic or problem?  Yes  No

Were they engaged in the topic? (Was it interesting?)  Yes  No

Were the students involved and engaged in the entire process?  Yes  No

In which part of the process were they disengaged?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Why do you think the students were disengaged?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Did the students generate ideas?  Yes  No
Did they use information from the problem as well as previous information from other courses?  
Yes  
No

Did they think of a variety of sources?  
Yes  
No

Did all students participate?  
Yes  
No

Did they take full responsibility of the roles given to them?  
Yes  
No

Did they come up with different strategies to help their learning and problem-solving?  
Yes  
No

Can you explain or name a few strategies you noticed the students were using to help them learn and to solve the problem?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Did greater student empowerment also result in greater student understanding of the materials?  
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Did they connect their information to the problem?  
Yes  
No

Did they reevaluate their ideas they had generated?  
Yes  
No

Did they generate additional issues?  
Yes  
No

Did they use the information in the product correctly?  
Yes  
No

Did they produce a high-quality product using their full effort?  
Yes  
No

Were the objectives of the course still met using the problem-based approach?  
Yes  
No

What is your general opinion about this process?

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Do you recommend it for language teaching?  
Yes  
No


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APPENDIX VI. Student Reflection Form-Draft 1 (adapted from Delisle, 1997)

How did I feel about the teacher’s role as a facilitator?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

How did I feel about my role as PBL learner?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What was my response to the problem?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Q.2. Were the students involved and engaged in the entire process?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What ideas and facts did I contribute?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Did I use information from the problem as well as previous information from other courses?

  o Yes
  o No

  What previous information was useful to me?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What different types of sources did I use for my research? (books, journal articles, websites, newspapers, etc.)

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________


Q.3. Did the students feel more in charge and more responsible for their learning? Did it result in greater student empowerment?

I helped think through the problem. Yes No
I helped in planning the solution. Yes No
I contributed new information to the group. Yes No
I helped my group in doing its work. Yes No
I was able to think of and use the learning technique which works best for me. Yes No

Q.4. Did greater student empowerment also result in greater student understanding of the materials?

I was able to connect my information to the problem Yes No
I was able to reevaluate the ideas I had contributed Yes No
I was able to think of and contribute additional issues Yes No
I was able to understand the problem and the related materials and task in a better way. Yes No

I was able to use the information in the project correctly Yes No

How do I generally feel about my learning through this activity?
APPENDIX VII. Teacher Reflection Form Draft 2 (adapted from Delisle, 1997)

Write the activity for which you are filling this Form: ________________________________

Please answer the following questions related to the problem/task/activity you gave to the students. There are some questions that require you to rate them on a scale from 0 to 6 where 6 is the highest and positive response while 0 is the lowest rating and the negative response. Circle the number that best matches your response and opinion. Please read each item carefully before you respond. Please do not write any identifiable information on this form. We just need your feedback.

1. What were the students’ responses to my less prominent role?
   They thought I was:
   - Not Helpful 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Helpful
   - Not Competent 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Competent
   - Not encouraging 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Encouraging
   - Not clear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Clear
   - Not Approachable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Approachable
   - Less controlling 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Controlling

Other comments:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2. How did I feel about my role as a facilitator?
   I felt:
   - Comfortable 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 uncomfortable
   - Confident 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 not confident
   - Less stressed 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 worried/stressed
   - Less in control 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 in control
   - Competent 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 lazy/incompetent
   - Useful 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 not useful
   - Approachable 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 not approachable
   - Active 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 passive

Other Comments:
______________________________________________________________________________
3. How did the students feel about their role as PBL learners?

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<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>0</th>
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<th>6</th>
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<td>Dependent on the teacher</td>
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<td>For learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependent on self</td>
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4. How did the students respond to the problem?

They found the problem:

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<th>Feeling</th>
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Other comments:

5. Did they share personal experiences related to the topic or problem?  Yes  No

6. Were they engaged in the topic? (Was it interesting?)  Yes  No

7(a) Were the students involved and engaged in the entire process?  Yes  No

(b) In which part of the process were they disengaged?

(c) Why do you think the students were disengaged?
8. Did the students generate ideas?  Yes  No

9. Did they use information from the problem as well as previous information from other courses?  Yes  No

10(a) Did they think of a variety of sources?  Yes  No

(b) What kind of sources did they use?

11. Did all students participate?  Yes  No

12. Did they take full responsibility of the roles given to them?  Yes  No

13(a) Did they come up with different strategies to help their learning and problem-solving?  Yes  No

(b) Can you explain or name a few strategies you noticed the students were using to help them learn and to solve the problem?

14. Did greater student empowerment also result in greater student understanding of the materials? If yes, then explain how?

15. Did they connect their information to the problem?  Yes  No

16. Did they reevaluate their ideas they had generated?  Yes  No

17. Did they generate additional issues?  Yes  No

18. Did they use the information in the product correctly?  Yes  No

19(a) Did they produce a high-quality product using their full effort?  Yes  No

(b) Why do you think so?
20 (a) Were the objectives of the course still met using the problem-based approach?  
Yes  No

(b) If you responded no, why do you think so?

21. What is your general opinion about this approach and process?

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<th>6</th>
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<td>Will result in greater retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead to better understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students were in-charge of their learning</td>
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Other comments and opinion:

22. Do you recommend it for language teaching?  
Yes  No

Why?
APPENDIX VIII. Student Reflection Form  draft 2 (adapted from Delisle, 1997)

Write the activity for which you are completing this form: __________________________

Please answer the following questions related to the problem/task/activity you did. There are some questions that require you to rate them on a scale from 0 to 6 where 6 is the highest and positive response while 0 is the lowest rating and the negative response. Circle the number that best matches your response and opinion. Please read each item carefully before you respond. You can use a dictionary to understand difficult words. Please do not write your name or anybody's name on this form. We just need your feedback about the lesson/activity/unit. If you have a problem with your teacher or a fellow student, you can talk to your advisor about it.

1. My teacher was:
   Not Helpful 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 helpful
   Not Competent /able 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 competent/able
   Not encouraging 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 encouraging
   Not clear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 clear
   Not Approachable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 approachable
   Less controlling 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 less controlling

Other opinion: ________________________________________________________________

2. Directions were:
   unclear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 clear

3. As a learner I felt:
   Scared 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 confident
   Uncomfortable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 comfortable
   Not responsible 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 responsible
   Not engaged 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 engaged
   Bored 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Challenged
   Dependent on the teacher 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 dependent
   For learning on self

Other opinion:

______________________________________________________________
4. The problem was:

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<tr>
<td>Not genuine</td>
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<td>Easy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. Ideas and facts that I contributed in the ________________ essay/activity:

6. (a) Did I use information from the problem as well as previous information from other courses?
   Yes   No

   (b) What previous information from other courses was helpful and useful to me?

7. What different types of sources did I use for my research? (books, journal articles, websites, newspapers, etc.)

8. The role/task assigned to me in my group was:

9. I helped think through the problem.  Yes   No

10. I helped in planning the solution.   Yes   No

I helped by: __________________________________________
11. I contributed new information to the group.  
Yes  No

12. I was able to think of and use the learning technique which works best for me.  
Yes  No

The learning technique that I found best for me was (e.g. reading, learning by doing, making diagrams or mind maps, learning by talking or explaining to a friend, note-taking, etc):

13. I was able to connect my information to the problem  
Yes  No

14. (a) I was able to reevaluate the ideas I had contributed  
Yes  No

(b) Explain How?

15. (a) I was able to think of and contribute additional issues  
Yes  No

(b) Additional issues and ideas I contributed were:

16. (a) I was able to understand the problem and the related materials and task in a better way.  
Yes  No

(b) Why do you think so?

17 (a) I was able to use the information in the project correctly.  
Yes  No

(b) Why do you think so?
18. How do I generally feel about my learning through this activity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was motivated</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was engaged</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will remember what I learnt</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I better understand the materials</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was in-charge of my learning</td>
<td>6 5 4 3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other comments and opinion:
APPENDIX IX. Student Reflection Form for APA citations (FINAL DRAFT)

Note: All the questions marked with a * are required questions

Please answer the following questions related to the activity you did. There are some questions that require you to rate them on a scale from 0 to 6 where 6 is the highest and positive response while 0 is the lowest rating and the negative response. Circle the number that best matches your response and opinion. Please read each item carefully before you respond. You can use a dictionary to understand difficult words. Please do not write your name or anybody’s name on this form. We just need your feedback about the lesson/activity. If you have a problem with your teacher or a fellow student, you can talk to your advisor about it.

*1. My teacher was:

Not Helpful 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very helpful
Not Competent /able 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 competent/able
Not encouraging 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very encouraging
Not clear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very clear
Not Approachable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very approachable

Other opinion: _____________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

*2. Directions were:

Not clear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 very clear

*3. As a learner I felt:

Scared 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 confident
Uncomfortable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very comfortable
Not responsible 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very responsible
Not engaged 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very engaged
Bored 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Challenged
Dependent on the teacher 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 dependent on myself

Other opinion:
*4. The problem/activity of learning APA was:

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<th>1</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Genuine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Confusing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other opinion and comments:

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Student involvement questions:

*5. The role/task assigned to me in my group was:

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

*6. I helped in planning the APA presentation. Yes No

I helped by: ________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

*7. I was able to think of and use the learning technique which works best for me. Yes No

The learning technique that I found best for me was (e.g. reading, learning by doing, making diagrams or mind maps, learning by talking or explaining to a friend, note-taking, etc.):

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Critical thinking questions:

*8. I was able to connect my previous information about APA to the new information I learned about APA citations. Yes No
(b) What previous information from other courses was helpful and useful to me about APA citations?

Greater student understanding questions:

*9. (a) I was able to understand how to use APA in a better way. Yes No

(b) Why do you think so?

*10 (a) I was able to use APA citations in the paper correctly. Yes No

(b) Why do you think so?

*11. How do I generally feel about my learning through this activity?

I was motivated 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 was bored
I was engaged 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 not engaged
I will remember what I learned 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 will not remember
I better understand the materials 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 do not understand
I was in-charge of my learning 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 dependent

Other comments and opinion:
APPENDIX X. Student Reflection Form for Cause and Effect Essays. (FINAL DRAFT)

Note: All questions with a * are required questions.

Please answer the following questions related to the long cause/effect essay. There are some questions that require you to rate them on a scale from 0 to 6 where 6 is the highest and positive response while 0 is the lowest rating and the negative response. Circle the number that best matches your response and opinion Please read each item carefully before you respond. You can use a dictionary to understand difficult words. Please do not write your name or anybody's name on this form. We just need your feedback about the lesson/activity/unit. If you have a problem with your teacher or a fellow student, you can talk to your advisor about it.

*1. My teacher was:

- Not Helpful 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 very helpful
- Not Competent /able 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 competent/able
- Not encouraging 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 very encouraging
- Not clear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 very clear
- Not Approachable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 very approachable

Other opinion: __________________________________________________________

*2. Directions were:

- Not clear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very clear

*3. As a learner I felt:

- Scared 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 confident
- Uncomfortable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very comfortable
- Not responsible 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very responsible
- Not engaged 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very engaged
- Bored 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Challenged
- Dependent on the teacher 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 dependent on myself

Other opinion:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

86
*4. The problem/essay topic was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Not interesting</th>
<th>Not engaging</th>
<th>Not genuine</th>
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<th>Very Interesting</th>
<th>Very Engaging</th>
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</thead>
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</table>

Other opinion and comments:

_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

*5. What previous information from other courses was helpful and useful to me to write the long essay? (e.g. knowledge about writing introductions, conclusions, etc)

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

*6. What different types of sources did I use for my research? Check ✔ all that apply:

- Books
- Journal articles
- Websites
- Newspapers
- Other

**Student involvement questions:**

*7. The role/task assigned to me in my group/pair was:

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

*8. I helped think through the essay topic  ✔ Yes  ☐ No

*9. I helped in planning the organization of the essay.  ✔ Yes  ☐ No

*I helped by: (check all that apply to your contribution in the long essay)

- Writing the thesis statement
- Choosing the method of organization
- Synthesizing/combining information from different sources

*10. I was able to think of and use the learning technique which works best for me.  ✔ Yes  ☐ No
*b. Check ✓ the techniques that apply to you as a learner:

- Reading
- learning by doing
- making diagrams, charts of information, or mind maps
- learning by talking or explaining to a friend
- note-taking
- Asking questions
- Other

Explain other: ________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

*11. Ideas and facts that I contributed in the cause/effect long essay were:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Critical thinking questions:

*12. I was able to connect my information to the topic  Yes  No

*13. (a) I was able to reconsider the ideas I had contributed  Yes  No

(b) Explain How?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

*14. (a) I was able to think of and contribute additional issues.  Yes  No

(b) Additional issues and ideas I contributed were:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
Greater student understanding questions:

*15. (a) I was able to understand the topic and the related materials and task in a better way.  

   Yes  No

   * (b) Why do you think so?

   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

*16 (a) I was able to use the information in the essay correctly.  

   Yes  No

   *(b) Why do you think so?

   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

*17. How do I generally feel about my learning through this activity?

   I was motivated  6 5 4 3 2 1 0  was bored
   I was engaged  6 5 4 3 2 1 0  not engaged
   I will remember what I learned  6 5 4 3 2 1 0  will not remember
   I better understand the materials  6 5 4 3 2 1 0  do not understand
   I was in-charge of my learning  6 5 4 3 2 1 0  dependent on the teacher

Other comments and opinion:

   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

   89
APPENDIX XI. Student Reflection Form for Argumentative essay (FINAL DRAFT)

Note: All the questions with a * are required questions

Please answer the following questions related to the problem/task/activity you did. There are some questions that require you to rate them on a scale from 0 to 6 where 6 is the highest and positive response while 0 is the lowest rating and the negative response. Circle the number that best matches your response and opinion. Please read each item carefully before you respond. You can use a dictionary to understand difficult words. Please do not write your name or anybody’s name on this form. We just need your feedback about the lesson/activity/unit. If you have a problem with your teacher or a fellow student, you can talk to your advisor about it.

*1. My teacher was:

Not Helpful 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very helpful
Not Competent /able 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 competent/able
Not encouraging 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very encouraging
Not clear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very clear
Not Approachable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very approachable

Other opinion: ____________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

*2. Directions were:

Not clear 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very clear

*3. As a learner I felt:

Scared 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 confident
Uncomfortable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very comfortable
Not responsible 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very responsible
Not engaged 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very engaged
Bored 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 Challenged
the teacher 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 depend on
dependent on myself

Other opinion:

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________
*4. The problem/topic/activity was:

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Other opinion and comments:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

*5. What previous information from this class or other courses was helpful and useful to me for writing the long argumentative essay?
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

*6. What different types of sources did I use for my research? Check ✓ all that apply:

- Books
- Journal articles
- Websites
- Newspapers
- Other

Student involvement questions:

*7. The role/task assigned to me in my group/pair was:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

*8. I helped think through the topic.          Yes  No

*9. I helped in planning the organization of the essay. Yes  No

*I helped by: (check all that apply to your contribution in the long essay)

- Writing the thesis statement
- Choosing the method of organization
- Synthesizing/combining information from different sources

*10. I was able to think of and use the learning technique which works best for me. Yes  No
*b. Check ✓ the techniques that apply to you as a learner:

- Reading
- learning by doing
- making diagrams or mind maps
- learning by talking or explaining to a friend
- note-taking
- Asking questions
- Other

Explain other:

___________________________________________________________________________________________________

*11. Ideas and facts that I contributed in the argumentative essay/activity were:

________________________________   ____________________________________________

________________________________   ____________________________________________

________________________________   ____________________________________________

Critical thinking questions:

*12. I was able to connect my information to the problem/topic.   Yes   No

*13. (a) I was able to reconsider the ideas I had contributed   Yes   No

(b) If you answered “yes” for 13. (a), then explain How?

___________________________________________________________________________________________________

Greater student understanding questions:

*15. (a) I was able to understand the topic and the related materials and task in a better way.   Yes   No

*(b) Why do you think so?

___________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________
*16 (a) I was able to the information in the essay correctly.  Yes  No

*(b) Why do you think so?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

*17. How do I generally feel about my learning through this activity?

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>I will remember what I learned</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I better understand the materials</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was in-charge of my learning</td>
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</table>

Other comments and opinion:
APPENDIX XII. Cause/effect Research Topics (group work)

Note: Some of the following research topics will require you to conduct independent study visits to specific people and/or places to ask for relevant information.

1) Why is the membership decreasing in the Frist Presbyterian Church in Muncie? How is it affecting the Church? Make recommendations how can the membership be increased? (Take an appointment with the Minister of First Presbyterian Church at West Riverside, to discuss the matter with him. You can email Pastor J.D. Georlett at: revjd@firstpresmuncie.org) Find literature online about factors that contribute to Church growth, and see if Pastor is working to improve the number of members in his congregation.

2) Why is the pre-school in First Presbyterian Church considered the best? (You can contact Tracy Clinger, who is in-charge of the preschool at First Presbyterian Church: prek@firstpresmuncie.org) You can search online or visit the library to find sources that will tell you the needs of students at Pre-K level, this will help you give supporting detail as to why this preschool is considered the best.

3) Discuss the causes and effects of gender discrimination. Give examples to support your thesis statement. Try to incorporate some real life examples also.

4) Why do students appeal for a grade review in the IEI? How does it affect their result? (You can contact Dr. McMillan for discussion over this topic).

5) What caused the death of famous Hollywood actor Robin Williams?

6) Other: ______________________________________________________________________________________

Note: A group presentation component could also be added to these essays if the teacher considers it appropriate.

Timed essay topics: (individual work)

- What are the effects of exercise on human body?
- Discuss the causes and effects of overpopulation in China
- Why some students fail in college?
- What are the factors that draw so many immigrants to United States?
- Why do people go for cosmetic surgery?
- Why did you consider to come to United States for education?

Argumentative Research essay Topics (group work)

Some of the following topics will require you to visit specific people or places to get the relevant information.

1) Should there have been an American Airstrike in Iraq? Why or why not?
2) In today’s world, can a course be taught without the use of technology? (Discuss with our Associate Directors Kathy Ramos and Phil Boltz) Also discuss how important is technology in the field of education.

3) Dr. Kent Brantly is one of two American aid workers who have tested positive for the Ebola virus while working to combat an outbreak of the disease at a hospital in Liberia. Do you think it was a wise decision to bring him to United States? What could be the possible hazards?

4) Does class size matter? (Discuss it with Kathy Ramos, how many students do they allow to be in a class and why? Go online to search the topic or consult books from the library about number or students and classroom management, how are they related).

5) Graffiti: Art or vandalism (damage, destruction)? Discuss. (Visit the places in Muncie where you can find graffiti. One place to go is along the White river Greenway. Look at it carefully; take a paper and pen with you to write down what you see and what it makes you think about. Use adjectives to describe your feelings/thoughts. For example, colorful, beautiful, shocking, damaging, creative, expressive, ugly, etc. Think again about the meaning of those words that come to your mind, whether they have a positive or a negative sense/meaning attached to them. Then write your thesis statement, based on your personal experience and opinion. That is, whether you think graffiti is art or vandalism.

Other: ____________________________________________________________________________

Timed essay Topics: (individual work)

- Is there too much pressure on girls to have perfect bodies?
- Is it okay for men and boys to comment on girls and women on the street?
- Should college football players get paid?
- Should technology be used in a classroom?
- Is it okay to cheat in examination?
- Can money buy you happiness?

Some tips for the students to get started on both research essays:

1) Define the topic/problem and clearly understand what it means.
2) Assign roles to group members.
3) Discuss the topic with the group. Brainstorm. (note-taker should be taking notes)
4) Research online or study some books from the library about the topic. (take some quotes and paraphrase them to cite in your paper).
5) Talk to people who can give relevant information.
6) Share your notes with all the group members
7) Write your own essay. Each member is to write their own essay about the topic. You can share sources but no essay should resemble another essay. Students must express their own opinion and supply supporting detail. No student should copy the sentences or paragraphs from another student. That is plagiarism!
APPENDIX XIII. ENIEI 141 – WRITING RUBRIC

STUDENT NAME: _____________________________
RATER: _____________________ FINAL PERCENTAGE: ________/100

DIRECTIONS: Choose ONE of the topics and write a 250 – 350 word essay about it. Please circle the number beside the topic you choose from the list provided.

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<th>Score</th>
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<th>Score X</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Correct usage; few errors e.g. in subject/verb agreement and verb tense (95-100% accurate)</td>
<td>Some errors e.g. in subject/verb agreement and verb tense (80-94% accurate)</td>
<td>Frequent errors e.g. in subject/verb agreement and verb tense (50-79% accurate)</td>
<td>Many errors e.g. in subject/verb agreement and verb tense (30-49% accurate)</td>
<td>Consistent errors, demonstrating lack of knowledge of general structures (15-29% accurate)</td>
<td>Incoherent or No answer</td>
<td>/5 X3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strong verbs, vivid &amp; precise description/explanation; clear meanings (95-100%)</td>
<td>Strong verbs, vivid &amp; precise description/explanation; clear meanings (80-94%)</td>
<td>A few strong verbs, a few vivid &amp; precise description/explanation; some clear meanings (50-79% accurate)</td>
<td>Weak verbs, poorly chosen &amp; overused words to explain/describe; mostly unclear meanings</td>
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<td>Essay contains a clear introduction ¶, thesis statement, 2 to 3 well-organized body ¶s each with a clear point, and a conclusion ¶. AND Logical connections between ideas and sentences are made clear through the use of transitions.</td>
<td>Essay contains all of the elements listed in column &quot;5&quot; BUT connections between ideas and sentences are not always clear and logical.</td>
<td>The essay is missing one of the elements listed in column &quot;5&quot; AND/OR transitions are not used.</td>
<td>The essay is highly disorganized. More than one essay element missing (listed in &quot;5&quot;) AND transitions are unclear BUT argument can still be followed.</td>
<td>The essay is coherent; the argument cannot be followed.</td>
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<td>Has adequate evidence, examples and details in support of the thesis</td>
<td>Weak evidence and examples; needs to expand or elaborate on details</td>
<td>Evidence, examples and details are lacking or irrelevant.</td>
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<td>The essay meets length requirement (&gt;250 words).</td>
<td>The essay is at least 75% of length requirement (187-200 words).</td>
<td>The essay is at least 50% of length requirement (125-175 words).</td>
<td>The essay is less than 50% of length requirement (&lt;125 words).</td>
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