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A Problem-Based learning Program for Enhancing English Majors' Writing Skills

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree in Education
(Curriculum and Instruction of English)

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Abstract

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Abstract: This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of problem-based learning in developing 3rd year English majors' reflective writing skills. The present study utilized the one group pre/post test design. Participants were 35 third year English majors (general Education) randomly selected from the English department, Faculty of Educa on, Ain Shams University in 2015, 2016. The tools of the study included: A list of reflective writing skills; an analytic scoring rubric for English majors, containing the reflective writing skills appropriate for the third year English majors; a pre-post reflective writing test. A three module program was designed and taught through using problem-based learning in order to develop English majors' reflective writing skills. Students' pre and post test scores were analyzed using t-test. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference at the level of (0, 05) between the mean scores of the study group students on the reflective writing pre and post test administrations in the reflective writing skill as a whole and in each reflective writing sub skill (planning and organizing, composing and drafting, revising, editing and evaluating) favoring their post test scores. Finally, it was concluded that the problem-based learning program had a significant effect on developing 3rd year English majors reflective writing skills.

Key Words: problem-based learning - reflective writing skill, reflective writing sub skills.

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Chapter One

Background and Problem

Chapter One

Background and Problem

Introduction

Language is one of the unique assets of Man. It functions as a means of communication. Even more, Language determines thought and world view, in other words, Culture and thought are dependent upon language.

This importance differs from one language to another according to the contribution of its speakers to the contemporary human civilization, hence the increasing number of people who attempt to master English. That is why it is becoming the language of international, and even local, conferences and the language of commercial telegrams and e-mails. In a word, it is becoming the language of information revolution.

Writing is one of the four macro language skills. It is considered a means of strengthening and enhancing other main language skills (i.e. reading, listening and speaking) and micro skills (e.g. the correct use of punctuation marks, grammatical rules and vocabulary). Furthermore, writing is one of learners' means of expressing themselves and communicating ideas. Moreover, writing provides evidence of learners' achievement, and a source for later reference. It is a significant language skill that should be developed at an early stage of learning the foreign language.

Writing could be defined as a holistic process. It is the output of successive reaction among other skills like speaking, reading and listening. It is a means of communicating information and ideas through the medium of a system of symbols (Wray&Medwell,

1991:117). They indicated that writing involves several stages: discovering what one wants to say, ordering one's ideas, expressing these ideas on paper, revising and altering the work and putting it into a final form suitable for the intended reader.

Writing is a dynamic process. Writing process shifts the focus from examining the products of writing to the composing process of writers. Writing is a process that is made up of several different elements: pre-writing, organization, writing, revising, and editing. However, these different elements overlap with one another; they are not separate stages. Peterson (2007:28), stated that "wri ng has been recognized as a process that helps learners to think more deeply about ideas and information they encounter through reading, listening, viewing, and physically experiencing the world around them". This focus on process encourages learners to see writing as an ongoing, recursive process from conception of the idea through publication. This process affirms that all writing has a purpose, and that writing passes through several steps.

According to Gardner and Johnson (1997), wri ng is a fluid process created by writers as they work. Accomplished writers move back and forth between the stages of the process, both consciously and unconsciously. EFL writers, however, may benefit from the structure and security of following the writing process in their writing. The writing process is not a highly organized linear process, but rather a continual movement between the different steps of the writing model. Weaver, Bush, Anderson & Bills (2006, p. 90) claim that writing process models typically reflect what we think of as a writing event, from generating ideas to publishing.

Writing is a main skill that consists of sub skills; they are: Grammatical structure (syntactic and morphological relationships),

the script of the language (handwriting, spelling and punctuation), fluency of writing, use of vocabulary, and using markers.

In this research, the focus was on one kind of writing, which is reflective writing. Reflective writing is a practice in which the writer describes a real or imaginary scene, event, interaction, passing thought, memory, form, adding a personal reflection on the meaning of the item or incident, thought, feeling, emotion, or situation in his or her life.

Many reflective writers keep in mind guiding questions, such as "what did I notice?" "How has this changed me?" or "what might I have done differently?" Thus, the focus is on writing that is not merely descriptive. The writer does not just hit the replay button; rather, he or she revisits the scene to note details, reflect on meaning, examine what went well or reveal a need for additional learning, and relate what transpired to the rest of life (Bolton, 2001).

Reflective writing is an evidence of reflective thinking. Effective reflective writing demonstrates that one can reflect on an important activity, body or theory and evaluate the challenges he/she experienced. Reflective thought is a complex process which involves interpreting new information in relation to one's own experiences and knowledge. Reflective writing is more personal than other kinds of writing. It is written in a more informal and personal style.

Because of the great importance of the writing skills, many studies highlighted and stressed the importance of developing these writing skills in teaching EFL. Several Egyptian studies recommended that much attention should be given to training students in practicing writing through different activities and teaching methods that give them enough opportunities and time to use the language in