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The Effect of Using Problem-Based Learning Approach on Developing EFL Writing Skills among Students with Learning Disabilities in Primary Stage

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Curriculum and Instruction (TEFL)

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Abstract

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Abstract: The study aimed to examine the effect of using Problem-based Learning (PBL) on developing EFL writing skills among students with learning disabilities in the 5th year at the primary stage. The study begins with a review of literature and previous studies dealing with Problem-based Learning and writing skills. A list of writing skills was prepared as a guide for the design of the instruments. The researcher designed a pre/post writing skills test and a rubric for learners with writing disabilities. The researcher also designed the proposed program. Participants were a group of students with learning disabilities in writing (n= 30) to get involved in its activities. Participants were submitted to a pre and posttest. Then, the scores were analyzed quantitatively. The results showed that PBL was highly effective in developing target writing skills of the participants.

Keywords: Problem-based Learning, writing skills, learning disabilities, reinforcement, Experimental method.

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وَقُلِ اعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۖ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT	Page
List of Tables	11
List of Figures	12
Chapter One **Background and Problem**	13
Introduction	14
Context of the Problem	17
The pilot Study	18
Statement of the Problem	18
Study Questions	19
Hypotheses of the Study	19
Aim of the Study	20
Significance of the Study	20
Delimitations	20
Definition of Terms	20
Chapter Two **Review of Literature and Related Studies**	22
Learning disabilities	23
Usage of writing abilities and writing skills	24
Importance of writing skills	25
Writing sub-skills	25
Writing sub-skills targeted in the current study	25
Handwriting.	25
Mechanics and spelling.	27
Expressing ideas.	28

CONTENT	Page
Students with learning disabilities	31
Types of learning disability	31
Common types of learning disability	31
Causes of learning disabilities	32
Treatments for students with learning disabilities	33
Problem-Based Learning	35
Problem-Based Learning and language learning	36
Rationale for selecting and using PBL Approach	37
Philosophy: Characteristics of Problem-Based Learning	39
Basic steps in PBL for dealing students with learning disabilities	40
Benefits of using PBL tasks& activities for students with writing disabilities	41
Expected Outcomes of Problem-Based Learning in Language Learning	44
Appropriate Learning Strategies for PBL	45
Photo Short Story	45
Mind Mapping	47
PBL and Collaborative Learning	49
PBL and Problem Solving	50
PBL and cooperative learning	50
Commentary	50
Chapter Three Methodology	55
Design of the Study	56

CONTENT	Page
Participants of the Study	56
Terminology	56
Instruments of the Study	58
The Program Conclusion	62
Chapter Four **Data Analysis and Discussion of Results**	65
The Used Statistical Technique	66
Results of the Study	66
Testing the validity of Ho1	66
Testing the validity of Ho2	67
Testing the validity of Ho3	68
Testing the validity of Ho4	68
Testing the validity of Ho5	69
Discussion of the Results	70
Conclusion	72
Chapter Five **Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**	73
Summary	74
Delimitations	75
Drawbacks and Challenges	75
Results of the Study	76
Program success factors	76
Conclusions	77
Recommendations	77
Suggestions for Further Research	77
References	78
Appendices:	88

CONTENT	Page
Appendix (A): Final Form of the Writing Skills List	89
Appendix (B): The Pre/Post Writing Test	90
Appendix (C): Writing Skills Rubric	96
Appendix (D): Satisfaction questionnaire.	98
Appendix (E): The Outline of the Program	100
Appendix (F): The Program	105
Appendix (G): Photos of the Participants	218
Summary in Arabic	223

List of Tables

Table 1: Criterion and Descriptors to Assess and Score L2 Writing Samples

Table 2: Correlation coefficients between the degree of each writing skills and the total test score

Table 3: Correlation coefficients between the degree of each writing skills and the total test score

Table 4: T-test Results for the significance of differences between the Mean Scores of the Participants' "Handwriting" on the Pre/Post writing skills Test

Table 5: T-test Results for the significance of differences between the Mean Scores of the Participants' "Mechanics and Spelling" on the Pre/Post writing skills Test

Table 6: T-test Results for the significance of differences between the Mean Scores of the Participants' "Expressing ideas" on the Pre/Post writing skills Test

Table 7: T-test Results for the significance of differences between the Mean Scores of the Participants' "writing skills" on the Pre/Post writing skills Test

Table 8: T-test Results for the significance of differences between the Mean Scores of the Participants' "writing skills" on the Post/Follow-up writing skills Test

List of Figures

Figure (1): Common types of learning disability.

Figure (2): PBL process.

Figure (3): Benefits of PBL.

Figure (4): Content of Sessions.

Chapter One
Background and Problem

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Introduction

Writing skills are one of the main communication and expressing tools for students to evaluate their performance in a written context. Learners depend on writing skills in many of their life treatments, activities, and tests. Although teachers depend on writing skills to determine the students' level in acquiring knowledge through written expression.

Writing is a common mode of communicating and demonstrating knowledge (Rouhani, Nafchi, & Ziaee, 2o16). Among the first things that children learn to write are the alphabet letters and their first names; they then use those letters to spell simple words and eventually string words together to form sentences (Puranik, et al., 2o18).

Also, written expression is an essential skill the learner should have to actively function in today's society (Corkett & Benevides, 2o16), the elements of written expression require a set of complicated abilities that go beyond the act of holding a pencil and putting words on paper and encompass the complex interaction among physical, cognitive, and sensory systems (Coffin, et al., 2o16).

Mastering of handwriting is also essential for children that it is important to try to find new methods for facilitating its learning and rehabilitation (Danna, & Velay, 2o15), handwriting is involved in most of the assignments of the teachers, the neat and clean handwriting is a demand of teachers and parents, it considers the refection of intellect, because of their good handwriting, students are considered shining by the examiners and teachers as well (Jameel & Nabeel, 2o16).

Despite the importance of writing, some students have learning disabilities in writing; learning disabilities have spread to all levels of education. We can observe learning disabilities in Kindergarten (Gottfried, 2o17); Primary school (Dennis, Sorrells & Falcomata, 2o16, Ok & Bryant, 2o16), Middle school and High school (Brown, & Cinamon, 2o16), and in the university (Harkin, Doyle & Mc Guckin, 2o15).

The act of writing presents difficulties for 1o–3o% of elementary school students (Rosenblum, Weiss & Parush, 2oo4). For many learners, especially those with a learning disability (LD), writing can be a source of frustration (Corkett & Benevides, 2o16), also, many students with LD experience difficulties mastering the process of writing (Graham, Harris, & Larsen, 2oo1).

There are diverse social problems experienced by children, adolescents, and adults with learning disabilities (Wong & Donahue, 2oo2). Study findings by King'endo, & Nyaga (2o15) reveals that 75 percent of teachers lack instructional materials that cater for learning disabilities (LD). Only 25 percent of teachers can identify cases of LD and give special attention. Lack of standardized tools for assessment at the EARC center may have led to poor identification and placement of LD. The researcher concluded that learning of the learners with dysgraphia (dysgraphia is a term used to refer to writing disabilities) is inadequate and this has been contributed by; lack of enough teachers trained in LD to identify learners with dysgraphia and apply appropriate teaching strategies, inadequate instructional materials that cater for LD and lack of standardized tools for assessment at the EARC center. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should oversee special education training to all education officers and teachers.

Furthermore, indicated that boys in primary schools had the highest percentage of poorly written work, eligible handwriting, and poor pencil control. Both boys and girls had an equal number in inconsistency in letter formation 121 and in messy written work. Girls with difficulties in inaccurate copying written work were more than boys. The results showed that all the head teachers interviewed agreed with the presence of learners with dysgraphia in their schools (King'endo, & Nyaga, 2o15).

Students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) have disparate neuropsychological processing deficits that interfere with academic achievement in writing fluency, spelling, and/or written expression (WE). Although there are multiple potential causes of written expression learning disabilities, there is a paucity of research exploring this academic ability from a neuropsychological perspective (Fenwick, et al., 2o16).

Because of the problems that learning disabilities may cause and the negative effects on children writing, several studies had addressed writing