



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Problem-Based Learning for Urdu Medium Language Students to learn English Language Skills**

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**ABSTRACT**

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In Pakistan, the Urdu medium of instruction is mostly used for teaching at public and private Higher Education Institutions. Students are facing many challenges to learn the English language through traditional teaching techniques. This manuscript explicitly explains the study of the employment of problem-based learning in higher education institutions of Pakistan where non-native English language students are studying. This is a semi-statistical study in which 900 undergraduate students have participated. The results show that students have a positive attitude in the learning of the English language through problem-based learning and the same technique has a positive impact on the learning skills of learners. The results also indicate that problem-based learning can be implemented on small and medium-scale public sector colleges without any financial impact. The results also indicate that there is a dire need to train the students and teachers in the theory and practices of problem-based learning to successfully implement it in colleges.

**Introduction**

The modern profession deals with uncertainties constantly, inadequate resources, incomplete information, and challenging demands of the clients' states' policies as well as the general public. Modern professions are required technical skills, as well as skills, relates to human relationships. The professionals much cope with the modern changes, states policies, and organizational behaviors. The professionals must also be well versed in legal consequences, and decision making skills (Guo et al., 2020).

Despite present roadblocks and challenges, the higher education institutions in Pakistan particularly in the Punjab state are delivered lectures in a normal way, especially in the early years of the discipline (Latif et al., 2018). Currently, a lot of research has been conducted on the effectiveness of project-based learning and problem-based learning that can cope with the present challenges of the traditional lecture ways (Trinidad, 2020).

From the past few decades, we observed general trends in the learning of higher education at HEIs of Punjab, there is no concept in the colleges about collaborative learning based on practice-based learning (Nawaz & Kundi, 2010). Modern world institutions are moving towards problem-based learning techniques. The work on problem-based learning started in the year 1969 in Canada for the discipline of medicine (Ballantyne & Knowles, 2007; Savin-Baden, 2000). After the innovation of this methodology, the same methodology was used in different medical disciplines as well other disciplines like commerce, arts, and law. A set of the problem is given to the students as a starting point. Project-based learning is an excellent backbone part for the curriculum. The traditional educational methods like typical lectures and routine skills training are not fruitful and not as supportive as problem-based learning (Bosica et al., 2021; Kong et al., 2014).

This research will focus on the question regarding the discipline of commerce and arts and we begin our research with the overall view of problem-based learning and its impact on higher education institutions of Punjab, Pakistan. Thereafter, we will shortly talk about problem-based learning as a solution in the commerce and arts curriculum at higher education institutions. The next section of the paper is about the suitability of problem-based learning for commerce and art students and finally, we will discuss commerce and arts as examples of partial problem-based learning policy.

English is a non-native language in Pakistan and is a widely spoken communication tool in education in the workplace and the community. Good English abilities and fluency are prerequisites for a career and success so good English language abilities are essential (Dastgeer et al., 2017). The explosion in global demand for English and information has increased, the requirement for quality English (Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015). Students are expected to not only be fluent in the English language but also to have the ability to solve problems and develop their thinking skills. Pakistan is becoming increasingly aware of the importance of learning English to thrive in a variety of fields, especially in trade and business (Hussain & Anwar, 2017). English language speaking and writing skills problem-solving techniques, and advanced thinking techniques are now measured as important tools for success in a fast-changing world (Brassler & Dettmers, 2017). The way we learn English will inevitably change as educators seek better teaching methods that meet the needs of their students and prepare them for more complex environments.

English Language speaking and writing skills, and thinking skills do not directly guide instruction. Traditional teaching is a behavioral approach that seeks to promote language learning in context. Most students start to know the language, but they don't know how to use it (Anthony & Kadir, 2012). This is especially true for Malaysian ESL students. Many work well on English tests, but poor reading and writing skills, especially in English speaking and English writing (Lin, 2015; Othman & Shah, 2013).

Section 2 of the paper is about the literature the authors reviewed during this study and section 3 is about the methodology used in this paper to solve the problem. Section 4 of the paper is about results and discussion and the last section of the paper is the conclusion.

## **Literature Review**

PBL seems to be a principled approach to learning or an alternative approach to learning in English, based on learning and integrating problems in the new world (Ulger, 2018). University classroom to enhance English learning and learning. The PBL approach can help you create meaningful English Second Language activities (Moallem et al., 2019). Relevant activities inspire motivation and engagement as students tackle problem-solving problems and situations. In addition, PBL's problem-solving process requires students to search for material and continually correlate what they read with information. This enables students to combine their gratified information with their English knowledge (Topalli & Cagiltay, 2018).

Although many studies have been conducted on the use of PBL in medicine and other fields little has been done on the use of Problem Based Learning in the context of language classrooms especially English as a Secondary Language (Liu, 2016). Two studies of PBL have been found in language instruction. We have developed a problem-based learning environment for non-native students' English learning and the other conducted a case study implementing a problem-based learning approach in a commerce English course.

In the above studies, despite the detailed clarification of how the problem-based learning method is applied in the English language classroom, to show the important effects of PBL on the students and its application in the context of second language learning. There is very little experimental data available. The effects of problem-based learning on language skills in classes have not been comprehensively studied.

Though numerous such studies have been led in other parts of the Western world, the outcomes cannot be summed up in the Pakistani learning environment because scholars in Pakistan have different cultural backgrounds, and different learning choices compared to students in other countries. Other key influencing factors such as institutional environmental and social expectations may influence the results of problem-solving studies in Pakistan. Researchers have even warned Pakistani graduates to opt for a teacher-centered approach. Pakistani students expected that their teachers is a source of information and knowledge and are highly dependent on their abilities. If students were assigned to a problem-solving learning environment and asked the teacher to lead then definitely students will get more positive results. It is important to understand how problem-based learning practices improve, how students think about the presentation, and how it affects their English reading, writing, and listening skills.

An education to determine the appropriateness and efficiency of using problem-based learning in the non-native English classroom environment may contribute to the development of good English as a Second Language. In addition, it is important to consider students' perspectives, especially when introducing new education/knowledge approaches (Nurlaily et al., 2019).

Compared to traditional speech-oriented learning, problem-based learning offers many learning benefits. Some of the benefits of PBL are to increase motivation to learn, to adapt learning to the real world, to promote higher learning, to encourage learning, and to teach students learning in the same way with realities and values

(Elizabeth & Zulida, 2012). Not only repetition but also understanding. Research to evaluate the effectiveness of PBL programs has shown that PBL maintains self-directed behavior, promotes long-term knowledge, promotes comprehension, integrates concepts, and transmits problems into professional skills (Albanese & Mitchell, 1993; Bridges, 1992). Ability to solve and reason for potential problems. PBL improves language skills, and although it is applied in content-based subjects, students in PBL classes improve their social skills because they have extra. Chances to exercise language used for real communication. In addition, students get a more profound sympathetic of vocabulary when confronted with words in real-life situations.

Researchers believe that problem solving is a teaching method that takes practical difficulties as an initial point for acquiring and integrating new information (Boud & Cohen, 2014; Brown et al., 2013). It is a student-centered approach designed to advance problem-solving English listening skills, self-learning, lifelong practice, and teamwork skills. This allows scholars to get comprehensive knowledge in a variety of fields and disciplines. From a construction point of view, this approach has implications for many areas in which students can understand real-world processes (Knight & Yorke, 2004).

The authors view PBL as focused experiential learning focused on investigating and solving chaotic, real-life problems. Professors use realistic problems to guide learning by exploring, asking, and challenging students' minds. PBL exposes students to confusing and unstructured situations in which they adopt the part of situational stakeholders or "owners". They know what it takes to pinpoint real problems and investigate viable solutions.

## **Material and Methods**

### **Research Design**

In this study, the authors used a quasi-experimental technique, especially the non-equivalent control group. The 2nd year class students (private sector colleges) for the academic session 2020-2021 were selected for the studies in question.

### **Samples**

The number of participants selected for this study is 900 students all over Punjab. All the participants are studying in private colleges enrolled in FA/F.Sc/I.Com programs. The 2nd year English subject is selected to implement problem-based learning techniques. There is no gender discrimination between participants, both males and females participated in this study and there is also no classification of the facilities they are enjoying for study. It is also pertinent to add here that the authors also did not consider the ages of the participants.

The 2nd year English is a compulsory course and all the participants must pass this subject to complete their degrees. The marks of English subject also count for their future admission in graduate programs. The target of the project-based learning is to enhance the English learning abilities of the participants so that they may be able to fluently speak, write, and listen to the English language.

### **Instrumentation**

The process of the study has consisted of 03 months. The self-assessment was used to assess the progress of the students and their approach to PBL. The main goal of the study was to get the comments of the participants that what they feel about PBL and what they had achieved.

In the first phase of the study, the teachers were guided properly on how to implement the PBL technique in their classrooms. A special session was carried out in the private colleges through volunteers to assist the teachers. All the teachers were fully motivated to adopt this new technique and the reluctant teachers were dropped.

After the completion of the PBL, the authors distributed the questionnaire to evaluate the program. The main objective of this questionnaire is to check the influence of the PBL on the learning process.

### **Data Analysis**

The authors obtained the data from the participants and were coded properly, the authors doubled check the integrity of the data and the data which was not filled properly was dropped. The authors also checked each questionnaire and after its validation, the same returned to the participants to verify their comments and ticked options. The whole process was completed within 2 weeks. The authors applied different statistical tools like IBM SPSS and Microsoft Excel for statistical analysis of the questionnaire.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Before the start of the investigation, the teachers of the respective classes informed the English language students that they are required to every nine questions on the questionnaire. The teachers and authors informed the participants about the purpose of the study and distribution of the questionnaire so that each participant give a clear response. The PBL lectures were arranged on the selected and appropriate day to carry out the survey and also to make sure the presence of the participants. Each participant was given 30 minutes to complete their work so that they complete their work freely and accurately. Thereafter, all questionnaires were collected and double-checked.

### **Results and Discussion**

To obtain the views of the participants after the implementation of the problem-based learning in the English classroom, the authors used a Likert scale questionnaire and included five Likert items. The participants were asked to rate the question on a five-point Likert scale (1-5). The five-level Likert scale (strongly agree (1), agree (2), strongly disagree (3), disagree (4), and neither agree nor disagree (5).

The authors applied statistical tools as stated above to check the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The IBM SPSS tool is used to perform Cronbach's Alpha test. The results of the test are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Validity and reliability test**

No.	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Q1	The problem-based learning (PBL) technique helps to understand lectures	0.839
Q2	The PBL helps to perform practical	0.819
Q3	The PBL assists to conduct group discussion	0.818
Q4	The PBL motivates the students to attend lectures and practical	0.826
Q5	The PBL is a key factor in the success of exams	0.835
Q6	The PBL is a significant factor to complete homework	0.826
Q7	The PBL must be part of the curriculum	0.867
Q8	The PBL session is most effective and organized	0.854
Q9	I am willing to learn English using PBL if it is implemented in the College	0.803

The values of all the variables are  $> 0.8$  which means that all the variables are consistent and reliable.

The participants were asked to evaluate their experiences with the implementation of problem-based learning in the English classroom. The score of the 900 participants is given in Table 2. As a whole, the participants showed a very positive perception of the PBL approach.

**Table 2**  
**Perception of the participants on PBL**

Q. No.	Question	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Strongly Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (5)
Q1	The problem-based learning (PBL) technique helps to understand lectures	167	690	9	26	8
Q2	The PBL helps to perform practical	180	589	18	76	37
Q3	The PBL assists to conduct group discussion	370	453	38	15	24
Q4	The PBL motivates the students to attend lectures and practical	225	613	19	17	26
Q5	The PBL is a key factor in the success of exams	217	458	81	54	90
Q6	The PBL is a significant factor to complete homework	239	584	38	15	24
Q7	The PBL must be part of the curriculum	232	583	41	10	34
Q8	The PBL session is most effective and organized	100	721	27	37	15
Q9	I am willing to learn English using PBL if it is implemented in the College	125	728	15	15	17

The above results are further evidence that English Language subject students are more confident about the benefits of PBL in their English classroom. The students are demanding change in their lecture methodology as well as to get more benefits to easy English learning. The results show that English language learning could be easier for the students if the lecture will be delivered by using problem-based learning.

**Table 3**  
**Responses to questions on the perceptions of students**

Q. No.	Question	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Strongly Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (5)
Q1	The problem-based learning (PBL) technique helps to understand lectures	19%	77%	1%	3%	1%
Q2	The PBL helps to perform practical	20%	65%	2%	8%	4%
Q3	The PBL assists to conduct group discussion	41%	50%	4%	2%	3%
Q4	The PBL motivates the students to attend lectures and practical	25%	68%	2%	2%	3%
Q5	The PBL is a key factor in the success of exams	24%	51%	9%	6%	10%
Q6	The PBL is a significant factor to complete homework	27%	65%	4%	2%	3%
Q7	The PBL must be part of the curriculum	26%	65%	5%	1%	4%
Q8	The PBL session is most effective and organized	11%	80%	3%	4%	2%
Q9	I am willing to learn English using PBL if it is implemented in the College	14%	81%	2%	2%	2%

The statistics of the Table 3 show that students are willing to learn English if college will implement problem-based learning (81%). When the participants were asked about the benefits of PBL in group discussion then 41% of the students are strongly agreed that PBL is quite helpful in the study, especially in group discussion. The participants are also strongly agreed that PBL is very helpful in the completion of the homework (27%), although 4% of students are strongly disagreed. There are 80% of the participants agreed that the PBL session is most effective and organized. This thing shows that PBL attracts the students to learn English quickly as compared to traditional English learning methods. The problem-based learning (PBL) technique helps to understand lectures, 77% of the participants are also agreed on this with 19% strongly agreed.

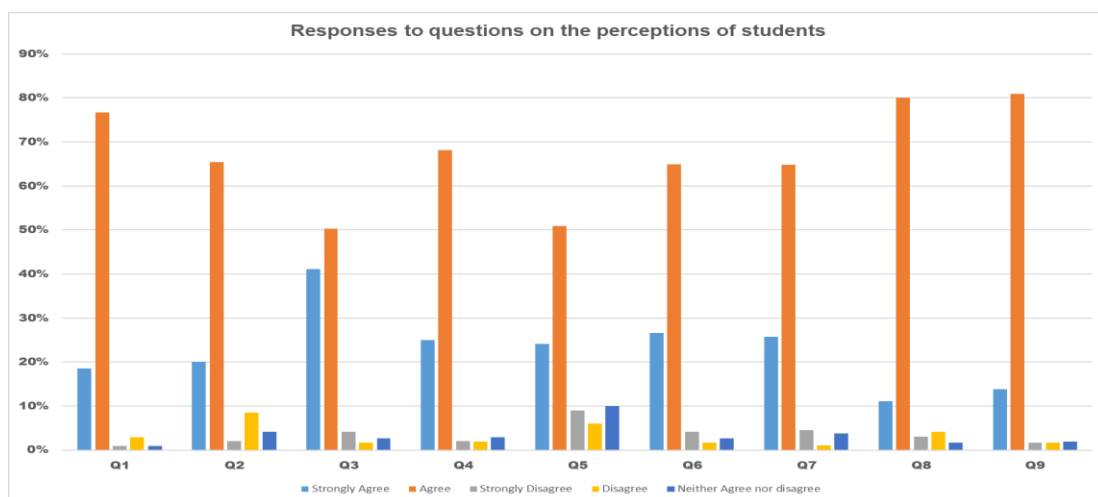


Figure 1: Responses to questions on the perceptions of students

Figure 1 shows that problem-based learning helps the students to perform practicals. The majority of the students gave their consent in the favor of this argument (65% agreed and 20% strongly agreed) while almost 10% of students are not agreed with this argument. The authors while interacting with the participants tried to get the reason for there to disagreeing comments and revealed that the English subject has no practical work therefore, they are not able to give their opinions properly.

The PBL is a key factor in the success of exams also scored positive remarks of the participants (24% strongly agreed and 51% agreed). Almost 15% of students disagreed with this argument. The results also show that 10% of students did not give their consent and became neutral. The authors further checked the results of the questionnaire and found that 65% of students are agreed with the argument regarding homework and same 65% of students are agreed regarding PBL support in curriculum, 27% of students are strongly agreed in the favour of homework and 26% of students are strongly agreed in the favour of curriculum.

**Table 4**  
Descriptive analysis of the questions

Descriptive Analysis	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
<b>Mean</b>	1.909	2.112	1.744	1.896	2.269	1.890	1.923	2.051	1.968
<b>Standard Error</b>	0.021	0.032	0.028	0.026	0.039	0.026	0.028	0.022	0.021
<b>Median</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Mode</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	0.619	0.957	0.834	0.772	1.183	0.777	0.826	0.673	0.626
<b>Sample Variance</b>	0.383	0.916	0.695	0.596	1.400	0.603	0.683	0.453	0.392
<b>Kurtosis</b>	7.316	2.093	4.617	6.187	0.462	5.459	5.295	6.858	10.276
<b>Skewness</b>	1.696	1.483	1.788	1.939	1.139	1.779	1.875	2.064	2.288

The authors have also taken the descriptive analysis of the nine questionnaires presented in Table 4. The above table shows that the PBL helps to perform practical and the PBL is a key factor in the success of exams has a very strong relationship with



each other. The rest of the variables also has almost the same means. Standard Error is  $<0.0$  and the value of the standard deviation is less than 1 which is very impressive.

### **Conclusion**

Problem-based learning is although not a new technique to enhance the abilities of the students, but it is still not implemented in developing countries like Pakistan. Problem-based learning has offered much more techniques to boost the teaching methodology, especially for the English language. Problem-based learning as a teaching approach offers a focused classroom, more interaction in English learning, uplift the motivation of the students, enhance learner autonomy, and provide opportunities to learn English beyond the classroom. The administration of the college and professors must make sure that the basic theme and principles of Problem-based learning. The students are also required to learn the basic concepts of Problem-based learning to successfully adopt them. The management is also required to overcome all the concerns and roadblocks in the implementation of Problem-based learning in the college. The teachers and students are required to get pre-requisite training of Problem-based learning, make sure the availability of the resources, and finally, students are mentally agreed to adopt Problem-based learning. Although the authors have conducted a survey in the English language classroom and found it very beneficial and it would be better for the readers to conduct the same type of survey for other languages, science, and engineering subjects. The researchers may change the sample size to get better results.

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