

Investigating the Effectiveness of a Project-Based Training Program on Developing EFL students' Writing Skills and Positive Thinking

Abstract:

The current study aimed to determine the effectiveness of a project-based training program on developing writing and positive thinking skills among English department students at Girls' college- Ain Shams University. The basics upon which this program was built were determined, the training program was prepared. A writing skill test and positive thinking questionnaire were prepared. The study had one experimental group (second year educational section-English department). The tools of the study were pre administrated to the experimental group. The participants carried out the assigned projects according to the training program. The tools were post applied on the experimental group. The obtained data were analyzed. Results maintained the effectiveness of the project-based training program on developing the writing skills and positive thinking level of the experimental group students.

Key words: project -based learning, writing skills and positive thinking.

التحقق من فاعلية برنامج تدريبي قائم على المشروعات في تنمية مهارة الكتابة والتفكير الإيجابي لدى طالبات شعبه اللغة الإنجليزية

مستخلص الدراسة:

هدف البحث الحالي إلى تحديد فاعلية برنامج قائم على المشروعات في تنمية مهارة الكتابة و التفكير الإيجابي لدى طالبات شعبه لغة انجليزية - تربوي (الفرقة الثانية) وحددت أسس بناء البرنامج التدريبي و تم اختيار المشروعات و بناء البرنامج ، كما اعد اختبار الكتابة ومقياس التفكير الإيجابي، و اختبرت مجموعه البحث التجريبية من طالبات قسم اللغة الإنجليزية شعبه تربوي بكلية البنات جامعه عين شمس .و طبقت أدوات البحث على المجموعة التجريبية قبلها ثم تم تنفيذ المشروعات المختارة طبقاً لأهداف وخطوات البرنامج التدريبي للمجموعة التجريبية، ثم طبقت أدوات البحث على المجموعة التجريبية بعديا. قامت الباحثة بمعالجة البيانات إحصائياً و أثبتت نتائج البحث فاعلية البرنامج التدريبي المقترح في تنمية مهارة الكتابة والتفكير الإيجابي لدى طالبات المجموعة التجريبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم القائم على المشروعات - مهارة الكتابة - التفكير الإيجابي

Introduction:

English language is an international language that should be mastered by students at different education stages. EFL students in particular must develop their language skills as it is a fundamental requirement for their college study and for their future career as well. Improving the four English language skills will always be one of the concerns of EFL instructors and researchers. There is an increasing interest to improve writing skill of EFL learners (Bae,2011:1, Lane et. al., 2008:236). In fact, there are many reasons for this. Firstly, writing is one of the main language skills, speaking, listening and reading, which are crucial for successful language acquisition. Secondly, the actual process of writing enables EFL writers to learn as they go along even after they finish their formal study (Harmer,2002: 28). Lastly, Writing is claimed to play an important role in intellectual development and career preparation of EFL students.

Writing is considered a very important skill as it provides a powerful means as self- expression as well as support for further learning and research. It is necessary to master writing since writing is an important communication means used in nowadays life. In spite of the importance of writing skill most language learners at all levels believe that writing is one of the most difficult language skills to master (Kurt & Atay, 2007; Latif, 2007). Learning to write in the foreign language is one of the most difficult tasks which EFL learners face and one that few of them are said to fully master. This may be because of the fact that writing in a foreign language is a complex, challenging and difficult process which involves cognitive, meta-cognitive, social and affective factors (Xiao-xia, 2007:31).

EFL students in Girls' college, Ain Shams University have two writing courses presented for them in the second and third year for the educational section. They study different topics like the process of writing, types of paragraph, some mechanics of writing and different types of essay. But still they suffer weakness and need to develop their writing skill as indicated by the results of the pilot study conducted by the researcher (see context of the problem). Many previous studies asserted as well the weakness of ESL students' writing skill and the need to tackle this problem using different approaches and strategies such as the study of Al-Hazmi (2006), Qu'atero(2008) and Qian (2010)

The face of university and college instruction is changing from approaches traditionally associated with the instructor as the center of the coaching process to approaches that place emphasis on energetic learning and the needs of students. In brief, there

exists a distinct shift from a lecture-based approach to an open-ended process focused model associated with critical theory that values request, reflection, negotiation of learning procedures, case and problem-based learning , discussion and cooperation, and self-directed learning (Barrett, 2005). The old stable conception of knowledge (knowledge given by instructor or/and textbook) has to be changed to a dynamic conception of knowledge (knowledge driven by students as information seekers who tackle variety of resources).

The 21st century, the century of globalization, information and technology, demands students to engage in higher order thinking, decision-making and procedurally complex tasks. Project-based Learning equips learners with most of these characteristics. Project-based Learning builds on individual strengths, and allows individuals to explore their interests in the framework of a defined curriculum. Project-based Learning is holistic in nature and incorporates the principles of providing challenging and complex work, interdisciplinary and encourages cooperative learning. Project-based Learning also lends authenticity to learning. While in practice, practitioners plan, implement and evaluate projects in real-world.

Project-based learning was used effectively in enhancing achievement and developing different language skills. Some previous studies assured that like the study of Tezi(2006), in which writing skill was developed and Ponpoon (2011) who developed language skills using project-based as well effectively.

Positive thinking is the process of encouraging thoughts that transform energy into reality. It is the mental process and operations that an individual does to convince himself with positive notions to motivate him to achieve his aims (Anthony,2010). Positive thinking gives us psychological stability and calmness to continue and work harder. Positive thinking means more than looking to the bright side of life or repeating optimistic statement, it means the continuous and gradual labor to develop ourselves in all aspects of life. Positive thinking has many dimensions such as: constructing positive self- identity, optimistic view of life, self-value, hope, continuous positive development and many other skills. EFL students lack positive thinking skills especially those related to absorbing the other like accepting personal responsibility, adjusting emotions and forgiveness. They are not trained to work in groups and exchange information. The researcher believed that project-based learning will give them the opportunity to cooperate when they work in group. They will be more tolerant and also will feel successful when they accomplish their projects. Project-based

learning can be used to improve their positive thinking as well as their writing skill (Kathpalia &Heah,2011).The current study aims at developing ESL students, writing skill and positive thinking using project-based learning.

Context of the problem

The need to conduct the current study springs from the following sources:

1- The researcher's personal experience as a lecturer at Girls' college directed her attention towards the weakness of the students' writing skill. Students' writings in exams showed their lack of many of the basic skills of writing like grammar, punctuation, use of vocabulary, organization and other writing skills. Students usually expect more marks than what they get due to their weakness in writing skill.

2-The researcher gave an open- ended questionnaire to 40 second year English students at the Girls' college (non- education section) .The questionnaire consisted of the following three questions:

-What are the problems you face when you write in English?

- How can you improve your writing skill?

- What are your suggestions for the writing course you study this year?

The students mentioned many different problems they encounter when they write like making many grammatical, spelling, organization, punctuation and content mistakes. They stated that they need more practice for writing skill to enable them to write correctly and at appropriate speed to accomplish different tasks and to finish answering questions in exams in time and in acceptable writing. They needed to have more practice and writing opportunities in the writing course they take in the college, and also stressed the importance of having continuous feedback for their written assignments to learn from it and avoid repeating mistakes.

3- The researcher gave an adapted positive thinking skills questionnaire (see appendix 1) to 40 second year English students at the Girls' college (non- education section). The results showed that most of the students (75%) showed low level in positive thinking. They lacked self-confidence and preferred individual work to group work to avoid problems.

4- Many previous studies assured the positive effect of project-based learning on developing achievement and other different

language skills such as Khater(2007) who showed the effectiveness of project-based training on developing achievement ,seeking competencies and oral presentation skills. Shiraz1 and Larsari (2014) asserted the effectiveness of project-based on developing intermediate school students reading comprehension skills. Marwan (2015), Koparan & Güven (2013) and Al Ahmadi (2014) also used project-based effectively to develop various skills. Many studies tackled the weakness of English students' writing skill and contributed to solving this problem using different strategies. Al-Hazmi (2006), Qu'atero(2008) and Qian (2010) attributed to the lack of appropriate writing instruction which overemphasizes writing as a product. Writing is one of the language skills that requires more research to develop.

Problem of the study

The problem of the current study was the weakness of second year educational section English department students at Girls' college-Ain shams University in writing skills and their low positive thinking level. In an attempt to solve this problem, the researcher designed and experimented a project-based program to identify its effectiveness on developing second year educational section English students writing skills as well as improving their positive thinking.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to improve some writing skills and positive thinking level of second year educational section English students at Girls' college-Ain shams University.

Questions of the study

The study sought to provide answers to the following main question:

What is the effectiveness of a project-based training program on developing writing skills and improving positive thinking skills of second year educational section English students at Girls' college-Ain shams university?

From this main question the following sub-questions emerged:

- 1- What are the writing skills required to be developed for the second year educational section English students?
- 2- What are the theoretical bases and features of the project-based training program for developing English writing skills and improving positive thinking?

3-What is the effectiveness of the brain-based training program on developing each of second year educational section English students writing sub-skills?

4-What is the effectiveness of the brain-based training program on improving second year educational section English students 'positive thinking skills?

Hypotheses of the study

1- There will be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the writing skills of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the test in favor of the post test.

2-There will be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the test on each writing sub-skill: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics in favor of the post test.

3- There will be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post application of the positive thinking skills questionnaire in favor of the post application.

4- The project-based training program is effective in developing writing skills.

5- The project-based training program is effective in developing positive thinking skills.

Aims of the study

The present study aimed at identifying the effectiveness of a project-based training program on developing second year educational section English students' writing skills and increasing their positive thinking.

Variables of the study

1- Independent variable

A project-based training program.

2- Dependent variable

1- Second year educational section English students' writing skills.

2- Second year educational section English students' positive thinking .

Delimitations of the study

The present study is delimited to:

- 1- Participants of second year educational section English department, Girls' college- Ain Shams University in the second term of the academic years 2015-2016. Second year educational section English students need to master writing skills as they depend on writing in their evaluation in most of the subjects they study. They also need to improve their writing skills for their future career as English teachers.
- 2- The writing skills to be targeted are the content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics of writing.
- 3-Positive thinking in its following skills: optimism, adjusting emotions, accepting personal responsibility, forgiveness, social Intelligence and self unconditionally acceptance.

Significance of the study

The present study tackles an important problem facing English students in the faculties of education which is the weak level of their writing skill. Writing is considered a fundamental tool for assessment in our education system. Writing also is an important language skill as it provides a powerful means as self- expression as well as support for further learning and research. Students also need to think positively to achieve better. Enhancing positive thinking will help them in their future career as teachers and in personal life to overcome different problems.

The present study has theoretical importance: the study will present theoretical frame about project-based learning: definition, benefits and characteristics, the teacher's role and the types of project-based learning. Writing skill theoretical part has the following dimensions: Definition and importance, the process of writing, the stages of writing, teaching writing, why writing is difficult and writing assessment. Positive thinking theoretical part deals with the definition and strategies used to develop it. This theoretical part may be of use to other researchers

It also has practical importance for English students in improving their writing and positive thinking skills. Learners will practice working in groups and constructing their own projects independently. They will search for, collect and present data about their project. EFL educators should consider implementing Project-based training in English courses at different education levels.

The researcher presents a training program based on project-based learning to investigate its effectiveness in enhancing the writing skill and positive thinking of English Majors.

Definition of terms

In this section of the study the terms are defined operationally.

Project-based learning: In this study Project-Based Learning (PBL) is defined as an educational strategy that actively involves 2nd year English students, education section at Girls' college, in improving their writing skills :(content-organization-vocabulary-grammar and mechanics of writing). Students investigate predetermined topics related to writing skill: the process of writing, mechanics of writing, narrative, argumantive, cause and effect and the researched essay. Developing their positive thinking skills as well in an extended time frame, collaborating with each other in small group works, consulting different sources locating the needed information, organizing this information and finally presenting their final written outcome.

Writing skill: In the present study, writing is defined in the ability of second year English students, education section at Girls' college to improve their following writing sub-skill: content-organization-vocabulary-grammar and mechanics of writing.

Positive thinking: Second year English students, education section at Girls' college following positive thinking skills: optimism, adjusting emotions, accepting personal responsibility, forgiveness, social Intelligence and self unconditionally acceptance.

Theoretical background

(1) Writing skill

Writing has always been considered an important skill in the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and other languages as well. It inspires logical thinking, drives students to focus their attention and arrange their ideas, and develops their ability to summarize, analyze, and criticize. Secondly, writing enhances learning by thinking in, and reflecting on the target language (Luchini, 2010:73).

Definition and importance of writing

Writing is one of the language skills which is important in our life. Through writing, we can inform others, carry out transactions, persuade, infuriate, and tell what we feel. However, we know that writing or learning to write especially in a foreign language is not

simply a matter of “writing things down”. It is one of the four basic skills that are very complex and difficult to learn.

Brown (2001) also states that a writing is a product of thinking, drafting, and revising that needs specialized skills on how to generate ideas, how to organize them coherently, how to use discourse markers and rhetorical conventions to put them cohesively into a written text, how to revise a text for clearer meaning, how to edit a text for appropriate grammar, and how to produce a final product. Wallace (2004) defines writing as the final product after students have learned several stages of writing separately before.

In Word reference (2010), Writing is defined as one of the ways to give an idea or message which is form in writing. It is an act of making marks on certain surface. Specifically, writing is a kind of expression in language which is created by particular group of symbol, having conventional values for representing the wordings of particular language which is drawn up visually.

Writing is also one of the productive skills which involve communicating a message in the form of letters and symbols. Communicating means sending certain information to others, therefore, a message must have a purpose. In other words, writing produces a written product which has certain information. Hyland (2004: 09) explains that writing is a way to share personal meanings. People construct their own views on topic. They will share their views on a topic to each other then. For EFL students, writing is considered the main vehicle to gain knowledge and also to be assessed. Writing is an essential skill for student teachers in particular for their future career

Byrne (1994) stresses the importance of writing for the EFL students for the following purposes:

- a. Writing satisfies a psychological need as it serves to provide learners with some tangible evidence that they are making progress in the language.
- b. Writing enables them in their future career as teachers to provide different learning opportunities for learners with different learning styles and needs. Hence, some learners, especially those who do not learn easily through oral practice alone, feel more secure and relaxed if they are allowed to read and write in target language.

The Process of Writing

There are various approaches to teaching writing. Among them we find: the product approach, the process approach, the genre approach and the integrated approach.

a-The Product Approach

This is the traditional approach to teaching writing where learners are given a model text to emulate. The model text is presented and analyzed before starting writing. Then, learners are asked to write their compositions following the model text.

b-The Process Approach

This approach sees writing as a dynamic process in which writers attempt to reformulate their ideas and convey a specific meaning. Thus, teachers can encourage students to explore their thoughts and develop their writing by adopting a five-step writing process model (Yi, 2010: 31).

c-The Genre Approach

The genre approach can be viewed as an extension of the product approach. Like product approaches, genre approaches regard writing as predominantly linguistic but, unlike product approaches, they emphasize that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced (Badger and White, 2000:155).

d. The Integrated Approach

IN this approach, writing involves knowledge about language (as in product and genre approaches), knowledge of the context in which writing takes place and especially the purpose of writing (as in genre approaches), and skills in using language flexibly (as in process approaches). In addition, writing development occurs by drawing out the learners' potential (as in process approaches) and by supplying input to which the learners respond (as in product and genre approaches).(Yi, 2010:29).

Stages of writing

Writing is a complex skill which involves a series of logical stages which enable writers to organize their thoughts so as to perform their writing tasks successfully. Although the writing stages are integrating in the writing process, they can be dealt with separately to facilitate description.

Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that the process of teaching writing consists of four basic stages. Each stage has its importance

in reaching the final writing product and also certain activities to help learners achieve it appropriately.

1) Planning

Planning or pre-writing is an activity of writing that aimed to encourage and stimulate the students to write. Its function is to stimulate students' ideas, the writing activities must be prepared to provide them learning experiences of writing likes brainstorming. According to Harmer (2004), there must be three considerations in this stage. The first one is thinking the purpose of writing. It will influence other features, like the text type, language use, and information or content of the text. The second one is related to the reader students refer to.

2) Drafting

Drafting is recognized as the first version production in a writing process. The draft may be edited and revised before becoming a fixed written work. At this stage, the students will focus on the fluency of the writing and write without having much care to the accuracy of their works. During the process of writing, they must also focus on the content and the meaning of the writing. Besides, they may be encouraged to deliver their message to different audiences such as peers and other classmates.

3) Revising

In this stage readers allowed the writer to reflect and revise the works. The students review the text to find out how effectively they have communicated their ideas to the reader. Revising is not a simple activity of checking language errors but it is done to improve global content and organization of the ideas so the writer's intention is clearer for the reader.

4) Editing

At this stage, the students are focused on tidying up their works as they prepared the final draft to be evaluated by the teacher. The main activity done by them at this stage is editing their mistakes on grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentences and diction.

Teaching Writing

Harmer (2001: 79-84) explains four reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language .They are reinforcement, language development, learning style and writing as a skill.

1. Reinforcement: some students acquire languages in an oral /aural way; others get benefit from seeing the language written

down. It is useful for students to write the new language shortly after studying it.

2. Language development: the process of writing is different from the process of speaking; the first helps us to learn as we go along.

3. Learning style: some students are quick at acquiring language just by looking and listening. Others may take more time spent in producing language in a slower way is invaluable. So, writing is appropriate for those learners.

4. Writing as a skill: the most essential reason for teaching writing is that, it is a basic language skill like speaking, listening and reading. Students need to know how to write different texts such as letters, compositions, essays and reports and how to use writing's conventions. Cumming (2002: 123-134) cautions writing teachers to be wary of exercises that attempt to break writing down into component skills as such exercises often eliminate portions of the task that are important to the personal and cultural significance of the writing. Archibald (2004: 5) states that writing instruction can be effective in raising proficiency in a number of areas rather than writing itself. Monaghan (2007: 4) notes that teaching writing would include writing strategies, the basis of grammar and syntax through various pedagogical methods. Ultimately, teaching writing means guiding students toward achieving the highest ability in communicating in words. In the current study the instructor will guide and present feedback for the learners who will acquire data and practice by themselves.

Why Writing is Difficult?

Writing is considered by many EFL students and instructors as a complex and difficult skill. According to Byrne (1997), writing is considered difficult even in the mother tongue because of three factors; psychological, linguistic and cognitive. As for the psychological side, when students write, they write on their own selves because it is a solitary activity so students have to write without possible interaction or feedback. Hence, writing in itself is considered difficult.

Concerning the linguistic problem, students have to make up for the absence of the features of speaking. Also, they have to keep communication open through their own efforts and ensure both the choice of sentence structure as well as the way of how our sentences are linked together and sequenced. So, the produced text can be interpreted on its own. With regard to the cognitive problem, students learn to write through a process of instructions. To achieve this, students have to master the written form of the

language and to learn the structures of writing; which are not used in speaking. Students also have to learn how to organize their ideas in a way by which a reader can absorb it without being present or knowing the writer.

Maltin (2005) believes that writing is one of the least understood linguistic tasks; research in this area is relatively limited. Tessema (2005) explains one of the reasons for the difficulty of writing skill is that even with the simplest writing tasks, students often lose interest and do not complete them. Yan (2005) points out that education systems emphasize writing for taking tests. The main purpose of writing is to pass examinations. This reduces writing to producing a product and receiving a grade from the teacher. Consequently, EFL learners have many difficulties learning the writing skill because of its demanding and complex nature.

Writing assessment

The difficulty of writing is not only in acquiring and teaching it but also in assessment. Davison and Dowson (1998, pp.140-144) discussed three kinds of writing evaluation which are self-evaluation, peer evaluation and teacher assessment.

- Peer evaluation: This kind of evaluation can be directed by prompt questions set by the teacher or in negotiation; which draw attention to matters such the total impression a piece of writing is intended to make on readers and the effect it has, specific strengths in relation to matters such as its use of genre, its selection of content, its appropriateness for its audience and its technical accuracy, general points which the writer could address in redrafting or revising the text. Students` comments can be valuable and informative about the development of their writing.

- Self- evaluation: It is particularly valuable when students produce especially sensitive or personal writing or when they use genres such as poetry. Writers, who are asked to discuss what they were trying to achieve and to indicate the source of their ideas, can provide a teacher with guidance as to what kind of response is appropriate. The self –evaluation forms are kind of objectification of the personal, and the teachers need to pay attention not only to the quality of the work, but also the degree to which the writer is able to distance them from the content in deciding how to respond.

- Teacher assessment: Teacher assessment of writing should also draw attention to the issues indicated for peer and self-evaluation. Many teachers begin their responses to writing with comments which show their reaction to the method in which the piece has made meaning and may include emotional responses as well as

analytical ones. The formative assessment and evaluation of writing should take the form of a developmental dialogue between the teacher and students and among groups of students. Richard (2003, pp.212-225) emphasized that the assessment refers to the variety of techniques used to collect information on a learner's language ability or achievement.

In the present study the two kinds of assessment were used. Self-correction, as the students had a self-checklist to help them in correcting their writing mistakes in the weekly written report they presented about their achievement in the assigned tasks of the project. Teacher or instructor assessment also was employed by the researcher for the individual and group reports. The researcher used a rating rubric. Zimmaro (2004:1) defined a rubric as a "systematic scoring guideline to evaluate students' performance (papers, speeches, problem solutions, portfolios, cases) through the use of a detailed description of performance standards". Rubrics help overcome the problem of fluctuations in the raters' grading in relation to the same written text. Rubrics help instructors to get consistent scores across all learners on writing tests and allow learners to be more alert to the expected writing performance and improve their performance accordingly (Kohn,2006:14).

(2)Project-based learning

The project method originates from Pragmatism, the philosophical movement which started in the middle of the 19th century and encourages action and practical application of knowledge in everyday life. Project-based learning is part of the instructional approach created by Dewey (1938), who believed practical experience in learning as a crucial factor.

The implementation of the project method was based on the following pedagogical principles, expressed by many educators (Chrysafidis, 2005): a) promotion of manual activity instead of memorization b) learners' active participation in the learning process, and c) exploitation of facts relating to the immediate reality as a source for learning.

One of the most important characteristics that differentiates Project-based learning from traditional educational approaches is that it is student centered. In Project-based learning, students can identify the problems, discuss the solutions or predictions, collect information, evaluate the collected information, make conclusions, combine views and create a product (Blumenfeld et al, 1991).

Definition

Project-based learning (PBL) has many definitions which cover different aspects. Thomas (2000) defined it as a model that organizes learning around projects. Project-based learning assures completing complex tasks that typically result in a realistic product, event, or presentation to an audience.

According to Bell (2010; 39), Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a student- driven, teacher-facilitated approach to learning. Project-based learning is an instructional method centered on the learner. Students ask a question and are directed through research under the teacher's supervision. Solomon (2003) agrees adding that project-based learning is a process of learning in which students are responsible for their own education. Students work together to solve problems that are curriculum-based, and often authentic. PBL is motivating, empowering and challenging to language learners; it usually results in building learners' confidence, self-esteem, as well as improving students' language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities (Bas, 2011, p. 2).

Bell (2010) points out that in a project based learning classroom, students are provided with a topic which they should develop through research or project work for their individual or group learning and teachers should monitor the project performed by students. Students, in this learning framework, are trained to be critical and responsible for their learning.

Larmer and Mergendoller (2010) pointed out that a project is meaningful if it fulfils two criteria. First, students must perceive the work as personally meaningful, as a task that is of interest and that they want to do well. Second, a meaningful project fulfils an educational purpose. For a project to be meaningful to students, they suggest that seven essentials needed to be fulfilled.

- (1) A Need to Know: The learners face an educational challenge and need to meet and solve it.
- (2) A Driving Question: A good driving question leads learners to sense purpose and challenge.
- (3) Student Voice and Choice: In terms of making a project feel meaningful to students, the more the learners choose themselves, the better.
- (4) 21st Century Skills: A project should provide learners with opportunities to build 21st century skills such as collaboration, communication and the use of technology.

(5) **Inquiry and Innovation:** Learners find project work more meaningful if they conduct real-life inquiry.

(6) **Feedback and Revision:** When learners refer to rubrics and other sets of criteria to evaluate their own as well as one another's work. Self-evaluation as well as feedback from peers makes learning more meaningful.

(7) **A Publicly Presented Product:** When learners present their work to a real audience, they will try to replicate the tasks done by professionals and in the process, create authentic products.

Roessingh and Chambers (2011) assured the previous seven essentials of PBL and added that they guide instructional design for project-based learning .

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that project-based learning is a teaching method centered on the learners. It engages learners in gaining knowledge through activities creating an end product. These definitions helped the researcher in gaining more knowledge about the essence of PBL and in designing the suggested program.

Benefits and characteristics of PBL

Many benefits of integrating project work in second and foreign language settings have been identified. First, the process leading to the end-product of project-work provides chances for students to develop their self- confidence and independence (Fried-Booth, 2002). Through conducting PBL students possess increased self-esteem, and positive attitudes toward learning (Stoller, 2006:27). Students' autonomy is enhanced, especially when they are actively engaged in project planning. A further frequently mentioned benefit relates to students' increased social, cooperative skills, and group cohesiveness. Another reported benefit is improved language skills (Levine, 2004). Because students engage in purposeful communication to complete authentic activities, they have the chance to use language in a relatively natural context and participate in meaningful activities which require authentic language use.

Another benefit is that because project work progresses according to the specific context and students' interests, students have enhanced motivation, engagement and enjoyment (Lee, 2002). Another set of benefits refer to the development of problem-solving and higher order critical thinking skills (Allen, 2004).

PBL has an important part in developing learners' target language for real life purposes. It helps students' language skills to become

more competent in the use of the target language and promotes learners learner motivation and integrated skill practice (Stoller, 1997).

Simpson (2011) mentions some benefits to using PBL in the language classroom such as gaining language proficiency, self-efficacy and self-esteem. In addition, project-based learning can improve language skills. As students engage in purposeful communication to complete authentic activities, they have opportunity to use language in relative natural context and participate in meaningful activities which require authentic language (Heines in Fragoulis,2009).

Researchers tried to identify PBL characteristics. Stoller (1997) mentions some characteristics in project-based learning.

1) Project work focuses on content learning rather than on specific language targets. Real world subject matter and topics of interest to students can become central to projects.

2) Project work is student centered, though the teacher plays an important part in offering support and guidance throughout the process.

3) Project work is cooperative rather than competitive. Students can work on their own, in small groups, or as a class to finish a project, sharing resources, ideas, and expertise along the way.

4) Project work leads to authentic integration of skills and processing of information from varied resources, mirroring real-life tasks.

5) Project work culminates in an end product that can be shared with others, giving the project a real purpose. The value of the project however is not just in the final product but in the process of working towards the end point. Thus, project work has both a process and product orientation, and provides students with opportunities to focus on fluency and accuracy at different project-work stages.

6) It is potentially motivating, stimulating, empowering, and challenging. It usually results in building student confidence, self-esteem, and autonomy as well as improving students' language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities.

The benefits and characteristics of PBL encouraged the researcher to conduct the present study to increase the second year English students' writing skill. The researcher also found it appropriate to develop the students' positive thinking as well. PBL encourages self-

confidence, motivation, engagement and enjoyment which are positive thinking skills.

Teacher role in project-based learning

Effective project-based learning requires the teacher to have a different role .The teacher's role is not dominant, but he/she is a guide, advisor, coordinator, and facilitator. In implementing the project method, the central point of the learning process moves from the teacher to the learners, from working alone to working in groups.

Marx et al. (1997) state teachers' problems when using PBL as follows:

- Time. Projects often take longer and more time than anticipated.
- Classroom management. In order for students to work productively, teachers need to balance the need to allow students to work on their own with the need to keep order.
- Control. Teachers often feel the need to control the flow of information while at the same time knowing that students' understanding requires that they build their own understanding.
- Support of student learning. Teachers have difficulty scaffolding students' activities, sometimes presenting them too much independence or too little modeling and feedback.
- Technology use. Teachers have difficulty pending technology into the classroom, especially as a cognitive tool.
- Assessment. Teachers have problems designing assessment tools that require students to demonstrate their understanding.

The teacher also should be aware of the fact that students have different abilities and finish work at different rates. PBL requires the teacher to adopt a new attitude to acquire a wide range of skills. During the project, the teacher should take on the role of facilitator, which involves being a source of ideas and advice, a referee helping to settle arguments or disagreements.

Types of PBL

In the following part the researcher will exhibit the different types of PBL. Fleming (2000:15-46) presented 13 project-based learning approaches. The following is a list of these approaches:

- Community study: A community study gives students an opportunity to learn in and about their community while using knowledge and skills they have learned in school.

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- **Design and Technology Experience:** This type of projects leads students to apply their learning to a situation or problem by developing a prototype or working model.
 - **Environmental Investigation:** This type of projects assures the importance of systematic data collection and analysis to know more about conditions, processes, populations, and life cycle of organisms.
 - **Expeditionary Learning:** It is an in depth study of one theme or topic.
 - **Field Study:** It addresses a problem or issue outside of the classroom and is led by a team of students under the supervision of a faculty member.
 - **Foxfire Approach:** It began in 1966 when Eliot Wigginton was teaching Basic English skills to high school students. Wigginton suggested that his students create a literary magazine. A key feature of this approach is community investigation undertaken by students.
 - **The Micro society:** It is a miniature community started and run by students within a school. A Micro society could involve students from different grade levels.
 - **The Museum Method:** This method uses the metaphor of a museum to help students to plan, organize, and display their learning about a particular issue, place, object, person, or event.
 - **The Problem-Based Learning:** It focuses on experiential learning organized around the investigation and solution of real-world problems.
 - **The Project Approach in Early Childhood Education:** This approach focuses on researching questions posed either by the children, the teacher, or the teacher in collaboration with children. The aim of the project approach is to learn more about the topic rather than to find answers to questions posed by the teacher.
 - **The Senior Project:** It provides an opportunity for seniors to work on intensive, in-depth projects of their own choosing. Projects may focus on one or more areas.
 - **Service Learning:** Service learning programs allow students to apply skills they have learned in school to carry out meaningful work in their society.
 - **Work-Based Learning:** Work-based learning approaches vary considerably and can include practices that are part of service

learning, experiential learning, experience-based education, school-to-work initiatives and cooperative education.

The present study did not depend on one type but it made use of more than one; namely the problem-based, the senior project, and work-based project. Students work on in-depth, intensive investigation on different topics concerning their writing course. They collect data, apply some of the suggested techniques and finally present the project.

(3)Positive thinking

Definition

Positive thinking is to maintain a proper balance in recognizing the various problems; it is an integrated approach to life, focusing on the bright and positive side in any situation, rather than focusing on the negatives. It is that innate ability to reach better results through positive thoughts. (Peiffer, 2002:12).

Positive Thinking is optimistic orientation in life, while negative thinking is pessimistic orientation. It leads to success (Neck & Manz, 1992). Positive thinking is the secret of high performance and improved achievement. It enhances openness, honesty and trust, which makes us follow our aim for better future and a better community. (Murphy, 2010, p. 8)

Perhaps the most important skills of positive thinking are: Taking full responsibility, conscious awareness, goal setting, positive time, self-development, and daily meditation (Johnson,2002). Positive thinking interventions stresses the improvement of the individual abilities to confront with negative situations and focus on positive skills (Stallard,2008). Froman (2009) believes that positive emotions modify the thinking and behavioral characteristics of humans toward a positive trend. Positive thinking is a mental attitude in which you expect good and favorable results. In other words, positive thinking is the process of establishing thoughts that transform energy into reality. A person who faces life with a positive attitude will always be more successful in life both professionally and personally, than a person that loses control over his thoughts.

Positive thinking in language-learning plays an important role. It enhances effective second-language communicators by planting in them the desire for self-confidence. It also successfully creates learners who engage themselves in learning even after they complete a targeted course or goal.

Atsuta(2003) mentioned three factors which influence positive thinking:

- Self-confidence which is the most significant in language-learning. It gives learners the motivation and energy to become positive about their own learning.**
- Experience of success and satisfaction which provides students with more power to follow a new goal. It allows language learners to understand the purpose of trying and have pleasure in communicating with others. Others might feel the sense of success when they complete a challenging task in a targeted language.**
- Good relationships among learners and between teacher and students In order to develop a mutual relationship with their learners, teachers need to understand students who are from different backgrounds, have different interests, future goals, aims for English learning, and most importantly, different personalities (Kabilan,2000).**

The researcher benefited from this part in designing the project-based activities that ensures the learners' self-confidence, experience of success at the different stages of completing the project and enhancing good relation among learners and with their instructor.

Developing positive thinking

Positive thinking can be developed using different strategies. To encourage positive thinking, the following strategies may be useful (Christi, 2009).

- Use positive words to encourage yourself while working and practice positive affirmations.**
- Remove all the feelings that are not positive and always redirect your thoughts.**
- Have self-confidence and put your doubts aside and believe that you will succeed in meeting your objectives.**
- Try to analyze what went wrong to avoid future mistakes and look forward more positive.**
- Think of a failure as an opportunity to have a new start**

The researcher impended many of positive thinking strategies in her guide to the learners. They met weekly and the researcher discussed the problems they face in accomplishing the project and used positive thinking strategies to help them.

Method

The design of the study is the pre-posttest quasi one group experimental design. Subjects were 35 second year English majors, education section, Girl's College, Ain Shams University.

Tools of the study

Treatment materials:

- 1- Writing checklist and scoring rubric.
- 2- The project-based training program.
- 3- A writing self-assessment checklist.

Measurement tools:

- 1- A pre-post writing test.
- 2- A pre-post positive thinking questionnaire.

To answer the study questions, the following procedures were followed:

1-Identifying the required writing skills for the second year educational section English department students

The required writing skills for the second year educational section English department students as determined by jury members- who were staff members from the Department of Curricula and Methods of Teaching, Girls' college Ain shams university- are: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics of writing. The checklist in its initial and final form is in appendix (2). Thus the first sub-question of the study was answered. Thus the first sub-question of the study was answered.

The researcher designed a writing scoring rubric which included the five chosen writing skills with scoring range from 6 to 1 mark. Students had 6 marks when they show mastery of the chosen skill and had one mark for showing weakness in the skill appendix (3).

2- Identifying the theoretical foundation and features of the project-based training program

Rationale

The current study stems from Project-Based Learning. It is an approach that keeps students engaged in continuous, cooperative in-depth investigation. In this type of learning students are able to take control of learning environment and process, working in groups to complete a series of tasks to reach the project's outcome. In this study the project was an academic writing course. Students

have different topics in this course like: the process of writing, mechanics of writing, narrative, argumantive, cause and effect and the researched essay. Working through projects, students will be trained to search for, plan, organize their information, use different sources, collaborate with each other and constitute the content of the project. The main objective of the program is to train the students for the written presentation of their projects taking into consideration the target writing skills.

The experiment lasted for the whole second term of the academic year 2015/2016. The researcher used to meet the subjects two hours weekly at the lecture's time and twice a week at office hours for consultation. The students were divided into 5 groups each group included 7 students. Groups from (1-3) used to meet the researcher every Sunday, 30minutes for each group. Groups from (4-5) used to meet the researcher every Thursday. This schedule was kept even at the time of the continuous teaching practice.

Description of the project

1- The first two meetings were devoted to explain project-based learning and what is expected to be accomplished by the end of the term. Students were informed that they will be divided into groups; each group will be responsible for tackling certain topic concerning the writing course. These topics were the same topics taught in the writing skill course which were the process of writing, mechanics of writing, narrative, argumantive, cause and effect and the researched essay. In the theoretical part of the course the topics were previously prepared by the instructor and organized in a pamphlet given to the students. The researcher presented the topics of the course according to her time plan weekly. In the projects students were informed that each topic should be defined well, they should get benefit from the theoretical lecture in their assigned topics.

2- The second step was to ask the students to divide the work among each other (students were divided into five groups each consisting of seven students). Two were responsible for searching the web for new information about the project topic, two other students searched for information and more documentation to support their diagnosis from journals and periodicals (provided by the instructor), while the other two students searched the library (Girls' college library and CDELT library) for books dealing with their topic. The seventh student was the leader who was responsible for collecting all the data, following the work of each student, recording every step and summarizing the results of each meeting to plan for the next. Every student in the five groups writes a weekly report

about her achievement and turns it to the researcher. The students had a self-checklist for writing skills (appendix: 4) to help them in evaluating their reports before turning it in.

Also, they were informed that each group should meet regularly to organize their material, decide on what is proper and what is not and how to write their final report for the project. This report will include all the material they gathered about the topic of the project. They revise their products (individual or group reports) regularly following the writing self-checklist dealing with the five chosen writing skills: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics of writing. All through these procedures they consulted their instructor twice a week at office to guide them, give suggestions for improvement and recognize their progress during the whole term.

3- The third step was to write the first draft to be presented to the class and to be discussed with their colleagues. Each student within the group wrote specific part agreed upon with her group and the rest of the group revised it with her. This part was a group as well as individual work. Students were informed that in this part they would be evaluated according to the individual reports they presented and their role in the final version of the written data about the project topic.

The final step was to revise their project where they elaborated, eliminated, or added more details for more clarification to achieve cohesion and coherence for each topic, and then they delivered the final version to be given to the instructor for closed discussion and evaluation and then got permission for the distribution of the written material to the whole class. Finally, groups exchanged their projects to be ready for the writing test.

In each project the instructor presented background about the project topic, identified the learning goals, introduced the topic and the project activities. Project activities were data collection, group discussion, individual student's activities and written report and team investigation and final written report. Thus, the second sub-question of the current study was answered.

Constructing the study tools

Tools of the Study

Measurement tools:

A- A pre-post writing skill test.

B- A pre-post positive thinking questionnaire.

The researcher designed the study tools as follows:

A- Writing test

The researcher developed a writing skill test. The test was used as a pre-post instrument to assess the experimental group's writing skill before and after administrating the project-based training program.

The test aim: It aimed at pre-post measuring the chosen writing skills of the members of the experimental groups of the current study.

Constructing the test: The test had three questions and the students were asked to choose only two. The first is to write a descriptive essay, the second question is to write a narrative essay and the third question was about cause and effect essay.

The test validity: The two instruments of the current study were given to the jury members. They approved the instruments and suggested some changes which were taken into consideration in the final version. To measure the test content validity, the first version of the test was submitted to jury members to evaluate the test in terms of (a) number of questions and appropriateness to evaluate the chosen skills, (b) suitability of the test to the second year educational section-English department students and (c) suitability of the test to measure the intended skills. The jury members' suggestions were taken seriously into consideration and modifications were done accordingly. After the modifications were made, the test was mostly a valid one, as it showed that it measured what it was intended to measure as stated by the jury.

Reliability of the test: The test retest method was used to determine the reliability of the test. The test was administered to 30 students who were in the second year non-educational section and was re administered by an interval of fifteen days to the same group. Then, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the test/re-test was calculated. The reliability coefficient was 0.98 which is relatively high .So, the test was reliable.

Timing the test: During the piloting administration of the test on the same 30 students, the time taken by all the students was divided by

the number of the students, (summation of the time taken by all the students) / (the number of the students) =130 minutes. The time allotted to answer the test was 130 minutes.

Scoring the test: The students' answers on the pre-posttest were scored by the researcher and another rater (a lecturer at English department, Girls' college –Ain Shams University) and the mean score was considered the students' mark in the test. Each student was to answer two questions, 15 marks for each student with the total of 30 marks.

B- Positive thinking questionnaire

Aim of the questionnaire: the questionnaire aimed at identifying the level of the second year, educational section, English department students' positive thinking skills before and after presenting the project-based training program.

Constructing the questionnaire: after reviewing positive thinking literature and previous related studies, the researcher designed it. It had six basic skills with the total number of 32 items in the form of statements said by the students to report their positive thinking status follows:

- Optimism, and it included 6 statements (1-6).
- Adjusting emotions, which included 5 statements (7-11).
- Accepting personal responsibility, and it included 5 statements (12-16).
- Forgiveness, and it included 5 statements (17-21).
- Social intelligence, which included 6 statements (22-27).
- Self unconditionally acceptance and it included 5 statements (28-32).

The researcher put into her consideration in the choice of the positive thinking skills their appropriateness to the essence of project-based training which requires the individual cooperation with others and the psychological needs of learners at the university level. The questionnaire started with simple introduction for the learners about the purpose of the questionnaire and the meaning of positive thinking.

The design and correction of the questionnaire: The total number of statements was 32. Every statement had four responses (always true, sometimes true, rarely true, not true). In scoring the questionnaire the positive statement was given the marks (4-3-2-1)

and the negative one is given the marks(1-2-3-4).The total mark of the questionnaire was 128 marks .

The questionnaire validity: it was given to the jury members to give their opinion about the appropriateness of the statements for their purpose and the learners' characteristics. They omitted 3 statements for being repeated and modified the structure of 6 statements. They agreed on the suitability and validity of the questionnaire to its aim.

Pilot administration of the questionnaire: The questionnaire was applied in its final form on a group of 30 2nd year non-educational English department students twice to achieve reliability. Holsti formula was used and the agreement was 0.76 which is an accepted rate. The average time taken to finish the questionnaire was 40 minutes.

Participants

The participants of the study were 35 students from second year educational section English department, Girls' college- Ain Shams University in the second term of the academic years 2015-2016.

Data analysis

The data obtained from pre and post applications of the tools of the study on the experimental and control groups were analyzed by using statistical package for social science (SPSS).

The first hypothesis

There will be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the writing skills test of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the test in favor of the post test.

In order to verify the validity of this hypothesis, a t-test for paired samples was used to compare the mean scores of the pre and post administration of the writing test. The results of the t-test proved to be statistically consistent with the hypothesis.

Table (1) t-test results of the pre-post administration of the writing skill test on the experimental group

Significance level	t-value	Difference between means	S.D.	M	N	Administration
00.1 significance	21.8	10.7	3.36	15.72	35	Pre
			4.00	26.42	35	Post

Table (1) shows that the mean score of the experimental group in the post administration of the writing skills test (26.42) is more than the mean scores of the pretest (15.72). The difference is about (10.7) marks in favor of the post administration of the writing test. The above table shows that the estimated t-value (21.8) is statistically significance at 0.01 level. Thus it can be safely said that the first hypothesis was verified. This shows that the members of the experimental group developed their writing skill due to the positive impact of the project-based training program.

The second hypothesis

There will be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the test on each writing sub-skill: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics in favor of the post test.

In order to verify the validity of this hypothesis, a t-test for paired samples was used to compare the results concerning writing sub-skills as follows:

Table (2) t-test results of the pre-post administration of the writing skill test on the experimental (sub-skills)

Significance level 0.01	t-value	Degree of freedom	Difference between means	S.D	M	N	The application	The skill
Sig.	13.26	34	2.21	1.2	3.37	35	pre	Content
				.72	5.58	35	post	
Sig.	9.29	34	2.46	1.4	2.93	35	pre	Organization
				1.81	5.39	35	post	
Sig.	14.9	34	2.43	1.3	2.84	35	pre	Vocabulary
				1.52	5.27	35	post	
Sig.	9.7	34	1.81	1.3	3.37	35	pre	Grammar
				1.15	5.18	35	post	
Sig.	9.91	34	1.39	1.4	3.21	35	pre	Mechanics
				1.4	4.60	35	post	

Table (2) shows that the mean scores of the experimental group in the post administration of the writing skill test surpass the mean scores of the pre administration in each writing sub-skill as follows:

- 1- The mean score for the post administration of the test in the content of writing is (5.58), while the mean score for the pre administration of the test is (3.37). The difference is (2.21) in favor of the post administration of the test and t value is (13.26).
- 2- The mean score for the post administration of the test in organization is (5.39), while the mean score for the pre administration of the test is (2.93). The difference is (2.46) in favor of the post administration and t Value is (9.29).
- 3- The mean score for the post administration of the test in vocabulary is (5.27), while the mean score for the pre administration of the test is (2.84). The difference is (2.43) in favor of the post administration. t value is(14.9).
- 4- The mean score for the post administration of the test in grammar is (5.18), while the mean score for the pre administration of the test is (3.37). The difference is (1.81) in favor of the post administration and t value is (9.7).
- 5- The mean score for the post administration of the test in mechanics of writing is (4.60), while the mean score for the pre administration of the test is (3.21). The difference is (1.39) in favor of the post administration and t value is (9.91). Thus the second hypothesis of the study was verified.

Thus it can be safely said that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post administration of the writing test on each sub-skill: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics of writing in favor of the post administration. The positive impact of the project-based training program on developing the experimental group students' writing skills is evident.

The third hypothesis

There will be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post application of the positive thinking skills questionnaire in favor of the post application.

In order to verify the validity of this hypothesis, a t-test for paired samples was used to compare the mean scores of the pre and post application of positive thinking questionnaire. The results of the t-test proved to be statistically consistent with the hypothesis.

Table (3) t-test results of the pre and post application of positive thinking questionnaire

Significance level	t-value	Degree of freedom	Difference between means	S.D	M	N	The application
00.1 significant	39.81	34	49.75	10.21	56.25	35	pre
				11.87	106	35	post

Table (3) shows that the mean score of the experimental group in the post application of the positive thinking questionnaire is (106) which is more than the pre application (56.25). The difference is about (49.75) marks in favor of the post application. The above table also shows that the estimated t-value (39.81) is statistically significance at 0.01level. Thus the third hypothesis of the study was verified.

The fourth hypothesis

The project-based training program is effective in developing writing skills.

Black Gain ratio was used to measure the effectiveness of the training program on developing the experimental group writing skill.

Table (4) Black gain ratio for the pre and post administration of the writing skill test

Effectiveness	Post mean	Pre mean	Total mark	The tool
1.39	26.42	15.72	35	Writing skill test

Black gain ratio value=1.39 which is more than the value decided by Black to determine the effectiveness (1.2). This ratio shows the effectiveness of the training program on developing the experimental group writing skill.

Thus the fourth hypothesis of the study was verified and the third sub question of the study was answered.

The fifth hypothesis

The project-based training program is effective in developing positive thinking skills.

Black Gain ratio was used to measure the effectiveness of the training program on developing the experimental group writing skill.

Table (5) Black gain ratio for the pre and post application of positive thinking skills questionnaire

Effectiveness	Post mean	Pre mean	Total mark	The tool
1.28	106	56.25	128	Writing skill test

Black gain ratio value=1.28 which is more than the value decided by Black to determine the effectiveness (1.2). This ratio shows the effectiveness of the training program on developing the experimental group positive thinking skills.

So the fifth hypothesis of the study was verified and the fourth sub question of the study was answered. Thus the main question of the study was also answered and the aims of the study were achieved.

Discussion of the results

The statistical analysis showed that the program was effective and these significant results could be due to several factors:

- The consulting of variety of resources improve the quality of learning and that belief is supports by Thomas (2000) who believes that PBL enhances the quality of students' learning in subject matter area. Students were asked to gather information about their project from different sources like the college library and the internet. Each time students used these resources they gained new information which was added to their schemata and was applied in a meaningful product. This result agrees also with that of Schneider (2005) who thinks that resources play a significant role.
- Students practiced writing individually to write their weekly reports and also contributed in writing and revising the final form of the material presented to their colleagues and instructor which gave them opportunity to practice writing and to have correction and feedback. The instructor gave copy of the scoring rubric and a self-checklist to the students to focus on the required skill.
- Students achieved better in writing skill when they investigated the topics themselves which motivated them to do more work and produce significant products. This result supports those of Blumenfeld et al. (1991) who believe that projects in which students pursue long-term investigations of a significant question have the potential to motivate and help them better understand subject-matter content.

- Students learned how to work higher level thinking skills such as evaluating the sources they deal with. This result supports those of Bottoms and Webb (1998); Reyes (1998) who indicate that students who learn through projects use higher order thinking skills rather than memorizing facts in an isolated context without practice.
- Project work gave students the opportunity to share ideas, widen their views, and exchange points of view in a group work rather than a competitive atmosphere. Working in groups also enhances students' positive thinking about themselves and their relations with their mates. They worked together and handled any problems they faced together. Collaborative learning allows students to exchange ideas with each other, voice their own opinions, and negotiate solutions. Kathpalia and Heah (2011) asserted the role of affective and social factors in project-based writing courses where students are collaborating face-to-face to complete the course tasks and assignments. Students' relations became better as they worked together and felt responsible for every step in the project.
- Project-based learning proved to be effective in developing EFL achievement in different language skills and especially writing. In his study, Tezi (2006) showed that the children' writing ability of his experimental group students who used project-based learning was significantly higher than that of another group which was taught using traditional teaching. Ponpoon (2011) studied the use of project-based learning to enhance the students' English skills at a Thai university. The result showed that through project-based learning, students' English skills were improved.
- Using self- evaluation and group evaluation using writing skills checklist helped students to reflect on their writing and the comprehensibility of their projects. This checklist was driven from the scoring rubric of the students' writing skills. Being aware of the system of evaluation helped students to improve their writing on each writing sub-skill where they had copies of the rubric on which they were assessed. The researcher also assessed their weekly report with feedback which helped them to overcome the errors or mistakes regularly. This result agrees with that of McGrath (2003) who believes that assessment should be a learning activity, not at the end of a project to test what was learned.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1-Project-based instruction should be adapted in different courses for EFL learners.
2. EFL teachers should be trained to use the project-based instruction in their teaching at different education stages.
3. The project-based instruction should be recommended as one of the teaching methods to be used for teaching to improve students' achievement and different language skills.
4. EFL teachers should train students to improve their writing skills using various strategies including project-based learning.
5. EFL teachers should empower students by creating learner-centered environment in which they are actively engaged in the writing process.
6. EFL students should have a clear notion about why they write, what they write about and how they write.
7. EFL teachers should provide opportunities for students to reflect on their writing performance as well as the writing activities.
11. EFL teachers should be supportive and encouraging to learners to work in groups and produce their own projects.
12. Variety of sources such as books, journals, databases and internet and other facilities need to be provided for the college's library and the departments' libraries to encourage students to consult various sources instead of depending on the "Notes" as the only sources available.
- 13- Positive thinking plays major part in EFL learners' achievement, positive thinking skills should be developed from early age.
- 14-Students' work in groups has many advantages. They get used to appreciating the individual role in the success of the group, cooperation, understanding the other and being tolerant to the mistakes of their partners. Project-based learning helps in improving learners' positive thinking skills such as optimism, adjusting emotions and accepting personal responsibility.

Suggestions for further studies

- 1- Project-based training programs for English majors to improve other language skills such as listening, speaking and reading.**
- 2- Project-based training programs for English majors to improve critical thinking skills need to be developed.**
- 3-Project-based implementation in English courses at different educational stages.**
- 4- Developing EFL students' writing skills at the faculties of Education using different approaches and strategies.**
- 5- Investigating the influence of positive thinking on students' achievement in different language areas.**
- 6- Exploring appropriate approaches and strategies to develop learners' positive thinking.**

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