

# The Implementation of Problem-based Learning Model to Improve Gender Awareness of Pre-Service English Teachers

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**Abstract:** This present study is only a small part of the big effort being carried out to develop Character-Based English Language Learning Model which can both teach English related skills and knowledge and transfer values at the same time. It mainly examined the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to increase pre-service English language teachers' gender awareness. This qualitative study investigated three aspects: (1) Teaching Learning Process, (2) PBL as Character-Based English Language Teaching Model (The Model), (3) Assignment. One in-service teacher and three classes of 60 students majored in English from Teacher Training Faculty of UIN Ar-Raniry, Aceh got involved in giving their examination, where they, beforehand, were exposed to PBL syntax for several meetings. The data were collected through observation and self-reported questionnaire. The major findings showed that both the observer and pre-service teachers responded very positively about the implementation of PBL. This suggests that PBL was applicable to improve gender awareness of the pre service English English teachers. Thus, it is recommended that PBL be used as an alternative learning model to instill the character of learners, especially in higher education.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency has become a big concern for many countries in the world, including Indonesia. It has become a worldwide phenomenon that young people are now caught up with (1) violence, (2) stealing, (3) cheating, (4) disrespect for authority, (5) peer cruelty, (6) bigotry, (7) bad language, (8) sexual precocity and abuse, (9) increasing self-senteredness and declining civic responsibility, and (10) self-destructive behavior (Lickona 1991:13-19). Many attribute this condition to the failure of education. Indeed education is expected to produce a good young generation as a successor to the nation, but the reality shows that many learners behave otherwise. The present learning system that focuses more on the cognitive ability is considered the cause of the failure of the education world. That is the underlying ground for the emergence of Character Education, a movement in which the orientation of education is directed to promote the three domains of education, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

In Indonesia, since highlighted by the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, in his welcoming speech for Education Day ceremony on 11 Mei 2010 in Jakarta (Budimansyah and Komalasari, 2011, p. 294), various attempts have been made by the government to promote this Character Education program. One of the attempts is by showing and providing clear legal frameworks in order that character education is implemented in or more primarily internalized in all units of education. Some of the prescribed legal frameworks are the 1945 Amendment Constitution, Law Number 20 Year 2003 regarding National Education System, Government Regulation No. 19/2005 on National Education Standards, Regulation of National Education Minister Number 39 Year 2008 regarding Student Development, Regulation of National Education Minister Number 22 Year 2006 regarding Content Standards, Regulation of National Education Minister Number 23 Year 2006 regarding Graduate Competency Standards, National Medium Term Government Plan 2010-2014, National

Education Ministry's Strategic Plan Year 2010-2014 (Kemendiknas, 2010).

English language learning is always identified with the learning focusing only on transferring skill and knowledge of English. To support Character Education Program initiated by the government, there should be attempts to integrate values in English language learning. This study which was to examine the implementation of Character-Based English Language Teaching Model by using the syntax of PBL to increase students' gender awareness in English Language Course II for the topic of gender is an attempt to support the Character Education Program initiated by the government. That is actually only a small part of the big effort being carried out to develop an English Language Learning model which can not only teach English related skills and knowledge, but also transfer values, particularly, for this context, gender awareness.

Problem-based learning, the one better known in the medical realm, is the learning model which was implemented in the present study. It was used here because of the advantages it offers in the teaching learning process. Boothe et al. (2011) for example, stated that students' experiences in solving problems during the implementation of PBL learning model will lead them to be proficient solving makers. In addition, solving problems by using English, the language being studied, will make the language learners get two advantages at the same time, that is, course content mastery and language development. PBL emphasizes cooperation and self-directed learning in solving problems. This will also make them independent students and good team members in collaborative learning. And the most importantly, getting used to solving problems has trained students' thinking skills. By then, they will have critical thinking.

Meanwhile, according to Pagander and J (2014) based on their investigation into various studies on PBL stated that all students experiencing this learning model feel that they learn a lot from the various activities offered. This applies not only to strong students but also to weak ones. Especially for the weak students they benefit from teamwork and problem solving sessions in mixed groups. PBL also improves students' skills in problem solving skills and promotes other skills such as independent learning skills, planning skills, reasoning skills etc., the ones that would be needed by them when entering their professional world.

In addition, this study preferred PBL because of its effectiveness in learning related to character development. A number of studies have provided

some proofs about it. A study done by Pulungan (2012), for example, investigated the influence of problem based learning model based on character education to change the character and ability of students in solving physics problem. The results indicated that problem-based learning based on character education gave an influence on character changes and solving physics problems. Similarly, the study done by Khanafiyah dan Yulianti (2013) also showed that the study of environmental physics which was carried out with problem-based learning instruction could improve students' environmental awareness and their ability in solving the problem. In line with the two mentioned studies, the findings of the research done by Setiawan et al. (2014) aiming to analyze the achievement of learners' learning achievement that was taught by using PBL model based combined with CD-assisted learning on problem-solving ability showed the same results. By doing experiments conducted at the junior level, their research resulted in that PBL model combined with CD-assisted learning effectively improved students' problem-solving abilities.

PBL is also applicable in the classes of English. NG (2009), Huang dan Wang (2012), and Othman (2013) have proven that. NG (2009), for example has proven that it was feasible to utilize in Business English course. Using problem-based scenario in doing group project for international students at Business English course at APU Japan, NG has proven that it is feasible to apply the approach. Student felt enthusiastic and interested in doing all the assignments. They learned a lot from the learning like managing their own learning, how to communicate in English. Huang & Wang (2012) have also proven that PBL is applicable in the translation classes. Using qualitative analysis, they made attempts to investigate the perspectives and opinions of a group of 53 students majored in English about the implementation of PBL in translation classes. The result then showed that PBL significantly increased students' motivation and successfully developed students' skills in translation. Similar results are also found by a study conducted by Othman (2013) aiming at investigating the impact of PBL on course content and language development. Doing a quasi-experiment on 128 undergraduate students divided into 64 experiment classes and 64 control classes, she found that the two classes did not show the differences in mastering the material. However, in terms of language development, PBL classes were superior; the arguments of the post writing essays of the students in the experimental class were richer than that of in the control class.

The character becoming the target to promote here is gender awareness. There are a number of reasons why this character is highlighted. *Firstly*, gender bias still becomes an issue not only in Indonesia but also in the world despite the existence of a global commitment to abolish gender discrimination in all areas (Malihah, 2011). Gender bias is still found in every aspect of lives. Although men are also the victims of gender discrimination, predominantly women experience this in various ways. Cases like denial of proper opportunity for education, abortion of a female fetus through sex determination, early marriage, rape and sexual harassment, divorce and destitution for trivial reasons are still common discrimination features in the lives of girls. Indonesian government has really made various attempts to abolish this, issuing a number of legal frameworks like gender mainstreaming policy (President Decree No. 9/2000) to show how serious the issue is. In spite of the efforts, gender discrimination in Indonesia still occurs. The overwhelming majority of cases, gender injustice practices are uneasy to see; it needs gender sensitivity and awareness.

*Secondly*, having gender awareness to be tolerant to gender differences is very important especially in the patriarchal society, where there has been a widespread belief that men held legal power over their families. In this society, gender discrimination cases frequently occur. Since gender awareness is not born, there should be an attempt to train it and thus, the duty of the school to do that.

*Thirdly*, many studies (Alemi & Jafari, 2012; Colangelo et al., 1979; Ifegbesan, 2010; Nashriyah et al., 2017; Rasyidin, 2015; Skliar, 2007; Utomo et al., 2007)) show that schools are also the agents of gendering. Gender bias in the society is enhanced there. Intentional or unintentional acts by teachers, teaching methods and textbooks/ resources are some of most common sources of gender bias. Therefore, it is crucial to address gender issues in learning as an attempt to end gender inequality and bias at schools especially to pre-service teachers in order that they know how to behave when dealing with boys and girls at schools.

## 2 RESEARCH METHOD

This present study mainly examined the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) as a part of Character-Based English Language Learning model to increase pre-service English language teachers' gender awareness in English

Language Course II for the topic of gender. There are three critical aspects to investigate: (1) teaching learning process, (2) PBL as Character-Based English Language Teaching Model (The Model), and (3) assignment. One in-service teacher and three classes consisting of 60 students majored in English from Teacher Training Faculty of UIN Ar-Raniry, Aceh got involved in giving their examination, where they, beforehand, were exposed to PBL syntax for five meetings.

The data related to the three critical aspects to examine were collected through observation and self-reported questionnaires. The observation was carried out by the in-service teacher to see the implementation of the PBL. Meanwhile the self-reported questionnaires consisting of close-ended and open ones were administered to the pre-service teachers to gain data from them. While, the close-ended questionnaires were aimed at gaining their perspectives and opinions about the three aspects based on their experiences being exposed to the model, the open questionnaires were used to gain data that might not reveal from the close ended ones.

At the end, all the data gathered from the two instruments were then analyzed using qualitative method covering the steps like collection, reduction, presentation and conclusion. All these data will then become the basis for the revision of the Model.

## 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Result

#### 3.1.1 Learning Activities

The implementation of the Model was respectively done in five meetings. At the first meeting, the students were introduced to the study, telling them about the objective and the procedure of the study. In addition, they were also informed about Problem Based Learning that would be implemented in the class, the activities and the task to do. What follows is the general picture of the implementation stages.

1. Opening Session (Meeting I)
  - a) Introducing the model of the English teaching
  - b) Explaining the sequences of the teaching learning.
  - c) Providing students the teaching materials.
  - d) Question and answer session about the model
  - e) Adminstrating a pre-test
2. Main Session: The Implementation of PBL (Meeting II, III, IV)

- a) Orienting the students to the problem
- b) Organizing students to study
- c) Directing students to do an investigation in groups
- d) Directing group discussion
- e) Developing and presenting the product/result
- f) Analyzing and evaluating the process of problem solving.

### 3. Closing (Meeting V)

- a) Doing Reflection together with the student for what have gone through during the first meeting
- b) Making summary together with the students
- c) Finding responses from the students
- d) Adminstrating a post-test

As can be seen, there were three meetings in a row where PBL was executed. PBL implemented in the study consisted of six syntaxes. They were 1) orienting the students to the problem consisting of (a) providing a text about gender and its related issues, (b) raising the gender issues, (c) providing evidence and examples of gender discrimination, (d) identifying factual situation of gender issues, (e) analyzing the importance and impact of gender issues, (f) determining gender issues priorities, and (g) motivating the students to solve the problem; 2) organizing students to study consisting of (a) dividing students into groups, (b) organizing students to do an investigation using PBL, (c) preparing student worksheet; 3) directing students to do an investigation in groups consisting of (a) directing groups to do an investigation, (b) doing the investigation to find data, (c) developing students' critical thinking and analysis, (e) helping students to analyze the gathered data; 4) directing group discussion consisting of (a) doing group presentation and discussion, (b) providing relevant analysis, critics and response towards various data presented in the discussion; 5) developing and presenting the product/result consisting of (a) submitting the product/result in the form of written report and PPT slides, (b) doing an oral presentation; and 6) analyzing and evaluating the process of problem solving consisting of (a) doing self-reflection, (b) evaluating the process and product by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of them, (c) giving feedbacks.

The first two syntaxes were executed at the second meeting. In this meeting, the researcher oriented the students to the problem. The activities included providing a text about gender and its related issues, raising gender issues, providing evidence and examples of gender discrimination, and motivating the students to solve the problem.

When everything was clear, the activities continued to the second syntax, that is organizing the students to study. The activities included in this step were dividing students into groups, organizing students to do an investigation using PBL, preparing student worksheet.

The third meeting was to do the third syntax of PBL, i.e. directing students to do an investigation in groups and this was done outside of the class. The activities for this step included directing groups to do an investigation, doing the investigation to find data, developing students' critical thinking and analysis, and helping students to analyze the gathered data. The guide for the investigation was the student worksheet that had been provided before. According to the guide, the students in groups of five had to choose one of five common forms of gender discrimination in Indonesia topics to investigate. Then each group was assigned to find the solutions of the problems from two sources, (1) a leading figure by interviewing him/her and (2) newspapers and alike highlighting the issue.

The fourth meeting was the day to implement the last three syntaxes of PBL, viz. directing group discussion, developing and presenting the product/result and analyzing and evaluating the process of problem solving. The activities for the meeting included doing group presentation and discussion, and providing relevant analysis, critics and response towards various data presented in the discussion, and submitting the product/result in the form of written report and PPT slides, doing an oral presentation. At the end of the meeting, the students were asked to analyze and evaluate the process that had gone through been of problem solving. This was then followed by doing self-reflection. During the reflection, the process and product are evaluated by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of them.

### 3.1.2 Observer's Response on the Model

As mentioned before, the main objectives of the implementation was to examine the implementation of PBL as a Character-Based English Language Teaching Model to see its applicability in increasing students' gender awareness in the class of English for the topic of gender. For that purpose, an observer was asked to observe the implementation of the model related to three aspects, that is, 1) the teaching learning process, 2) Character-Based English Language Teaching Model (The Model), and 3) the assignment.

Table 1: Observer's Response on The Model.

	STATEMENT	Ctgry
<b>I. Learning Process</b>		
1	The teaching learning process is well-prepared.	VG
2	The sequences of pre-teaching is well implemented.	VG
3	The sequences of while-teaching is well implemented.	VG
4	The sequences of post-teaching is well	VG
5	The teaching materials are presented in a way that helps students to learn English.	VG
6	The teaching materials are presented in a way that helps students to learn about character (viz. gender awareness).	VG
<b>II. PBL as a Character-based English Language Teaching Model (The Model)</b>		
7	Learning English by using The Model makes English language learning become more interesting	VG
8	Learning English by using The Model makes English language learning become more challenging.	VG
9	The Model eases the students to master English language.	G
10	For me, the Model is interesting.	VG
11	The Model hardens the students in mastering English language.	G
12	Learning English language using the Model has made students in depression.	G
13	In my opinion, students' ability in English will not increase by using the Model.	G
14	The Model will widen students' knowledge, especially about gender.	VG
15	The Model in this study will make students aware of the importance of respecting gender differences.	VG
16	The students will feel the benefit of learning English by using the Model.	G
17	The students will gain double benefits from this Model, that is, the increase of students' competence in English and their knowledge about a character (viz. gender awareness).	VG
<b>III. Assignments</b>		
18	The reading materials provided are suitable with students' competence level.	VG
19	The assignments given are suitable with students' competence level.	VG
20	The assignments given can help students in mastering the topic content and English skills.	VG
21	The assignments given will make the students interested in learning more.	G
22	The time given for finishing the assignments is adequate.	G
23	The teaching materials provided are interesting to discuss.	G
<b>Overall Evaluation</b>		
24	I'm interested in applying this Model in my English class.	VG
25	I will recommend this Model to other English lecturers.	VG

In general the table shows that the observer were satisfied with the Model. This was based on the fact that no "poor" and "fair" categories were chosen in the three aspects to examine. Even she chose "very good" categories more than "good" categories (15 out of 23 items). Thus, unsurprisingly, the observer indicated "very good" for the overall evaluation. Some of the "very good" categories are no. 7 (Learning English by using The Model makes English language learning become more interesting), no. 15 (The Model in this study will make students aware of the importance of respecting gender differences.), and no. 20 (The assignments given can help students in mastering the topic content and English skills.)

The fact that the observer still gave "good" category for eight items in the second and third aspect, suggested that all these eight items need to consider for the revision. Some of the "good" categories are no. 9 (The Model eases the students to master English language.), no. 12 (Learning English language using the Model has made students in depression.), and no. 22 (The time given for finishing the assignments is adequate.)

### 3.1.3 Pre-service Teachers' Response on the Model

#### a) Close-ended Questionnaire Result

At the end of the meeting, all three classes of 60 students being exposed to PBL took a part in a survey to examine their opinions about the Model. As having mentioned, to find data of the survey, two kinds of questionnaire were used, that is, a close-ended self-reported questionnaire and an open one. The table 2 is the result of the close-ended self-reported questionnaire.

Similarly, the responses from the students for the model were also very good. No "poor" and "fair" categories were selected in the three aspects to assess. They also chose "very good" categories more than the "good" ones (14 out of 23 items). There were only nine "good" categories. Therefore, unsurprisingly, they also indicated "very good" for the overall evaluation.

Some of the the "very good" categories the chose were no. 4 (The sequences of post-teaching is well implemented.), no. 17 (I gain double benefits from this Model, that is, the increase of students' competence in English and their knowledge about a character (viz. gender awareness).), no. 23 (The teaching materials provided are interesting to discuss.), and no. 25 (I will recommend this Model to other English students). Two examples of the "good"

Table 2: Students' Response on the Model.

	STATEMENT	Ctgry
<b>I. Learning Process</b>		
1	The teaching learning process is well-prepared.	VG
2	The sequences of pre-teaching is well implemented.	VG
3	The sequences of while-teaching is well implemented.	VG
4	The sequences of post-teaching is well	VG
5	The teaching materials are presented in a way that helps students to learn English.	VG
6	The teaching materials are presented in a way that helps students to learn about character (viz. gender awareness).	VG
<b>II. Character-Based English Language Teaching Model</b>		
7	Learning English by using The Model makes English language learning become more interesting	G
8	Learning English by using The Model makes English language learning become more challenging.	VG
9	The Model eases the students to master English language.	G
10	For me, the Model is interesting.	G
11	The Model hardens the students in mastering English language.	G
12	Learning English language using the Model has made students in depression.	G
13	In my opinion, students' ability in English will not increase by using the Model.	G
14	The Model will widen students' knowledge, especially about gender.	VG
15	The Model in this study will make students aware of the importance of respecting gender differences.	VG
16	The students will feel the benefit of learning English by using the Model.	VG
17	The students will gain double benefits from this Model, that is, the increase of students' competence in English and their knowledge about a character (viz. gender awareness).	VG
<b>III. Assignments</b>		
18	The reading materials provided are suitable with students' competence level.	G
19	The assignments given are suitable with students' competence level.	G
20	The assignments given can help students in mastering the topic content and English skills.	VG
21	The assignments given will make the students interested in learning more.	VG
22	The time given for finishing the assignments is adequate.	G
23	The teaching materials provided are interesting to discuss.	VG
<b>Overall Evaluation</b>		
24	I'm interested in applying this Model in my English class.	VG
25	I will recommend this Model to other English lecturers.	VG

category were no. 9 (The Model eases the students to master English language.), and no. 22 (The time given for finishing the assignments is adequate).

Just like the response of the observer, the "good" categories from the response of the students will be considered to revise, especially for the five items that both the observer and students agreed to indicate "good". They were no. 9 (The Model eases me to master English language), 11 (The Model hardens me in mastering English language), 12 (Learning English language using the Model has made me in depression), 13 (In my opinion, my competence in English will not increase by using the Model) dan 22 (The time given for finishing the assignments is adequate).

### b) Open Questionnaire Result

Likewise, the result of the open questionnaire also showed students' positive response on the implementation of the model. Here are some of their comments and feedbacks.

IF: *In my opinion, the approach used was good and fun especially when being asked to find data from outside. That was the first experience we have ever had. Usually lecturers only gave us topics to write and then we were asked to present them. Actually it was kind of boring. But the task that you gave was fun because the activities included having to interview someone to get new information. Then the presentation in front of the classroom using English was also fun. It was good to practice our speaking ability*

FF: *According to me, the method of teaching was very good and this should also be done by other lecturers because doing the interview becomes a challenge for students and foster student socialization through interviews with community leaders. In addition, presenting the results of the interview in the class with English was good to develop students' speaking skills and also to foster student self-confidence.*

CN: *In my opinion, the learning approach used in the classroom was very good. You gave us the task to go straight down the spaces with various tasks. You gave us a new experience in the learning process. And this was my first experience in interviewing a leader and looking for the profile of him. In addition, assigning us to present the results of research in English was a very good step for us to further improve our speaking skills and courage ourselves. Overall, the learning approach that you have implemented was very good.*

DR: *I personally love the way you taught. Regarding about the assignment to interview, honestly I felt challenged, but I really like that method because you gave us first experience to carry out a formal interview with someone.*

AS: *The most impressed was when you gave us an assignment to interview someone.*

As can be seen, positive responses were given by the students. They considered the teaching learning process was fun, not boring because they had to go outside to find data to interview someone. That was challenging and fostering their socialization skills. It was the first experience for them. In addition that they had to do presentation in front of the classroom using English was also considered positive since they could practice their speaking ability and this activity had fostered their self-confidence. Due to these advantages, the students recommended that other lecturers implement the same learning model.

### 3.2 Discussion

Overall, we find that both the observer and students give positive feedback about the model. Of the 25 items that became the focus of attention, none of them are in the category of "enough" let alone "poor". Of 25, only five items they agreed on as the "good" category, namely no. 9 (*The Model eases me to master English language*), 11 (*The Model hardens me in mastering English language*), 12 (*Learning English language using the Model has made me in depression*), 13 (*In my opinion, my competence in English will not increase by using the Model*) dan 22 (*The time given for finishing the assignments is adequate*). There are seven items, namely no. 7 (*Learning English by using the Model makes English language learning become more interesting*), 10 (*For me, the Model is interesting*), 16 (*I feel the benefit of learning English by using the Model*), 18 (*The reading materials provided are suitable with my competence*), 19 (*The assignments given are suitable with my competence*), 21 (*The assignments given will make me interested in learning more*), dan 23 (*The teaching materials provided are interesting to discuss*), that were in dispute between the observer and students. On the seven items, there was a difference of opinion in which what was "good" according to the observer, "very good" for the student and vice versa what was considered only "good", "very good" according to the observer. Meanwhile, for the remaining 13 items (viz. no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 14, 15, 17, 20, 24, and 25), both the observer and the students agreed that all those 13 items were "very good". As can be seen, although

there are some disagreements, we can conclude that both the observer and students were satisfied with the Model since most the items were indicated "very good" by them.

Beside having positive responses from the close-ended questionnaire, we also have another positive responses from the open-questionnaire about the Model. From the answers, it revealed that they liked the learning model. They considered that the teaching learning process was fun, not boring. Usually they had to write the topic assigned by their lecture and present in. However, this present learning model made them to go outside of the class they were accustomed to be to find data, to interview someone. And it was challenging because it was the first time for them to do so. To find data through interview, they had be able to speak politely and clearly and this indirectly had fostered their socialization skills. In addition, they were very positive about the learning model because they benefitted a lot from the presentations in front of the classroom using English. These activities had developed their language skills and fostered their self-confidence at the same time because they had to use their working language; they had to speak and to do such they had to be brave too.

The positive results of this study further confirm the list of the advantages put forward by Boothe et al. (2011) and Pagander dan J (2014) and this would be great because then the language teachers need not to hesitate in trying to apply this learning model considering its effectiveness.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study showed the feasibility and applicability of PBL as a Character-Based English Language Teaching Model to increase students' gender awareness in the English Course II class for the topic of gender. Both the observer and the students as pre-service English teachers who were exposed to the Model for five meetings responded positively toward the application of the Model in the English class. This suggests that the Model can be used in English language learning to transfer both English related skills and knowledge and values, particularly, for this context, gender awareness. Generally students considered that learning English by using the Model made English language learning become more challenging, especially having to do an interview. The Model widened their' knowledge, especially about gender. No wonder then they indicated that they gained double benefits from this

Model, that is, the increase of students' competence in English and their knowledge about a character (viz. gender awareness). Since the finding showed the feasibility and applicability of to improve gender awareness of the students, thus, it is recommended that PBL be used as an alternative learning model to install the character of learners, especially in higher education.

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