

LANGUAGE LECTURERS' AWARENESS ON COOPERATIVE PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING (CPBL) METHOD

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ABSTRACT

Language lecturers have utilised various methods in enhancing students' competency in preparing them for the working world. Nevertheless, the outcomes are consistently mediocre and indistinguishable from the quality of their peers' works. Cooperative Problem-based Learning (CPBL) is a combination of cooperative learning (CL) and problem-based learning (PBL) and has shown to improve the problem-solving skills among students. Moreover, CPBL trains students to work together with people of different background and instils positive values of teamwork. This has resulted students to become better learners from the CPBL experience, and it is believed that CPBL is able to assist students in the language classroom to prepare them of the working challenges. The essence of implementing CPBL in class fits with the demand of producing better graduates of the future. As CPBL has never been implemented in the language classroom, pilot study on the language lecturers' awareness is needed to proceed with its execution. Thus, this paper investigates the awareness among language lecturers on the CPBL approach and their willingness to incorporate CPBL in the language lessons. Interviews were conducted among language lecturers to find out their understanding and perceptions towards CPBL approach. The findings of this study revealed that the language lecturers are still using traditional method of teaching in the classroom and their awareness towards CPBL is divided between cooperative learning or problem-based learning. They are uncertain of both combinations in CPBL approach, but are willing to try CPBL if it has been proven to be effective in the language classroom.

Keyword: Cooperative Learning, CPBL method, Language Learning, Problem-based Learning, Teaching pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

The current working industry is challenging and is urging the education sector to prepare graduates who are excellent in all aspects. Young graduates need to equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge in order to survive the challenges. Companies are looking for candidates who are team players, have good communication skills, deep knowledge, skilful in solving problems and able to adapt themselves in any situation. Hence, educators need to play their role in preparing graduates to become the experts of the demanded skills and knowledge. In view of the fact that language classroom is often involved with skill training, it is

seen that language classroom is the most suitable platform to train the students' ability. According to Scarino and Liddicoat (2009), language learning involves both the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, where the learning occurs within an individual and the successfulness of language learning can be achieved when there is an interaction between people. To be competent in language, one must understand its function and apply it for effectiveness. At the present time, most of the language classrooms emphasise on the four important skills, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing to enforce the utilisation of the second language. However, this type of learning puts less focus on other skill aspects, such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which

the employment sector sought and expect employees to have. According to Tan (2003), the emergence of a new approach is due to the concern of students' lack of thinking skills as the courses were being too focused on content, which caused boredom among students and burn out among teachers. Moreover, the traditional language classroom environment is producing almost identical products where students demonstrate similar qualities of an employee. In a related example, Felder and Brent (2005) mention that with the common teaching approach, it is often heard variations of complains regarding engineering graduates who can memorize and plug numbers into formulas, yet, they do not know how to think. The companies are searching for distinct candidates with more advantages that could help in prospering the industry. Due to this, there is a need for changes in the education system, particularly in the language classroom since it deals with the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

In relation to this issue, language lecturers must be creative in educating and developing the skill features to meet the demand of the market. Cooperative problem-based learning (CPBL) seems to be relevant for application at the present time since it offers a different approach of learning. The challenges in the 21st century such as rapid technological development and increase global competition have put PBL as one of the popular teaching and learning methodology; due to the multitude of benefits that it was claimed to bring about to students and the integration of cooperative learning aspects such as cooperation and peer-based learning help to lead a positive impact in learning (Khairiyah, Syed Ahmad Helmi, Mohammad Zamry & Nor Farida, 2012). In CPB, students will have to solve tasks within the time frame. During the time given, they will have to take their own initiative in managing their groups to come up with the best results, which is similar to what they will experience at work. Consequently, students will be trained in all aspects of soft skills, together with raising the awareness and motivation in learning. Researches have shown the effectiveness of CPBL in helping the students to become more driven in their studies. They persistently find valid information in

order to get the accurate details for the problems. CPBL also indirectly pushes the ability of the students to become critical thinkers and problem solvers while they work on the problems. As a result, the students gain more advantages from the learning process. Kalnins, Valtere, Gusca, Valters, Gass and Blumberga (2014) have conducted a CPBL research towards environmental engineering students to see the relevance of CPBL in improving their skills before entering the working industry. The study validated that it has achieved its goal where students learn how to do research on their own and increased their knowledge in the field. They were also able to explore the industry and comprehend it better for the possible solutions of the existing complexities. From there, they made their own conclusions and contribute the ideas on improvement and advancements in policy and actions.

CPBL indisputably helps the students in refining their skills to become more knowledgeable, motivated, hone their thinking and problem solving skills as well as interpersonal skills. Despite this, CPBL was only implemented in technical classes such as engineering and there is no research conducted in the language classroom using this approach. This is for the reason that in engineering classes, students will not be able to learn in a situation that requires them to be passive and offers less opportunity to think about the information presented. Khairiyah, Fatin Aliyah and Syed Ahmad Helmi (2014) explain that the current engineering classes focus on available knowledge rather than developing skills, which somehow have caused the inability of the graduates to comprehend and address big problems. The students need to be taught of a well-structured closed problems that are amenable to a single correct solution are at one end of spectrum, and ill-structured, open-ended problems that are not amenable to such a solution, are at the other end. In addition, since problem solving is a complex skill, it needs supporting skills such as team working, self-directed learning and communication to help students go through the PBL cycle without falling flat. Thus, the supporting skills need to be developed too and the combination of cooperative learning in CPBL would help in the

learning process. Moreover, Felder and Silverman (1988) state that to prepare the students in becoming global learners, they must be given the freedom to devise their own ways in approaching matters and be exposed to advanced concepts before dealing with them in the actual circumstance. The active learning promoted in CPBL classroom may help the students to improve their language abilities. Hence, this paper investigates Malaysian language lecturers' awareness towards CPBL and their willingness to incorporate it in their language lessons.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of CPBL comes from the combination of cooperative learning and problem-based learning. CPBL incorporates the five principles of cooperative learning, namely positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and group skills as well as group processing and integrate them with the problem-based learning.

In CPBL, cooperative learning plays its role by training the students to improve their social skills as it puts emphasis on group interaction. Students will be divided into small groups and seek understanding together. The aim of cooperative learning is to assist students in grasping the academic content. In cooperative learning, the students will receive training in small group social skills through the assigned roles and the instructor will listen and intervene when necessary (Matthews, Cooper, Davidson, & Hawkes, 1995). Davidson and Major (2014) define cooperative learning as students who work and learn together to achieve mutual goal in a helpful manner. However, it is not necessarily on the same project. Cooperative learning encourages students to learn better in comparison with the traditional method, which improved the group-wide goals rather than individualistic goal (Wei & Tang, 2015). The five principles of cooperative learning are essential to be completely cooperative. The students must help each other to learn and achieve success, be accountable on their fair share of work, communicate

with groups and put efforts in their work (Wichadee & Orawiwanakul, 2012). Each member is given a responsibility and therefore the success of the task depends on everyone in the group.

Numerous researches on cooperative learning have been conducted in classrooms to enhance the learning experience including language classroom. As language learning requires interaction among people, cooperative learning could help students to develop competency in language use. Wang (2012) did a pre and post test on the implementation of cooperative learning in writing subject and found that the students increase their motivation in learning based on several factors such as higher self-efficacy, successful experience, setting group goals and positive relationships with group members. The learning becomes more valuable to the students when the success is based on group efforts instead of individual work. Alghamdi and Gillies (2013) conducted an experiment to study the difference between traditional teaching and cooperative learning in language classrooms. There was a significant contrast in the scores of the students where those who learn through cooperative learning received better results compared to those who studied with the traditional method. Cooperative learning helps students to drill themselves in improving their language as well as social skills and therefore is an essential component in CPBL.

Regardless of the strengths shown by cooperative learning, CPBL will not be more effective without the integration of problem-solving approach (PBL). For decades, PBL has demonstrated benefits in improving the soft skills of individuals particularly the critical and problem-solving skills. Countless researches have made comparisons between PBL and traditional method of teaching and learning. PBL is more constructive, where the problems serve as the context and the stimulus for students to learn course concepts and metacognitive skills (Davidson & Major, 2014). In PBL, students will be given real situations to be analysed in groups and apply the knowledge that they have learned throughout the process of working out the problems. On the other hand, classroom instructors act as facilitators and guide the

students when they come to a dead end. Due to the reason that PBL has close proximity with the real life circumstances, many researchers believe that PBL is the best approach to implement in the classroom as it helps the students to experience, learn, be disciplined as well as enhance their soft skills.

In language classrooms, PBL could assist students to develop survival skills for the actual situation at work, increase their market, and prepare the students for lifelong learning (Boothe, Vaughn, & Hill, 2011). Students' language skills are reinforced through the PBL model, as they will experience large areas of context and communicate within groups, which is similar to the actual situation at work. Boothe, Vaughn and Hill (2014) stated that the combination of language with hands-on learning or the professional content helps to strengthen the language skills through group dynamics, workplace reality and content area knowledge. Ng (2009) has conducted PBL approach in language classroom by providing scenarios to the students and required them to apply all the aspects involving the four skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking. At the end of the semester, most of the students agreed that the lesson kept them excited and motivated to learn the language. Upon observation, the students became more independent in their learning, heightened their awareness towards the language, interacted better with their friends and became creative in solving the problems. Similar findings were reported by Huang and Wang (2012) where the students were more motivated to learn and became innovative in managing the tasks given to them. The lesson became meaningful and rewarding to the students, as they were able to take control of their own studies and learn. After a period of time, PBL enhanced the students' English interpreting skills. This implies that PBL could assist students in improving their creativity, problem solving and critical thinking skills together with increasing the learning experience. According to Woods, Felder, Rugarcia, and Stice (2000), to develop critical thinking skills, learners must have practice to apply the target skills by identifying problems, doing research, reflections, writing, working in groups and changing the study management.

The integration of these two major approaches of learning has produced a more fitting and refined approach that is CPBL. The strengths of cooperative learning and problem-based learning could highly benefit the current education system to be in line with the workforce demand. Due the fact the CPBL is more favourable in technical classrooms or subjects like engineering, the values and profits it brings could lead to great changes in any of the teaching and learning classrooms. Students will gain extra points from the implementation of CPBL as it trains the students to become better individuals through the learning. The administration of CPBL in classrooms is not considered new. Several researches have conducted and put forward significant results compared to the conventional classrooms of teaching and learning. In CPBL, students will be divided into small groups and assigned with tasks or problems to solve while the instructors function as the facilitators.

In the CPBL framework, there are three stages involved before the successful execution of CPBL in the classroom. The first phase relates to a part of the PBL component that is it to understand the actual problem and analyse before jumping to conclusions for the solutions. Students need to do discussions, research and identify the problem statement to develop comprehension of the given scenario. The second phase requires the students to examine the possible approaches in order to solve the problems. For all group members to comprehend the materials, the students will have to conduct peer teaching and learning to explain the ideas or concepts involved. Lastly, the students need to present, justify and do reflections of their final product in the third stage and the classroom facilitator will give feedback and do discussions of the potential solutions for the problems (Khairiyah, Syed Helmi, & Nor Farida, 2011). In these three phases, students will assimilate their knowledge and apply all the essential skills in developing more enlightening individuals through interpersonal and intrapersonal skills such as teamwork, team discussions, synthesising and application of information. Incidentally, it could also train their critical and problem solving skills. The CBPL framework below displays the details of the stages:

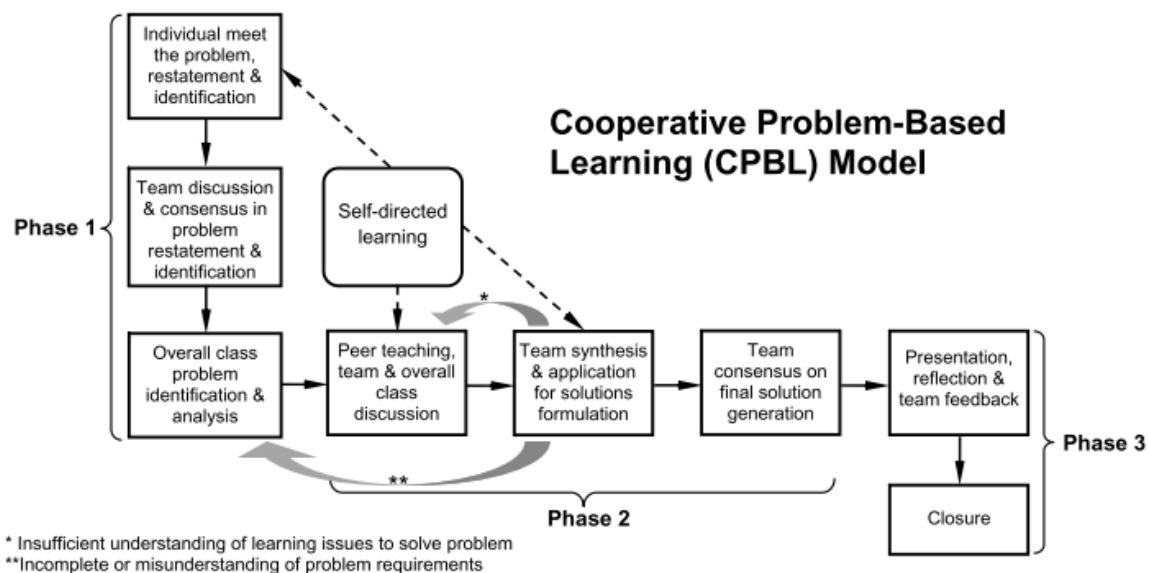


Figure 1 The Cooperative Problem-Based Framework (Khairiyah et al., 2011)

CPBL has been proven to demonstrate its effectiveness in classrooms. Fatin Aliyah, Khairiyah, Syed Helmi and Mimi (2012) carried a research on third year chemical engineering students in the "Process Control and Dynamics" subject using phenomenological research design by observing, interviewing and getting reflections from the students. The students were pessimist at the initial implementation of CPBL but began to change their attitudes and became more accepting in the middle of its execution. Ultimately, the students claimed to have better understanding of the assignment, improved their learning skills, became more motivated, boosted self-confidence as well as increased their problem solving and critical thinking skills. Parallel to the research, Kalnins et al. (2014) have conducted a study on environmental engineering students to expose them with the industry through administering CPBL in the "Environmental Management Systems" course. The students have to go through all the three stages of CPBL framework in order to develop theoretical knowledge and practical skills. At the end of the lessons, the students manage to comprehend the issues and challenges pertaining to the environmental industry. Apart from that, the students were observed to enhance their specialties in the field together with learning ways to do proper research. Perceptibly, CPBL manages to provide

better learning experience for learners as it correlates with the actual setting of working environment. Thus, CPBL indicates better possibilities to adapt in the teaching and learning process in order to prepare better graduates, which could meet the demand of the job market.

Notwithstanding, the implementation of CPBL in classrooms could be challenging for several reasons. The execution of CPBL could be time consuming and students may experience inferiority in groups. The unpleasant experience while dealing with different people of various opinions may create negative perception towards this approach. Students could become unwilling to work in groups due to poor interactions with group members. In addition, failure to lead groups may contribute to negligence in completing the assignment. Hence, the instructors must put close monitoring on the students' cooperation, team spirit and communication within the groups (Huang & Wang, 2012).

In spite of these, in accordance with the growing demand of economic industry in Malaysia, CPBL is of great assistance in producing quality graduates. The present Malaysian education system is emphasising more on the subject content and presentation skills.

While in Malaysian classrooms, CPBL has been utilized in engineering courses in the higher institutions, yet CPBL model has not been largely conducted by lecturers despite the fact that it is suitable for any field with different level of difficulties (Umi Soleha, Khairiyah, & Fatin Aliyah, 2011). The combination of students training towards social skills in cooperative learning and the drilling in problem solving process is unquestionably appropriate for the Malaysian education system, particularly young adult learners to make aware of the present demand of workforce.

Accordingly, the classroom learning must incorporate all the imperative skills in conformity with the needed aspects at work. Since language classroom operates on the utilizing both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, it is the best medium to employ CPBL in gaining its prominent benefits. Students who enter the higher institutions in Malaysia do not need only to equip themselves with soft skills but language as well since the government is urging the education sector to produce well-rounded candidates. According to Hays Quarterly Report (2016), skilled graduates and adaptable to change are high in demand and suitable for the transformations in the Malaysians industry for the year 2016. Due to the changes in the working environment, educators need to refine the teaching approach, particularly language lecturers. Hence, this paper could contribute in the introduction of CPBL approach in the language classrooms to develop young university students' language abilities and reforming the perspectives of the present language teaching and learning approach.

METHODOLOGY

This study used an exploratory design and a qualitative approach, where it focuses on gaining insights towards implementing CPBL in the language classroom. Exploratory design is useful to gain background information on a particular topic in studying an issue and effectively gathers information about the issue (Labaree, 2009). Exploratory research is a great source of dynamism and vitality in a study, yet it is also a source of uncertainty and ambiguity in the

early stages of the research (Mansourian, 2008). Since this is an initial study towards the implementation of CPBL in the language classroom, there were many ambiguous points at the beginning of the study that needed to become clear. For instance, it is not clear how feasible CPBL will be in the language classroom, what aspects to focus on, how to collect and analyse data. Moreover, by understanding the way these lecturers teach, its effectiveness in teaching and learning, their understanding of CPBL and their readiness to try CPBL may give clearer images of the difference between CPBL with their current teaching method in finding out whether they have already used CPBL in their classroom uninformed, without knowing its term – Cooperative Problem-based Learning. Therefore, the findings of lecturers' awareness in CPBL, literately or not may shed better understanding towards the execution planning of CPBL and the best way to proceed in the language classroom.

The method used for this study was semi-structured interview, which was based on Zorn (2010) guide that explains the designing process of conducting an interview. This semi-structured design was chosen in crafting the questions as it let the respondents to have ample time in giving their views and personal experience. It also allows the results for comparison since the respondents are required to answer questions of the same general theme (Nohl, 2009 in Twardella, 2010). Moreover, interview is the best to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the respondent's perspective or situation, which also can be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation (Berry, 1999). Creswell (2004) stated that open-ended questions in an interview allow the respondents to freely voice their opinions and experiences with less interruption of the researcher's attitudes and previous findings. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 language lecturers in Malaysia who are teaching academic writing and professional communication courses to understand their awareness towards CPBL approach. The data will be used to look further into the execution of CPBL in the language classroom. As this study is an exploratory research, only small sample size is involved (Labaree, 2009) and according to

Creswell (2013), the number of five to ten respondents is enough to yield sufficient depth of information from interviews. As previously mentioned, this is a preliminary study of the CPBL implementation in the language classroom, hence language lecturers were chosen as the respondents. These lecturers have been teaching for more than six years with the minimal qualification of masters' degree.

Before the interviews were conducted, the lectures were informed and appointments were set to meet them at the university. They were explained on the process of the interview before it started. Seven questions were asked in order to gain insights of the lecturers' awareness on CPBL and all the information was used for data presentation. The interviews were recorded using mp3 recorder and later transcribed for analysis. The analysis of data was done according to Zhang and Wildemuth (2016) qualitative analysis of content by categorising the questions into four headings that are teaching approaches, students' progress, CPBL awareness and the lecturers' willingness to incorporate CPBL in their language classroom.

RESULTS

Teaching approaches

While teaching academic writing and professional communication, all the 10 respondents do not seem to have specific method in teaching but commonly the learning will start with lecture in the first hour and followed by interactive activities in the second hour. They will explain the lesson, teach for comprehension, provide examples for the students to understand, introduce the materials, encourage question and answer session and ensure the students fully understand of the topic being taught. In the second hour of the class, the students are given tasks related to the topic taught and more interactive activities are encouraged in the second session where the students may have to work in groups for discussions and collaborate to present their work. Some respondents also stated that they include video shows in the lesson to avoid the subject from being too dry. However, since

learning in the classroom does not provide sufficient time to cover all the incidental matters, most of the respondents claim to integrate the use of technology such as creating Facebook group, Whatsapp group or Trello to communicate with the students outside of the classroom. From there, the students are able to ask further clarification of the complex matters and share their ideas and thoughts on the assignment or tasks given to them. Below are some of the answers:

Lecturer D:

"Normally, I'll divide the lesson in two parts. The first part is where I give the lecture and all the inputs and the second part is where I let them do the exercises."

Lecturer G:

"For writing, I can't do much except for explaining the theories and let them do the practice. For presentations, I show them relevant videos, introduce them with online materials, for example, pretzie, and emaze. I also use facebook group to communicate and discuss with the students outside of the classroom."

Lecturer J:

"I usually introduce the traditional method like we have to do lectures and then only they will have to get into activities. I don't believe in getting the students jumping into the situation without knowing the background or its rationale."

From the interview, it is comprehended that most of the respondents start with a lecture to ensure the students' get the basic knowledge of the lessons followed by exercises to test their understanding.

Students' progress

The respondents reported that students could understand better through their current teaching approaches. The evidence can be seen through the ability of the students to connect the ideas and parts of the writing, correcting their friends language in the assignment, improve in grammar, come up with better sentences in writing, applying what is taught and good remarks and comments at the end of the semester. Nevertheless, three of the respondents said that the approaches that they used do not really

improve the students' competency in language for the reason of time constraint that the little contact hours make it difficult to give more input for the students to receive, especially in the presentation class. Furthermore, some students are quite rigid and demonstrate less creativity in their written assignment.

In addition, most of the respondents stated that they are not able to tell whether the students have changed the way they think, as it could not be seen on the surface. Despite that, they realized that the students become more aware of the new knowledge and one respondent mentioned that the students do not improve their thinking skills if the lesson is based solely on communication. The reactions they gave are:

Lecturer F:

"Definitely the students improve since we are doing two-way communication in the classroom. We do discussions and they present them in front of the class."

Lecturer H:

"I won't have empirical proof that I have changed the way the students thought. In terms of the outcomes, I would say they understood the fundamentals of what we teach. I think there is awareness in terms of how they performed differently across the three of four presentations that they did"

Lecturer I:

"I would say that the current approach does not really improve the students because of the time constraint. We meet them only once a week and there are like 20 to 25 of them."

Thus, it can be seen that majority of the lecturers are convinced with the approaches that they employ in the language classrooms help students to improve in their learning through the end results, yet few respondents have different opinions on the same matter.

CPBL awareness

Based on the interviews, all respondents have not formerly heard of CPBL approach. In general, the respondents have heard of cooperative learning and problem-based learning but not the combination of both approaches. When describing the implementation of CPBL in the classroom, the respondents explained similarly based on the terms of 'cooperative' and 'problem-based'. According to them, the implementation of CPBL could be as giving students a problem, providing them a scenario and the students are required to cooperate in doing research, finding details to come up with the solutions of the problems in groups. The students will be guided, share ideas and information with their group members. Several views on the description of CPBL are stated as below:

Lecturer C:

"The students are given tasks and they work among themselves, find solutions of the particular projects or activities. At the end, they will come out with the solutions."

Lecturer E:

"It could be through discussions, a lot of situational questions, and then get them discussed, make them practice. I think small groups work better as they will be more confident if they are in smaller groups."

Lecturer J:

"It goes by case study. You give them a scenario and they are asked to solve it and they have to go and find information relevant to task at hand. The task will be divided among themselves and perhaps come back with the theoretical aspects of technical presentation, work on content, arrange them, get pieces of information from different groups and then put them together and figure out how it should be done."

On another question of CPBL suitability in the language classroom, six of the respondents are hesitant towards the implementation of CPBL. This is for the reason that the execution of CPBL may need to consume

a lot of time, which could lead to unproductive classroom. The syllabus may not be covered at the end of the semester. Another concern is the students may experience difficulty since they are not trained for such tasks, unless they are advanced learners. To make CPBL successful in class, the instructors must equip the students with the necessary English skills before engaging them. Furthermore, one respondent stated that problem-based is not really suitable for language learning. In contrast, four respondents are very supportive towards the implementation of CPBL in the language classroom due to the two-way interaction and it encourages the students to use the language. According to them, from observations, the students only utilise the skills when they are in the language classroom. The respondents believe that the students could enhance their soft skills, be dependent on their learning, and get more ideas that the good students could help the weak students throughout the learning process, with the condition that the instructors must guide the students. Some of the responses are:

Lecturer B:

"I think CPBL is suitable in language classroom, but the practicality is another question. Whether we can apply it is another question."

Lecturer C:

"In one way, CPBL could improve students' language skills but the lecturer must ensure they equip the students with the necessary command of language before engaging them with the projects."

Lecturer D:

"I would say it is the best way since in learning you need to have input and output and CPBL is the best platform for students to apply the language skills."

The answers portray that the respondents managed to describe some components of CPBL in its implementation and few were sceptical upon its execution despite they have agreements on its benefits.

Willingness to incorporate CPBL

The last two questions of the interview focus on the respondents' view on CPBL as a way to improve soft skills, particularly language abilities and their willingness to incorporate CPBL in their language classrooms. Majority respondents agreed that CPBL could help to increase students' soft skills as it offers students the opportunities to use the language in all aspects namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. CPBL could also assist in training the students' creative and thinking skills since they need to solve problems. Some respondents said that CPBL could make learning language more enjoyable as it seems to be different from the current approach. In spite of this, the effectiveness of CPBL in enhancing soft skills is still doubtful since they have never put an attempt on CPBL. The accuracy of language is of question since the students will only converse with their peers, who may not act as the instructors to correct their language use.

Lecturer A:

"I am willing to try but I don't think there will be enough time. If it has been tested to work, I'll use it."

Lecturer G:

"Yes of course I'll give CPBL a try. Today's classroom is changing very fast and CPBL could be one of the ways to utilize interaction and communication using the target language."

Lecturer I:

"I think CPBL is good because it could help to prevent students from getting bored and it will sharpen their thinking skills as well."

In consideration of everything, all respondents are willing to integrate CPBL in their language classrooms. Four of the respondents strongly agree with the incorporation of CPBL due to the need of changing environment in teaching generation Y and the benefits of assisting the students to become better learners with refined skills. While the other six respondents are willing to try CPBL if it has been tested

to be effective in enhancing the learning experience, increased the students' capability and understood by students in playing their role in the tasks.

DISCUSSIONS

From the interviews, it can be implied that majority respondents are still using the traditional method of teaching where the lesson begins with a lecture and the students have to apply the knowledge through the practice and exercises related to the content. Nevertheless, the respondents had attempted in making the learning fun and make use of the technology to further assist the students' enquiries. Since the field of education is experiencing changes in the way teaching and learning occur, technology based activities is beneficial in the language classrooms (Kim, 2015). The awareness of group activities does exist among the respondents as they divide the students into groups to discuss and work together on the assignments. By doing group work, the students will feel more comfortable and confident to communicate and discuss, for they psychologically believe they are on the same standard of their own kind. According to Goethals, Winston and Zimmerman (1999), peer effects is important in higher institution where it could bring direct effects on the cognitive capacity through group communication. The students become the sources of information to evaluate opinions and abilities, which resulted in their judgement, belief, value, level of aspiration, and ability. As a consequence, the students become more open in receiving information and instructions. Inadvertently, these respondents have incorporated one of the fundamental parts of cooperative learning to encourage their students in becoming motivated learners through communication with peers.

Regardless of the positive outcomes received at the end of the semester, there was no indication that the students manage to navigate their own learning. The students are still relying on the lecturers to get information and notes for all the lessons start with lectures. The display of creative thinking is present, where the students construct better sentences in

writing and insert new ideas in their personalised presentations, yet it is lacking in critical and problem solving skills, which are highly anticipated by employers. U.S. Bureau Labour Statistics help to shed the current skills gap by reporting that the working industry is facing difficulty in finding employees who have specific skills, which schools do not teach and the labour market does not supply (Half, 2015). Critical and problem solving skills is the heart of new learning paradigm and it is vital to be applied explicitly in the curriculum to prepare students towards successful studies, work and living in the challenging economy (Kivunja, 2015).

Hence, the implementation of CPBL in the language classroom seems exceptionally suitable to prepare the students in the various demanding fields. Evidently, several researches have proven that CPBL could help to sharpen the critical and problem solving skills along with their interpersonal skills. Fatimah, Fatin Aliyah & Khairiyah (2012) discovered students' improvements in points of long-term memory, hard work, confidence, independence, understanding, capability, passion, interests and time management. Despite the views stating that language learning does not involve problems, the relevance of its practicality is definite since language learning revolves around utilising skills. Language learners need to use various approaches in learning in order to practise different skills and open their mind in the variety ways the concepts are explained. Problem-based learning promotes a more meaningful and authentic interaction in the language classroom compared to the assigned activities like role-play, as the focus is on the real world issues and problems (Mathews-Aydinli, 2007).

In language classroom, CPBL could work by complying with the stages in the CPBL framework. Theoretically, language classroom instructors will state the instructions clearly to the students before presenting them with the real-life problems related to their course. From there, the students will have to cooperate and apply all the basic skills in language that are reading, listening, speaking and writing. The critical and problem solving skills will come in

the process of gathering information and coming out with the possible solutions. Thus, the students' skills will be sharpened, they will be more disciplined and significantly it helps to develop the students in becoming more responsible on themselves. Undeterred by the unawareness and inconsiderable hesitations, the language lecturers have positive view towards CPBL execution in their language classroom. They understood the concept and all of them are willing to try CPBL approach in their classrooms as they see it as a way to improve the students' skills and the need to be in line with the current generation of learners. Nevertheless, the administration of CPBL in the language classrooms needs to have proper planning beforehand to avoid disruptions during its implementation.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, language lecturers' awareness is divided either towards cooperative learning or problem-based learning and they are relatively unclear of both combinations in the CPBL approach. The strong points that are already in the cooperative learning have validated its effectiveness in improving students' social interactions. However, to enhance the learning outcomes, PBL is integrated since it encourages deeper thinking abilities of the learners through problem solving. The collaboration of both approaches produces finer and independent individuals who are able to comprehend complex situations as required by the employment industry. The practicality of CPBL has been tested in engineering classes and the results were immense and bring significant impacts to the education sector. The students are more disciplined, motivated, confident and appreciative towards the learning. Hence, CPBL is a great advantage to exert in the Malaysian language classrooms for the reasons of the skills concentration in language learning that takes place within the mind and communication with people.

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