



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

REFLECTION THROUGH BLOGS IN ESL PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

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REFLECTION THROUGH BLOGS IN ESL PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

By

ISOLDE HON PEI SHA

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science**

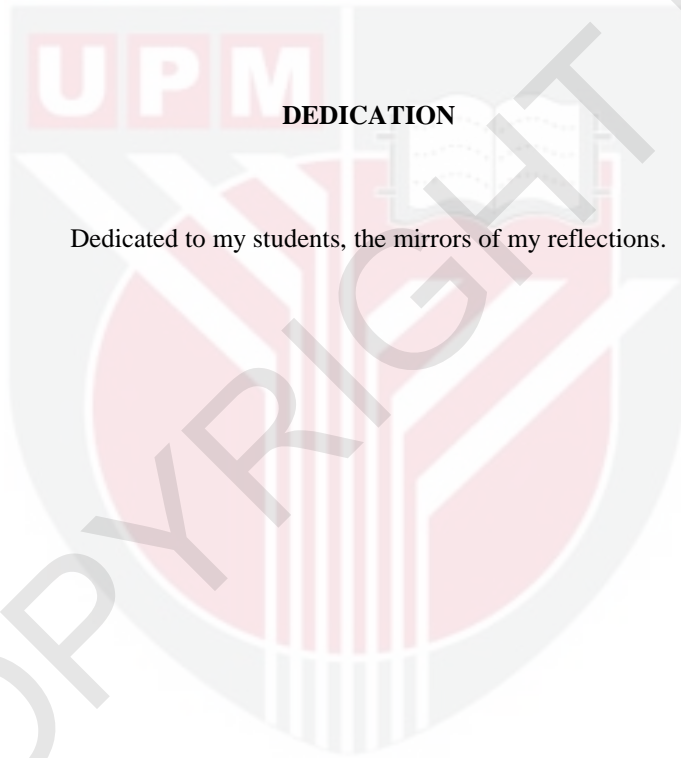
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my students, the mirrors of my reflections.

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

REFLECTION THROUGH BLOGS IN ESL PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

By

ISOLDE HON PEI SHA

January 2018

Chair: Prof. Jayakaran Mukundan, PhD
Faculty: Educational Studies

Reflective learning (RL) and project-based learning (PBL) have long been acknowledged as important aspects of personal and professional development. Yet, the practice of RL and PBL in Malaysian classrooms are still underutilized and students are not getting sufficient input to meet the demands of the international standards, as reported in the 12 OECD, PISA 2012 Database. To address this, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has produced the Project-Based Learning Handbook (2006) and accompanied by the new Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013 - 2025) which contain necessary information and guidelines to produce students who can keep pace in an increasingly competitive global economy. However, an inductive and reflective research to discover and describe the Malaysian students' perception and experience of both RL and PBL combined has yet to be conducted.

The aim of this study is to identify the dimensions and frequency of reflections found in the learners' blogs, the extent learners include stages of Gibbs Reflective Cycle in their reflections through blogs, and the extent learners identify with reflective learning and collaborative learning through their projects. The sampling for the study was purposeful and the participants were 10 TESL, 3rd year undergraduates. Research data was collected from participants' reflections through blog entries and from follow-up qualitative interviews. In this study, data analysis also included the transcribing and reading of blog entries and interviews.

The findings of the study showed that participants were engaged in reflection and produced responses that included all three reflection dimensions within their personal and group blogs. More reflective writing was produced using the initial stages of reflection rather than those which required higher order thinking skills. Thus, there were more reflections on descriptions of their experience and the feelings that they had developed in the process of completing their project. Furthermore, reflective learning and collaborative learning were evidently present throughout this project. Participants also suggested the significance of conflict-resolution as an essential element that emerges

every time they had to overcome obstacles in the process. This study provides valuable information on how students perceive and experience RL and PBL which are crucial to better equip our students holistically to allow them to succeed in the 21st century.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

REFLEKSI MELALUI BLOG DALAM PEMBELAJARAN BERASASKAN PROJEK BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA KEDUA

Oleh

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Januari 2018

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Kedua-dua pembelajaran reflektif (PR) dan pembelajaran berasaskan projek (PBP) telah lama diakui sebagai aspek penting dalam pembangunan peribadi dan profesional. Namun, amalan RL dan PBL dalam bilik darjah Malaysia masih kurang digunakan dan pelajar tidak memperoleh input yang mencukupi untuk memenuhi permintaan piawaian antarabangsa, seperti yang dilaporkan dalam laporan OECD 12, Pangkalan Data PISA 2012. Bagi menangani masalah ini, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia telah menghasilkan Buku Panduan PBP (2006) bersama dengan Pelan Tindakan Pendidikan Malaysia Baharu (2013 - 2025) yang mengandungi maklumat dan garis panduan untuk melahirkan pelajar yang mampu bersaing dalam ekonomi global. Walaubagaimanapun, penyelidikan induktif dan reflektif untuk menemui dan menggambarkan persepsi dan pengalaman pelajar Malaysia dalam gabungan PR dan PBP masih belum dijalankan.

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti dimensi dan kekerapan refleksi di dalam blog pelajar, sejauh mana pelajar memasukkan peringkat Kitaran Reflektif Gibbs dalam refleksi mereka melalui blog, dan sejauh mana pelajar mengenal pasti pembelajaran reflektif dan pembelajaran kolaboratif melalui projek ini. Kajian ini menggunakan persampelan bertujuan dan peserta terdiri daripada 10 orang mahasiswa TESL, tahun ke-3. Data kajian dikumpul daripada refleksi peserta melalui entri blog dan dari wawancara kualitatif susulan. Analisis data juga termasuk catatan dan pembacaan entri blog dan temu bual.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa peserta telah melibatkan diri dalam refleksi dan menghasilkan respon yang mengandungi ketiga-tiga dimensi refleksi dalam blog peribadi dan kumpulan. Penulisan reflektif lebih banyak dihasilkan dengan menggunakan refleksi peringkat awal berbanding dengan refleksi yang memerlukan kemahiran berfikir aras tinggi. Oleh itu, terdapat lebih refleksi deskripsi tentang pengalaman dan perasaan yang timbul dalam proses menyiapkan projek mereka. Pembelajaran reflektif dan kolaboratif jelas hadir sepanjang projek ini dan peserta juga

mencadangkan kepentingan resolusi konflik sebagai satu elemen penting untuk mengatasi halangan-halangan dalam kajian. Kajian ini memberikan maklumat yang berharga mengenai persepsi dan pengalaman pelajar dalam RL dan PBL yang amat penting untuk melengkapkan pelajar-pelajar kita secara holistik untuk membolehkan mereka untuk berjaya dalam dunia abad ke-21.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (date of viva voce) to conduct the final examination of Isolde Hon Pei Sha on her thesis entitled “Reflection Through Blogs in ESL Project-Based Learning” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MOE	Ministry of Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
RSS	Rich Site Summary
RL	Reflective Learning
PBL	Project-based Learning
LMS	Learning Management System
RLB	Reflective Learning Blogs
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
RMK-9	Rancangan Malaysia Ke-9 (Ninth Malaysian Plan)
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PT3	Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (Form 3 Assessment)
PMR	Penilaian Menengah Rendah (Lower Secondary Evaluation)
ESL	English as a Second Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Ever since the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia introduced the “Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025” (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2013), many measures have been taken in order to achieve a better understanding of the present-day performance and challenges of the Malaysian education system. MOE is currently stressing on improving access to education, raising standards (quality), closing achievement gaps (equity), promoting unity amongst students, and maximising system efficiency (Preliminary Report Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015, 2013).

Parallel with the growth of ICT, many technology-based and web-based activities were adopted into our local educational practices in order to achieve new curriculum goals. Media sharing, online games, social networking and blogging are some examples of ICT possibilities. However, among different kinds of Web 2.0 applications, blogging has become one of the more popular possibilities (Huddle, 2009).

Weblogs or better known as blogs, can be utilized for the purpose of reflecting on course work, assignments, careers, or even current events. Blogs can also be used to save and distribute content generated by the students and the faculty. RSS (Rich Site Summary) feeds allows access to blog content in various ways, such as newsreaders, providing the opportunity for bloggers to share information to individuals who are interested in the same field. Blogs offer a high level of autonomy and freedom in sharing information to both students and the faculty, as well as other users from all around the world and at the same time, creating opportunities for peer interaction. Blogs provide a forum for extensive discussion that goes beyond coursework to other areas of personal exploration. Blogs provides a medium that is efficacious for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and application (Garrison & Vaughan, 2007). Therefore, students are also able to learn as much from their peers as from their teachers or textbooks.

In Malaysia, the primary and secondary education curriculum has yet to adopt the idea of reflective learning (RL) through blogging, while in the local institutions of higher learning, the initiation of RL and project-based learning (PBL) is still at its infancy stage. Nevertheless, there have been some efforts taken by organizations or by lecturers themselves such as the use of the Learning Management System (LMS), which is being adopted by a number of local universities. However, the practice of online instruction is still low since it is considerably a new method in the context of the Malaysian classrooms (Mohd Hashim, 2012).

Higher education is beginning to look into the blogs’ educational potential as tools to help advocate meaningful learning and integration of learning experiences either from

the inside or outside the classroom setting (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Blogs have the potential to promote collaborative or reflective learning by providing a medium for students to engage in reflection on resources and content (Dron, 2003; Williams & Jacobs, 2004). On top of that, group blogs can be used for student-to-student communication and display of work. It is also a medium for the development of student portfolio, classroom management, reflective learning, as well as peer support (Hall and Davidson, 2007).

Thus, it seems that blogging should have the potential to support reflective practice, which by right, should consequently connect the work done in the class with experiences the students have encountered in the outside world (Beale, 2007). Thus, an study is needed to discover the extent of RL and PBL's relevance in Malaysian classrooms and its impact on students. A study in this direction would require in-depth knowledge of students' interest and engagement with their blogs and projects, as well as their personal experiences in the process of completing the project. This study therefore, aims to explore the presence of reflective learning and collaborative learning in PBL and the interactions within reflective blogs of participants.

1.2 Reflection Through Journals and Blogs

1.2.1 Introduction of Journals and Blogs

According to Brockbank & McGill (2007), a journal is “a collection of your thoughts, feelings, speculations, and maybe dreams. It is like a map of your learning journey.” As for Thorpe (2004), reflective learning journals are referred to as “written documents that students create as they think about various concepts, events, or interactions over a period of time for the purposes of gaining insights into self-awareness and learning”. In order to engage in reflection, learners need to have a medium or platform to express their thoughts. Traditionally, learners record them a book or a diary. However, with the advancement of internet technology, the introduction of web-blogs has become an avenue for learners to publish their thoughts and reflections. With web-blogs learners can share their thoughts through electronic platforms such as blog, websites and online forums to name a few. The potential of blogs as reflective learning journals has been explored in many studies by researchers (Armstrong & Warlick, 2004; Williams & Jacobs, 2004; Yang, 2009). Encouraging learners to write reflective journals is an effective way for them to learn new concepts, discover feasible learning strategies and gain feedback for further improvement in future projects. Mynard (2007), mentioned that blogs enable its users to engage in authentic writing practice and allow students to practice language by recycling language input learned in classrooms. Blogging is also an alternative way of communicating with teachers and peers, which in turn, creates a collaborative learning environment.

To develop lifelong learning skills as learners, we need to be aware of the way we learn. Knowing how we learn makes us more effective learners. Going through our plans and actions, writing down our thoughts and emotions throughout the process of learning help to identify and clarify our learning styles. By reflecting on our own learning, it helps us to focus and actively engage in our development as independent and critical learners. Reflection is a way of learning and it enables us to evaluate and assess our own

performance as learners. Keeping journals will allow us to keep records of our learning progress which will later prove useful in discovering the strategies and processes that work well for us. By engaging in RL, we are also engaging in metacognition (thinking about our own thought processes), participating actively in learning as well as acknowledging our personal responsibility as lifelong learners.

“It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience, it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalisations or concepts can be generated. And it is generalisations that allow new situations to be tackled effectively.” (Gibbs 1988).

1.2.2 Incorporating Technology - Reflective Learning Blogs (RLB) in Malaysia

In 2012, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) introduced Frog Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) under the initiation of the 1BestariNet project. Frog VLE is a web-based learning system that mirrors real-world learning by integrating virtually identical concepts of education (www.frogasia.com). Through Frog VLE, instructors are able to create interactive virtual learning sites to conduct a virtual lesson or share relevant information with their students. Students on the other hand are able to view these created sites as well as create their own virtual learning sites to share their thoughts about the lessons and obtain feedback from both the teacher and their peers. MOE also organized training courses related to Frog VLE to help teachers comprehend the use of the Frog VLE and subsequently assisting them to implement it in schools. With this sophisticated virtual media, MOE aims for a drastic transformation in the Malaysian education system. However, a recent study shows that the teachers from the monitored school still lack in readiness and possessed inadequate skills in assessing Frog VLE (Kaur & Hussein, 2015). Evidently, educational blogging is no longer a novelty in the context of language learning. However, the use of blogs in teaching and learning in the Malaysian higher education setting is still at its infancy stage, not to mention primary and secondary school settings, where research in these areas are even scarcer. A quick search on popular research databases could easily testify that.

1.3 Project-Based Learning

1.3.1 Project-Based Learning: Why is it important?

Within the context of student-centered learning, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has recently become increasingly prominent in engaging and preparing students for the 21st century. This is because PBL is a versatile and flexible instructional method that allows students the autonomy to select strategies and approaches in completing their projects on their own. Thus, students can be engaged in tasks that are interdisciplinary in nature, and that each task can be solved in many ways (Omar, Taib & Basri, 2012).

Trilling & Fadel (2009) suggested that to be an independent lifelong learner, one must possess three. One must have the ability to critically assess what others say and to overcome problems, to communicate and collaborate with others in the process of learning, and have the ability to generate new ideas and innovations that can help develop a better world. This is very much relevant to PBL as it requires students to play active roles as problem-solvers in the process of learning and to be critical and creative in the process of thinking (Barron et al., 1998). PBL also encourages cognitive processes by allowing one to investigate about a topic worth learning in-depth. (Harris & Katz, 2001). Moreover, PBL encourages collaborative learning which promotes reflection and exchange of different views. Since project work collaborative in nature, learners are able to practice their team-work and collaboration capabilities (Bas, 2008; Fröhlich, Henze & Nejd, 1997). In accordance to the 21st century learning, technology also plays a big role in the modern educational setting. Therefore, incorporating the use of technology in PBL can further enhance the effectiveness of PBL (Hannafin & Land, 1997).

The aforementioned studies have proven that PBL is a relevant method to meet the current demands in education. PBL provides not only direct involvement in the project, but also the opportunity to develop new skills and knowledge through experiential learning and promote life-long learning. Students will also be able to develop problem-solving skills as they learn to communicate with real people through collaborative learning, solve real-world problems and reflect on their learning by incorporating ICT. Pair work or group work will require learners to plan, organize, negotiate, express themselves, and make decisions about issues and how information will be studied and presented. Since project work is collaborative in nature, the development of these skills occurs even among learners at low levels of language proficiency (Bas, 2008) as they go through the process of learning from each other. Research showed that students in PBL classrooms retrieved higher scores than students from traditional classrooms (Marx et al., 2004; Rivet & Krajcik, 2004). Other than that, teachers' self-reports demonstrated that experience with PBL activities benefitted students who consequently displayed positive attitudes towards learning, good work habits, problem-solving capabilities, and high self esteem (Tretten and Zachariou, 1995). PBL needs to be seriously considered as one of the main teaching approaches used in Malaysian classrooms in order the further improve the quality of the graduates produced by institutions of higher learning in the country (Omar, Taib & Basri, 2012).

In Malaysia, PBL was first introduced in schools in 2006 (Project-Based Learning Handbook, 2006). The Educational Technology Division of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) prepared a Project-Based Learning Handbook to help implement the "Making Schools Smart" Programme for all Malaysian schools under the Ninth Malaysian Plan (RMK-9). The purpose of this programme is to necessitate innovation in areas of teaching and learning by incorporating technology. The PBL handbook aims to help students achieve 21st century skills through activity-based learning which would further encourage self-directed, self-paced, as well as self-accessed learning (Yusof et al., 2012).

MOE (2006) suggested that problem-solving, communication, collaboration, planning, personal skills, social skills, knowledge acquisition skills, thinking skills, scientific skills,

generic skills, environmental skills, creative skills and information technology skills can be acquired through PBL.

In October 2011, the MOE launched a comprehensive review of the education system in Malaysia with the aim to develop it through the newly established National Education Blueprint for a span of 13 years (2013-2025). The decision was made to raise our education system to international education standards. This would help our Malaysian children meet the needs of the 21st century. Within the blueprint, one of the highlighted topics was *Student Cognitive Performance against International Standards*. This section highlights the needs of assessing our students' cognitive skills such as application and reasoning through the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) and the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA). In 1999, when Malaysia participated in TIMSS, although discouraging, Malaysia's score in TIMSS was higher than the international average both in Mathematics and Science. By 2011, the system's performance took a tumble and scored below the international average where 35% and 38% of our students failed to achieve the minimum proficiency levels in Mathematics and Science. As for PISA, almost 60% of our 15-year-olds did not meet the minimum proficiency level in Mathematics, and almost 44% and 43% failed to achieve the minimum proficiency levels in Reading and Science respectively.

In the New Education Blueprint (2013-2025), the 7th Shift to transform our education system is *Leverage ICT to Scale up Quality Learning across Malaysia*. This shift includes the provision of internet access for all 10,000 schools in Malaysia and a video library to share best practices for lessons in Science, Mathematics, Bahasa Malaysia and English language. It promotes maximized use of ICT for distance and self-paced learning so that students can access to high-quality teaching no matter the place or student skill level. This shift clearly promotes student-centered learning and self-regulated learning which can be achieved through the implementation of PBL in classrooms as well as learning reflections through ICT.

Although PBL was introduced in Malaysian schools more than a decade ago, PBL is still underemphasized in the local educational setting. Despite the fact that studies have shown the effectiveness of PBL towards enhancing student learning and the availability of adequate technology infrastructure in schools, the use of technology in PBL is rather limited (Muniandy, Mohamad, Fong & Idrus, 2009). Until today, many local institutions are still reluctant to venture into the business of using PBL in classrooms. The overuse of school textbooks is prominent in Malaysia as it is cost-saving and very effective in controlling large classes – an average of 45 students per class (Mukundan, 2003). Most educators are unwilling to take the risk of using PBL in classrooms since PBL involves a lot of unconventional out-of-class activities. It brought about fear that it may result in lower achievement scores as many believe test preparation is more important. However, that is not the case. The next section will discuss further on the PBL practices done in Malaysia.

1.3.2 Project-Based Learning: Practices in Malaysia

PBL is still considered a new method in the Malaysian Education System. In 2014, the MOE announced the replacement of PMR with PT3 which has the same scope as PMR before, which is using summative assessment in the evaluation of students' overall intellectual ability at lower secondary level. All subjects within the PT3 scope are assessed via written tests except for History and Geography which are assessed via written assignments, projects, field study and or case studies relevant to the respective subjects. This is the first and only attempt that MOE has made to incorporate PBL in our local teaching and learning assessments.

In line with the implementation of the second wave of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025), it is important that the MOE includes practical assessments or PBL in English Language as well. Since English is also part of the School-Based Assessment (SBA) which aims to move away from focusing on just examinations (*The Star*, 2015), it is only appropriate that PBL is included as part of the curriculum and assessment in schools. The implementation of PBL is believed to help pave the path to meet the needs of compulsory passes in the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) English examination (*The Sun Daily*, 2015).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

With the introduction of the PBL Handbook in Malaysia, revision and the implementation of the new Malaysia Education Blueprint, replacement of PMR with the new PT3 assessment and the initiation of the 1BestariNet (Frog VLE) Project, everything seems to be in optimal position to establish a strong foundation in achieving international standards in education. However, many teachers and students are still struggling to conform and utilize all these advanced methods and assessment strategies in their learning and instruction.

Most educators in Malaysia are still conducting overused conventional classroom practices which no longer apply to our current classroom settings. Such practices include the mind-numbing chalk-and-talk, tedious grammar drills and the overuse of school textbooks in classroom teaching. A study done by Keys & Fernandes (1993) finds that 9% of the students (participants of the study) showed that they were experiencing boredom in all or most lessons, 55% claimed they were bored in some lessons, while many students claimed their teachers rarely offer praises for good work. About 40% of students indicated that during the year, they have yet to discuss their work with their teachers individually. Some think of the process of learning as dull and dreary, while some think of classroom life as boring, uninteresting, unimportant, or unsubstantial (Kennedy, 2005). Many claimed, the subject matter used in school was boring and irrelevant to the real world outside of the classroom (Waller, 1932). Decades later, a number of studies showed that teachers depended a lot on recitations that focused on insignificant facts and did not allow the students the opportunity to think about the content (Hoetker & Ahlbrand, 1969). Currently, we can see that many teachers are still unaware of the fact that the teaching methods used in classrooms can no longer engage

students. Thus, students find learning to be something that requires too much effort and is unappealing.

Malaysian students are not getting the sufficient input to meet the demands of the international standards. With the continuous practice of Teacher-Centred Learning, it will be difficult for our students to think out-of-the-box let alone solve real-world problems. This was shown in the 2012 *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA), where Malaysian 15-year-olds were the worst in East Asia, outperforming only our neighbouring country, Indonesia. Out of 44 countries worldwide, Malaysians ranked 39th in problem-solving skills (12 OECD, PISA 2012 Database).

Inauthentic tasks will deny the students opportunity to relate to their real-life experiences, which would probably lead them to being not passionate about what they are doing. The central feature of school life is the purposeful act where classroom lessons should be conducted according to the projects that students want to do (Kilpatrick, 1918). A good example would be the first chapter of the Form 1 Textbook entitled, '*Family Circle*' which portrays an ideal family where all the members of the family are happily living under one roof. Students from lesser than 'perfect' families may be convinced that their families are inferior and incomplete. In a study conducted by Mukundan (2013), none of the 43 students in his class thought there was any realism in the unit – in fact the entire class reported that these were “unreal families” – the words used to describe the unit were – “too much harmony”; “characters unreal”; “settings unreal”. This unrealistic portrayal of an ideal family may cause students to have lower self-esteem and may not give them the chance of self-expression. Ruth Wajnryb (1997) also stated that a typical English Language Textbook is portrayed as “safe, clean, harmonious, benevolent, undisturbed and PG-rated” and thus denies the learner the valuable learning resource which can be proved by affect. If RL, CL and PBL were implemented, students will be given the opportunity to deal with authentic tasks which require them to solve real-world problems and reflect on the ways they have used to deal with the problems both cognitively and affectively.

Research shows that students who were more inclined to practise hands-on work demonstrated good understanding and they were able to perform exceptionally even on traditional tests (Thomas & Mergendoller, 2000). This means that students will be more engaged if tasks are meaningful and relatable to their own experiences. Teaching will be more effective if tasks provided are authentic with a relative purpose. Students will then learn constructively while putting their hands on to complete the purposeful tasks. Ariffin & Yaacob (2014) found in their study that all the students agreed that blogs assisted them in improving the command of their second language because blogs provided them a platform where everybody was using English. A study by Murugaiah & Thang (2010) showed that the exchange of knowledge and information with peers enhanced their drive to learn because learning from peers is less daunting compared to learning from teachers. Even though numerous studies have shown significant results in students' attitude and performance through the RL, CL and PBL approach, there has yet to be a study on RL with CL in PBL. A study done by Krause (2004), led a teacher to query about the possibility of blogs being collaborative or interactive in a writing environment. Features of RL with CL in PBL would prove useful as it helps to identify the dimensions and characteristics of reflections that the students provide in the process of learning through

these methods. This in turn would provide justification on the effectiveness of RL, CL and PBL. Therefore, in this study, we seek to address the gaps in the research of RL, CL and PBL and provide the information needed on how learners relate to RL, CL and PBL altogether. This information is crucial as it allows all concerned parties to access information about the effectiveness of RL with CL in PBL and the need to implement the approach in our education system.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

- i determine the dimensions and frequency of reflections found in learners' blogs.
- ii determine the extent to which learners include the stages of Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988) in their reflections through blogs.
- iii determine the extent to which learners identify with reflective learning and collaborative learning through their projects.

1.6 Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1)

- 1) What are the dimensions and frequency of reflections found in learners' blogs?

Research Question 2 (RQ2)

- 2) To what extent do learners include the stages of Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988) in their reflections through blogs?

Research Question 3 (RQ3)

- 3) To what extent do learners identify with reflective learning and collaborative learning through their projects?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study is significant in that it provides information on the relevance of RL and PBL in the Malaysian English classrooms. The input that students retrieved from multiple sources and their responses towards the project will indicate the potential of RL and PBL in enhancing English Language proficiency among Malaysian students.

The findings will also be significant to curriculum developers in Malaysia as it will provide vital feedback on the inclusion of RL and PBL in the Malaysian English Language classrooms. It will also help teachers who are concerned with the projects that they need to carry out in class. This information would help to improve the pedagogical practice and solve issues in the country especially where the teaching of the English Language is concerned.

The findings from the students' responses will also attempt to establish the elements of PBL that they enjoyed the most. This could subsequently guide future RL and PBL implementation. Another considerable outcome would be on the participants' reflection on their journey of self-discovery through the process of RL and PBL. The reflection may reveal deeper issues faced and their personal feedback throughout the process of completing the assigned RL and PBL.

1.8 Operational Definitions

1.8.1 Authentic Task

Mueller (2005) described authentic task as a form of assessment in which students are required to deal with real world tasks that exhibits meaning through the application of essential knowledge and skill. In the present study, authentic task is referred to the video project in which they have produced based on their own experiences about current issues related to young adults

1.8.2 Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning (CL) is an umbrella term that covers a variety of educational approaches which involves combined intellectual effort by a group of people aiming to achieve the same learning goals. It involves people working in pairs or in groups, mutually searching for common ground in terms of understanding, solutions, meanings, or creating a product (Goodsell, et al, 1992). This study will focus on the joint effort initiated among learners whether they are directly or indirectly involved in the video project. Thus, we will discover the steps taken to ensure completion of the project and the major impact on the participants as a result of the video production.

1.8.3 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking may be defined as continuous persistent effort in pursuit of comprehension through the examination of any belief or form of knowledge (Glaser, 1941). This study will look into the participants' engagement and development in critical thinking as part of the learning process in completing this video project. Critical thinking skills will be tested throughout this study as participants figure out the best solutions to the problems that surface in the process of completing the video project.

1.8.4 Problem-Solving

Problem solving describes a problem as a necessity which must be met (Ritz, et al. 1986). This study will look at the problem-solving skills of learners through their reflection in blogs. Thus, we can identify their action, reaction and outcome of their deliberation.

1.8.5 Project-Based Learning (PBL)

PBL is a model that systemizes learning around projects (Thomas, 2000) such as complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems, that requires students to engage in problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities. In this study, projects refer to the videos that the learners have to produce within a given time frame. This study aims to explore student's reflection, attitude and experience towards PBL.

1.8.6 Reflective Learning (RL)

Reflection has been described as a deliberate process during which the learner partakes and focuses on his or her performance and thinks metacognitively about their actions, what has occurred and what was learnt from the experience, in order to inform what they might undertake in the future (King, 2002). This present study will look at the learners' reflection on their experiences in completing their video project through their reflective blogs.

1.8.7 Textbook

The definitions for Textbooks are wide and varied. One common definition is that a textbook is a printed and bound object for a course of study which contain facts and ideas pertaining a certain subject (Encyclopedia of Education, 2008). In this study, the textbooks are referred to the Malaysian English Language Textbooks (Primary 1-6 and Secondary 1-5). Within this context, textbook based approaches contrast distinctly with PBL.

1.8.8 21st Century Skills

21st Century skills are skills that are demanded of the students in order to achieve success in the modern workforce. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2011) has developed a framework that explains these skills in a few components which includes the many skills required for one to successful in the present century such as critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills and communication skills to name a few.

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