

## The Application of Problem-based Learning in Literary Texts Classes and Learners' Attitudes: A Correlational Study

دراسة ارتباطية بين تطبيق التعليم القائم على حل المشكلات لتدريس النصوص الأدبية و مواقف

طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية

\*Mountassar Billah Kellil<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Sabrina Baghzou<sup>2</sup>

قليل منتصر بالله<sup>1</sup> د. بغزو صبرينة<sup>2</sup>

University of Abbes Laghrour (Algeria)

جامعة عباس لغرور (الجزائر)

Kellilmontasser@gmail.com<sup>1</sup> / bsabrina083@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>

Dep. Day : 30/06/2021	Acc. day: 05/09/2021	Pub. day: 02/03/2022
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

### Abstract:

The current study examined how students' attitudes towards problem-based instruction are correlated with its level of application. Prior to this study, the researcher conducted a quasi-experiment with an intervention of PBL-based instruction in the literary texts classroom in the department of English. The current descriptive correlational study was then carried out in aims of unveiling students' attitudes towards PBL-based activities in light of their perceptions about the extent to which PBL activities were applied. Thirty third year students at Abbess Laghrour University in Khenchela, Algeria responded to a survey measuring attitudes and perceived level of PBL practiced. Data analysis has revealed that, overall, students reported having practiced a sufficient amount of PBL activities, a few others who had failed to practice PBL activities sufficiently viewed them more negatively and benefited less from them, and their perceived level of practice is significantly correlated with their attitudes towards various PBL activities.

**Keywords:** PBL-based instruction, literary texts, EFL learners, Attitudes.

ملخص البحث

هذه الدراسة دراسة وصفية إرتباطية ، تهدف إلى معرفة مدى ارتباط آراء الطلاب حول التعليم القائم وفق المقاربة بحل المشكلات بتصوراتهم لمستوى تطبيقه. و لتحقيق ذلك؛ أجرينا أولا دراسة تدخلية شبه تجريبية قاصدين تطبيق هذه المقاربة في الفصول الدراسية لتعليم النصوص الأدبية ، مستهدفين طلاب السنة الثالثة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة عباس لغرور خنشلة. بعد ذلك أجرينا دراسة استقصائية من خلال إعدادنا لاستبيان يضم مجموعة من الأسئلة الخاصة بموضوع دراستنا، قاصدين دراسة مواقف الطلاب تجاه مختلف الأنشطة و تصورهم

\* Mountassar Billah Kellil. Kellilmontasser@gmail.com

لتطبيقها. بعد اطلاعنا وتحليلنا لإجابات ثلاثين طالبا، و جدنا أن الطلاب -عموما- الذين مارسوا قدرا كافيا من الأنشطة يرونها مفيدة ومجدية في تسهيل استيعاب النصوص الأدبية، أما من فشلوا في ممارستها، فيرون أنها غير مجدية في ذلك؛ إذ صعب عليهم استيعاب تلك النصوص من خلال ممارستهم لتلك الأنشطة. و عليه، نستنتج أن المستوى المصور لممارسة الأنشطة يرتبط بمواقف الطلاب تجاهها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية، التعليم، حل المشكلات، تصورات الطلاب، النصوص الأدبية.



## I. Introduction

An ultimate aim in foreign language teaching is to facilitate the learning and teaching processes in order to promote learners' overall level in various subjects. One of these subjects is literature, which is often considered fruitful for EFL learners since it enhances their linguistic knowledge and critical thinking skills as well as their knowledge of the target culture. In spite of this, EFL teachers often encounter numerous challenges when teaching literary texts.

This issue has been tackled by numerous researchers who aimed at managing difficult and challenging factors that impede its successful learning process. Bousbai (2010), for instance, highlights the problem of dealing with literary texts on the surface level, which resulted in lack of motivation in literary texts in EFL classes. Additionally, Kheladi (2017) drew attention to EFL learners' lack of interest in reading, shortage in resources (Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017) and high level of anxiety in literary texts classes. In attempts to cope with factors that hinder the learning of literary texts in the EFL classroom, researchers implemented various teaching and learning methods and techniques (Bousbai, 2010; Fehaima, 2018; Yilmaz, 2012). One such method was problem-based learning (PBL). Basically, this instruction method is based on the use of real life problems as a starting point of every lesson where learners actively engage in a process to solve these problems, thus gaining knowledge (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980). For instance, when a teacher is faced with the task of introducing adjectives related to profiles to his or her learners, he or she may use the following problem scenario as a starting point: *A man lost his son while visiting a zoo. The man looked for his son but could not find him. Then, he went to a security agent to ask for his help. The agent asked the man about his son's appearance. At this point, the teacher can show the learners a picture of this lost child and ask them to describe him for the security agent, so learners actively gather adjectives related to physical appearances and use them to describe the lost child.*

PBL was studied in relation to mostly language skills (Azman & Shin, 2012), English language proficiency (Ansarian, Adlipour, Saber, & Shafiei, 2016), vocabulary issues (Mohammadi, 2017), and critical thinking skills (Bashith & Amin, 2017). All the aforementioned studies accentuate the positive effect of PBL, as a teaching method, on various elements related to foreign and second language learning. This being said, the utility of PBL in literary texts classes in an EFL setting has not been covered. Besides the aforementioned problems, the researchers in the current study have witnessed problems of knowledge appliance, lack of participation and low level of confidence, and a considerable level of passiveness shown by EFL students during literary texts classes.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to implement PBL in EFL classes and examine learners' views on its usefulness in relation to its level of application. In order to effectively accomplish this, the researchers adopted the following research question, aims, and hypothesis:

**Research question:** To what extent is the level of PBL-based instruction of literary texts correlated with students' attitudes?

**Hypothesis:** Students' attitudes towards PBL-based activities are positively correlated with the extent of applicability of PBL-based instruction.

**Objective 1:** To examine students' perceptions towards the level of applicability of PBL-based instruction.

**Objective 2:** To unveil students' attitudes towards PBL-based activities employed in the literary texts classroom.

**Objective 3:** To examine the extent to which PBL-based instruction of literary texts is correlated with students' attitudes.

## II. Background

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework of PBL

Barrows and Tamblyn (1980), who are thought to be pioneers in PBL, define it as "The learning that results from the process of working toward the understanding or resolution of a problem" (p.18). Simply put, PBL refers mainly to learning situations where real-world problems are used as starting points of classes and the learning that results from attempts to solve those problems. It is considered as a curricular, instruction-based and learner-centered teaching-learning approach (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980; Savery, 2015) where students are involved in an inquisitive process of gathering information previously identified as necessary to solve the problem that was used as the starting point of the lesson. Furthermore, a problem resolution also requires the use of knowledge based on both facts and practices, in addition to skills necessary in applying this knowledge. Considering it a

teaching–learning method based on constructivist assumptions, Savery and Duffy (1996) outlines the following principles upon which PBL is based:

- a- Learning objectives of lessons and activities should be clearly identified to learners.
- b- When it comes to directing their learning process, learners should be self-reliant.
- c- The learning environment should be challenging and motivating for learners, triggering learners' thinking activity through the inclusion of complex issues.
- d- Learner-learner discussions and meaning negotiations are the areas where learners construct new knowledge.
- e- Learner's self-monitoring has a vital role in the learning process since it is considered as an opportunity for learners to reflect on the weaknesses and strengths of their learning so as to improve their performances in the future.

## 2.2. Elements of PBL

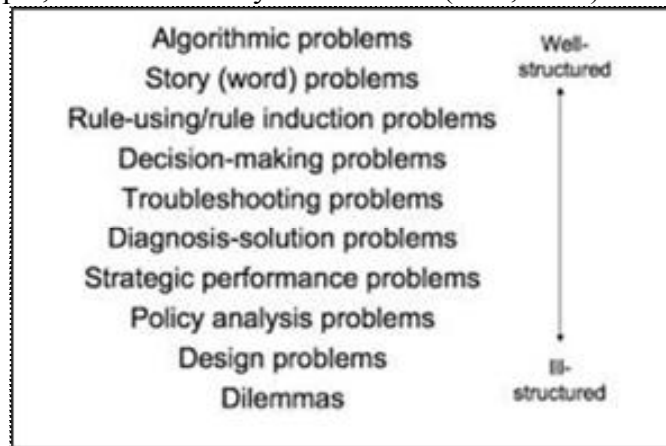
Multiple scholars (Savery & Duffy, 1996; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004) have identified various elements that are fundamental for practicing PBL, such as collaborative learning, self-directed learning, facilitation, self-reflection, and creation of problem scenarios. Firstly, ownership of the learning process is offered to learners whereby they rely on themselves to set learning objectives, identify, gather and analyze knowledge needed to solve the problem presented by the teacher. Hence, the teacher's role shifts inside PBL classrooms, pushing them to be facilitators, meaning that their interference in the learning process drastically diminishes (Savin-Baden, 2003). Namely, Barrows and Tamblyn (1980) assert that tutors in PBL environments are neither knowledge masters nor transmitter.

In addition, Lee and Tan (2003) and Savery and Duffy (1996) claim that learners' collaborative work to solve different problems is an element without which PBL cannot take place. Considering another element of PBL, self-reflection, according to Teoh and Ansarian (2018), is believed to be basic since it provides an opportunity for learners to evaluate their learning by identifying the areas where they demonstrate high performance as well as the areas where they performed poorly and the mistakes they committed during the learning process, all with aim of optimizing their future learning performance.

## 2.3. Characteristics and Types of Problem Scenarios

Jonassen (2001) defines a problem as an "unknown entity" that may vary in regards to its complexity. For instance, a social phenomenon may be more complex than a math problem, especially since this latter can be solved

by following logical procedures. Without a feeling of ‘the unknown’ or the urge to determine it when encountering a problem, then the situation is not considered as a problem. Another important characteristic of problem solving in PBL having diverse solutions (Ansarian & Teoh, 2018), unlike puzzles, for example, which have only one solution (Bird, 2014).



**Figure (1):**Typology of problem types

**Source:** (Jonassen, 2000) found in Jonassen and Hung (2008).

As figure 1 shows, problems vary in terms of structure, where well-structured means problems presented to learners with all their elements being explained to them. Additionally, well-structured problems necessitate a limited set of ‘rules’ and ‘principles’ to be solved (Jonassen, 2000). Ill-structured problems contain a number ‘unknowns’ to learners (Wood, 1983), can be solved in many ways, may have diverse solutions (Kitchener, 1983), and prompt learners to communicate, sharing their own perceptions about the problems (Jonassen, 2000). Moreover, in order for ill-structured problems to be solved, they require application of knowledge from multiple disciplines (Jonassen, 2000).

### III. Method

This study adopted a descriptive, correlational design. As a continuation of a previous study that was an experiment aimed at examining the effect of PBL-based instruction in the literary texts classroom, the researchers conducted the current study to gain insight into learners’ views about the implementation of PBL-based instruction.

#### 3.1. Sample

The sample for this study is purposive, comprised of 30 third year students (out of a population of 86) of EFL at the department of English at the University of Abbes Laghrour, Khenchela. The sample was chosen for a specific purpose: these students are the same as the ones in previous experiment, which was used as the basis for the current study. The majority of participants (23; 76.7%) are female, and only 7 (23.3%) are male. Participants' age ranged from 20 to 36 (M=23.23).

### 3.2. Data Gathering Tools

To gain an understanding of students' perceptions of level of application of PBL, the teacher/ researcher integrated PBL-based instruction into their literary texts classroom for one semester. During this semester, the target population had to study the literary eras of British literature; hence, the integration of PBL was carried out tackling those eras. Since the problem scenario is the basic activity of PBL, the learners were exposed to problem scenarios where they had to rely on their knowledge of British literature to solve them. For example, in one of the PBL sessions the students read *Ode on Melancholy* by John Keats. Then they were exposed to the following problem: *Using the given poem, why was John Keats, as one of the romantic poets, thought of as a rebellious author?* The students then had to solve this problem by doing various PBL activities, such as working collaboratively to gather and evaluate the information required to solve the problem, sharing knowledge among each other, and debating, all in attempt to gain knowledge.

The researchers then carried out the current investigation to gain examine how their attitudes towards PBL activities are correlated with their perceptions of the extent to which PBL activities were employed. To accomplish this aim, the researchers devised a questionnaire divided into two main sections. The first section was comprised of 33 items, and it aimed to measure students' perceptions of the extent to which they believed PBL was employed in the classroom. The second main section contained 27 items and measured students' attitudes towards PBL activities and various aspects of the PBL-based environment. All items in the first section were based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree); in the second section, 17 items were based on a five-point Likert scale (also from one to five), and the other 10 items were based on a three-point Likert scale (from one to three).

### 3.3. Procedures

Before administering the questionnaire, the researchers ran a pilot test by having several students respond to the questionnaire, providing feedback on its appropriateness and comprehensibility. According to Cohen et al.

(2005), to increase its overall validity, a questionnaire must be pilot-tested by administering it to a smaller group of respondents from similar population before administering it to a larger group. Those who piloted the questionnaire found some words and some formatting not fully comprehensible, so the researchers changed a number of words and expressions as well as formatting to ease comprehensibility and clarity. The final administration took place in class, but those who could not finish in time were asked to complete the questionnaires at home. After all respondents returned their questionnaires, the researchers checked for the items' internal consistency; which yielded a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .713$  for PBL application (the first section) and  $\alpha = .745$  for attitudes towards PBL activities (section 2), which suggests an average and acceptable level of reliability (Cortina, 1993).

#### IV. Results and Interpretations

The following section presents the results obtained from the questionnaire along with a discussion of the findings, which comprises references to previous studies available in the literature.

##### 4.1. Implementation of PBL

The third section of the questionnaire was devoted to checking the extent to which PBL activities were implemented in literary classes according to the third year students' perceptions. To this end, the researchers attempted to represent the essential elements of PBL— self-direction, collaborative learning, the use of problem scenarios, teacher's facilitation of the learning process, and self-reflection— by including 33 items in this section. Each item represents a PBL activity of which the degree of implementation is evaluated on a scale from 'Never' to 'Always', which were given 1 to 5 respectively. In interpreting responses, the researchers considered a response of 1 – 1.79 to be very negative, 1.8 – 2.59 to be negative, 2.6 – 3.39 to be neutral, 3.4 – 4.19 to be positive, and 4.2 – 5 to be very positive. For a number of statements that were reversed, the coding values were also reversed. For instance, in statement 19, "The teacher used to choose the course materials for you", instead of assigning a value of 4 to those who agreed, like in the regular statements, those who agreed were assigned a value of 2. Hence, in the final interpretation, a mean of 2.38 is interpreted negatively just like the rest of the statements, although when looking at the statement, a lower mean would mean a positive interpretation. All data was analyzed using SPSS 25 software.

The analysis of students' answers about the implementation of each element of PBL reveals varying perceptions (Refer to Table 1 for sample questions). The analysis of the first element, which is the use of problem scenarios in literary texts classes, represented in item number 1 and 16,

reveals a score of  $M= 3.03$  and  $M=2.86$ , respectively. These scores indicate that the students were mostly neutral; they thought that they only slightly approach various literary texts in light of PBL learning since the starting point of each session was usually problem scenarios.

Another element is students' self-directed learning. When considering scores of items number 5, 9, 12, 14, 27, and 28, which are believed to be related to self-directed learning, the following mean scores were found:  $M=3.46$ ,  $M=2.8$ ,  $M=3.8$ ,  $M=2.93$ ,  $M=2.96$ , and  $M=3.43$ , which are mainly neutral with two reports being positive. These results indicate that the ownership of the learning process is usually assigned to the students, with no reports diverting towards a lack of self-directed learning. A closer look at item five, for example, reveals students' responsibility in the process of solving the presented problems by themselves rather than depending on the teacher. Likewise, item 28, which refers to students' preparation of their own plans of solving the problems, indicates that students usually directed their own learning.

#### Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1. We used to start our lessons with problems based on literary texts.	3.0357	1.26146	Neutral
3. The teacher used to explain the given assignment.	4.3548	.98483	Very positive
4. Whenever there was a misunderstanding related to the assignment, the teacher clarifies.	4.4516	.85005	Very positive
14. I used to negotiate meanings of ideas with my classmates.	2.9333	1.22990	Neutral
20. The teacher used to monitor the learning groups.	3.7241	1.13063	Positive
25. The teacher used to clarify ambiguous points.	4.3226	1.19407	Very positive
26. The teacher used to let the students find their own solutions.	4.0323	.83602	Positive
1. We used to establish debates in class.	3.4667	1.27937	Positive
OVERALL	3.4767	.55461	Positive

**Table (1)** PBL Implementation in the Classroom



Additionally, item 10, which discusses who sets learning objectives, suggests that the students are responsible for setting their own learning objectives which is thought to be a critical element of self-directed learning ( $M=3.6$ ). Students' self-direction can also be perceived in their answers to item 19, which questions the degree to which the teacher chose course material for his students; results ( $M=2.37$ ) suggests that the teacher did usually interfere when it came to choosing course material. For this statement, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, the coding value was reversed so that a lower value would indicate a negative interpretation like in the rest of the statements.

Moreover, the teacher's role as a facilitator of the learning process was scrutinized when asking learners about their perceptions towards the teacher's role in literary texts classes. Items 3, 4, 8, 13, 15, 20, 24, 25, 26, and 27 are concerned with the role of the teacher as a facilitator. With means ranging from  $M= 2.96$  to  $M=4.45$  on these items, the teacher can be considered as a facilitator according to students' perception, which means that he adopted the role as recommended by PBL rather successfully. For instance, in items number 3, 4, and 25 the students report that the teacher usually clarifies the given assignments besides ambiguous points. In addition, according to results obtained for item 11, the teacher avoided imposing his own beliefs and views on his students ( $M= 3.13$ ). In line with this perception, the teacher used to negotiate meanings of various ideas with his students (item 13,  $M=3.29$ ).

Another key component of PBL is collaborative work; in this regard, the mean scores of items two and 22 ( $M=3.06$  and  $M=2.87$ , respectively) indicate that students learned in groups to find solutions to the problems presented during literary texts classes. The analysis of students' answers to item number 14, which involves meaning negotiation— another aspects related to collaborative work— reveals that they feel like they sometimes negotiate meanings of concepts and ideas during literary texts classes ( $M=2.93$ ). Moreover, the students reported that they often shared their solutions with their classmates (item 18,  $M= 3.1$ ).

The last element discussed in this section of the questionnaire is learners' reflection on their learning. When asked if they evaluate their learning process in item 17, students responded positively ( $M=3.53$ ), which means that they usually assessed their learning process by identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, students' openness is demonstrated in their answers to items 23 ( $M=3.77$ ) and 31 ( $M=3.74$ ), wherein they reported that they accepted their classmates' viewpoints and even learned from them. Additionally, in learning environments where PBL is a prevailing teaching

and learning method, the students were offered opportunities to practice English with group members and other classmates. This claim is based on students' responses to items 29 (M= 3.8) and 30 (M=4.16). Nevertheless, students were neutral when asked whether problems scenarios with which they dealt during literary texts classes were problems they may encountered in their daily lives (item 16, M=2.86).

All in all, the overall average score of all the statements (M=3.48) indicates that, according to students' perceptions, the features and elements of PBL were present in literary classes. This is a further indication that the teacher was relatively successful in implementing PBL-based instruction of literary texts.

Mostly, these outcomes are in congruence with numerous research studies. For instance, the findings established by Blumberg (2000), Khoiriyah, Roberts, Jorm, and Van der Vleuten (2015) and Markušić and Sabljčić (2019) highlight that students' self-reliance in regards to the learning process is increased in PBL environments. Similar to Barrows and Tamblyn (1980) and Savin-Baden (2003), who sustain the idea that the role of the tutor in PBL settings should be a facilitator, the students of this study viewed the teacher as a facilitator during literary texts classes.

#### **4.2. Attitudes towards PBL**

The second section, attitudes towards various PBL-based activities, is comprised of 27 statements about students' attitudes towards various activities and aspects of the PBL-based literary texts classroom. Table 2 presents a few examples of statements in the section and each statement's interpretation. Of the entire section, 12 statements received an average neutral response; 14 statements received an average positive response, and one statement received a very positive response. None of the statements received a negative or very negative average response. For instance, in statement 1, students reported that it was motivating to work with classmates collaboratively to finish assignments (M=3.600). Additionally, according to statement 10, students felt even more positive about their interaction with the teacher, indicating that it was effective in establishing effective learning of literary texts (M=4.214). The following section presents more descriptive statistics, particularly on the sum of items for each section, followed by inferential statistics that enable the researchers to answer the research questions.

## Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1- It is motivating to work collaboratively with classmates to finish an assignment	30	3.6000	1.40443	Positive
5- PBL provides me with opportunities to direct my own learning.	27	3.4444	1.12090	Positive
10- Interaction with the teacher established effective learning of literary texts.	28	4.2143	1.03126	Very Positive
11- Interaction with my classmates helped me in learning literary texts.	30	2.9677	1.25124	Neutral
16- PBL has helped me develop my social skills.	30	3.2667	1.17248	Neutral
17- The problems presented by the teacher motivated me to learn.	30	4.0968	1.10619	Positive

**Table (2):** PBL Implementation in the Classroom

These findings are similar to results found in various studies. For instance, PBL has been viewed as a motivating learning approach and stimulating in terms of group work (Azmani & Shin, 2012), which is considered by students to be preferable (De Wet & Walker, 2013). Also in line with this study, Dochy et al. (2005) report that students perceive the key aspects of PBL learning environments as valuable.

**4.3. Descriptive Statistics for Sums**

When running descriptive statistics for the sum of each section, the researchers used SPSS 25. The researchers counted the sum of scores of every item in each section, which yielded the total score for its corresponding section. For instance, for the first section, the extent to which learners thought PBL was implemented, each student's response to all items in the section was

added to yield a total score for that section. The total possible score for this section was 165 (33 items based on a 5-point scale); hence, the mean score is based on a total possible score of 165. The second section was based on a total score of 115 (17 items were based on a 5-point scale, and 10 items were based on a 3-point scale). Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the sum of each section.

#### Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error
Application of PBL Activities	Mean	115.0000	2.31040
	Std. Deviation	12.65456	
	Minimum	84.00	
	Maximum	140.00	
Attitudes	Mean	80.3667	1.67434
	Std. Deviation	9.17073	
	Minimum	60.00	
	Maximum	94.00	

**Table (3)** Descriptive Statistics for Sum of Sections 1 and 2

As the table above shows, total scores for perceptions towards the implementation of PBL activities in the literary texts classroom range from 84 to 140 ( $M=115$ ,  $SD= 12.655$ ), which is above the expected mid-point. A mean score of 115, therefore, indicates highly positive responses, which is in line with the initial analysis of each statement that indicates that more students perceive a high implementation rate of PBL-based activities. Scores for the second section, students' attitudes, range from 60 to 94 ( $M=80.367$ ,  $SD= 9.171$ ). These scores also indicate that students have an overall positive attitude towards PBL-based instruction and the classroom environment since a mean of 80.367 is above the expected average.

#### 4.4. Inferential Statistics

To test the relationship between students' perception of the extent to which PBL was applied in the classroom environment and their attitudes

towards its various activities, the researchers set out to use Pearson's correlation analysis. Being a parametric statistic, Pearson's analysis carries a significant assumption of normality. Therefore, prior to carrying out the analysis, the two main variables were tested for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality (Table 4). According to the test statistic, non-significant values for both the application of PBL ( $W(30) = .936, p = .070$ ) and attitudes towards PBL activities ( $W(30) = .955, p = .225$ ) indicate that the data can be used to run the parametric test statistic Pearson's correlation analysis.

	Statistics	df	Sig.
Application of PBL	.936	30	.070
Attitudes	.955	30	.225

Table (2) Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality

After establishing normality, the researchers ran Pearson's correlation analysis to test for any correlation between the two variables (Table 5). As results of the analysis indicate, a significant positive correlation exists between students' perceptions of the level of applicability of PBL and their attitudes towards various PBL-based activities conducted in the classroom ( $r = .474^{**}, n = 30, p = .008$ ). A correlation coefficient of 0.474 indicates a weak to moderated relationship between the two variables, albeit significant. Therefore, according to the analysis, the more positive students' perceptions are about how much PBL was actually implemented, the more positive their attitudes towards PBL activities are.

Correlations

		Application of PBL	Attitudes
Application of PBL	Pearson Correlation	1	.474**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.008
	N	30	30

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table (3)** Pearson's Correlation Analysis

To contextualize the results, examples of statements about the level of applicability include, “I used to negotiate meaning of ideas with my classmates”, and “We used to establish debates in class”. Examples of statements from the section on attitudes include “The problems stimulated the acquisition of new knowledge”, and “Interaction with my classmates helped me in learning literary texts.” Clearly, different students may have different perspectives on the extent to which PBL was applied to them. For instance, to the two sample statements on application above, some learners could have strongly disagreed because they may have just refused to interact with classmates while others may have strongly agreed for the opposite reason. Likewise, the same students who strongly disagreed in these two statements could have strongly disagreed in the second two sample statements; they could have not benefited from classroom discussion or debates; hence, the problem scenarios were ineffective in helping stimulate their acquisition of new knowledge. In the same sense, those who failed to interact with classmates and participate in PBL-based activities would have had difficulties in grasping certain information about the literary texts being dealt with.

Accordingly, these results are significant for a number of reasons. First, the fact that there is a positive correlation between the two variables indicates that the more PBL-based instruction is applied and internalized by learners, the more learners benefit from such instruction. Second, these results reveal that dissatisfaction with certain PBL-based activities or features does not necessarily mean that these activities are not satisfactory; it could simply mean that those who are not satisfied with the activities simply failed to

practice them. Perhaps they were absent, or they failed to cooperate or interact appropriately, therefore leading these learners to not fully internalize the PBL experience. Third, these results reveal that, despite the teacher's efforts, not everyone in the same classroom has the same experience. While some were extremely satisfied, others were dissatisfied, and while some felt they practiced PBL, others did not feel the same. These perspectives indicate that teachers considering PBL-based instruction should be cautious of this phenomenon and try to neutralize the classroom to the point where most of the learners are receiving the same experience.

#### 4.5. Discussion

According to the above results, the hypothesis of this paper is confirmed, meaning that the more PBL is implemented in the EFL literary texts class, the more positive attitudes students demonstrate. When students work collaboratively, sharing views and negotiating meanings, they become more motivated and acquire new knowledge. In line with these results, Roskams (1999) reports positive views students held towards the usefulness of peer interaction. The role of the facilitator, who establishes learner-teacher interaction, and self-directed learning, is found to prompt students' freedom and facilitate their learning. Similarly, Douglas and Morris (2014) found that students showed positive attitudes towards their activeness; additionally, learner-learner and teacher-learner interactions paved the way for successful learning. Also according to the current study, the use of challenging problem scenarios in literary texts classes makes the learning process motivating. This is in line with Fukuzawa, Boyd and Cahn (2017), who found that in the beginning of PBL classes, when students encounter problem scenarios, they become highly motivated. Revealing similar views, Azman and Shin (2012) report an increase in learners' motivation when managing the problem. In their attempts to solve problems, students find numerous opportunities to apply learned knowledge, highlighting that the more PBL is implemented, the more they apply their knowledge. Moreover, self-reflective practices are perceived as tools facilitating future learning processes. Hence, the more they are conducted, the more students spot their weaknesses and strengths in order to improve future performances. Roskams (1999) has also reported that students greatly valued the usefulness of peer feedback.

The researchers, based on the findings of the current study, recommend the use of PBL as an innovative and instructional teaching method in EFL literary texts classroom in order to promote team work, motivation, active learning and self-reflective practices among EFL learners.

#### V. Conclusion

The current study was conducted in an attempt to reveal the applicability of PBL in the EFL literary text classroom; however, the main aim was to examine the relationship between the extent to which PBL was implemented and learners' attitudes. Results from the data analysis have revealed that increasing implementation of PBL elements, such as collaborative work, self-directed learning, self-reflection, and motivation, is encountered by positivity in learners' attitudes towards those elements. The limitation of this study is the Covid-19 lockdown that interrupted and limited the number of literary texts sessions, being reduced to only 10 sessions. For future research, the researchers highlight the scant research investigating the role of PBL in different subjects in the EFL classroom, particularly in Algeria. Concerning future research on PBL in literary texts classrooms, the researchers believe that it is worth inquiring thoroughly into other elements such as mediated learning, collaborative learning, and others. Since PBL involves problem scenarios which tackle various multidisciplinary issues, its effectiveness in many courses such as culture, grammar, sociolinguistics can be investigated.

#### VI. Bibliography

1. Ansarian, L., Adlipour, A. A., Saber, M. A., & Shafiei, E. (2016). The Impact of Problem-Based Learning on Iranian EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7(3), 84-94. doi:10.7575/aiac.all.v.7n.3p.84
2. Ansarian, L., & Teoh, M. L. (2018). *Problem-based language learning and teaching: An innovative approach to learn a new language*. Springer.
3. Azman, N., & Shin, L. K. (2012). Problem-based Learning in English for a Second Language Classroom: Students' Perspectives. *International Journal of Learning*, 18(6), 109-126.
4. Barrows, H.S., & Tamblyn, R.M. (1980). *Problem-based learning: An approach to medical education*. New York: Springer.
5. Bashith, A., & Amin, S. (2017). The effect of problem based learning on EFL students' critical thinking skill and learning outcome. *Al-Ta lim Journal*, 24(2), 93-102. doi : 10.15548/jt.v24i2.271
6. Blumberg, P. (2000). Evaluating the evidence that problem-based learners are self-directed learners: A review of the literature. In D. H. Evensen & C. E. Hmelo (Eds.), *Problem-based learning: A research perspective on learning interactions* (p. 199-226). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
7. Bousbai, A. (2010). Incorporating *A Reading Strategy in Literature Intensive Course with A View to Increasing the Learners' comprehension*



- and Interpretation of Literary Material- The Case of Second Year Students at the English Department-Ouargla University* (Doctoral dissertation, Universite Mohamed Khider).
8. Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2005). *Research Methods in Education*. (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). Taylor & Francis e-Library.
  9. Cortina, J. M. (1993). What is coefficient alpha? An examination of theory and applications. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78(1), 98-104. doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.78.1.98
  10. De Wet, L., & Walker, S. (2013). Student perceptions of problem-based learning: A case study of undergraduate applied agrometeorology. ISRN Education, 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2013/982942>
  11. Dochy, F., Segers, M., Van Den Bossche, P., & Struyven, K. (2005). Students' perceptions of a problem-based learning environment. *Learning environments research*, 8(1), 41-66. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s10984-005-7948-x.pdf>
  12. Douglass, C., & Morris, S. R. (2014). Student perspectives on self-directed learning. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 13-25. Retrieved from <http://commons.lib.niu.edu/handle/10843/17486>
  13. Fehaima, A. (2018). An Integrative Approach to Teaching Literary Texts to EFL Students: The Case of Second-Year Learners at University of Tlemcen (Doctoral dissertation).
  14. Fukuzawa, S., Boyd, C., & Cahn, J. (2017). Student motivation in response to problem-based learning. *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching*, 10, 175-188. <https://doi.org/10.22329/celt.v10i0.4748>
  15. Işıklı, C., & Tarakçıoğlu, A.Ö. (2017). Investigating problems of English literature teaching to EFL high school students in Turkey with focus on language proficiency. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(2), 82-95. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jlls/issue/36120/405598>
  16. Jonassen, D. H. (2000). Toward a design theory of problem solving. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 48(4), 63-85. doi : <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02300500>
  17. Jonassen, D. H., & Hung, W. (2008). All problems are not equal: Implications for PBL. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 2(2).
  18. Kheladi, M. (2017). An exploration of the main difficulties and challenges, in teaching EFL literature: The case of teachers at the university of Tlemcen, Algeria. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 5(11), 55-66.

19. Khoiriyah, U., Roberts, C., Jorm, C., & Van der Vleuten, C. P. M. (2015). Enhancing students' learning in problem based learning: validation of a self-assessment scale for active learning and critical thinking. *BMC Medical Education*, 15(1), 140. doi.org/10.1186/s12909-015-0422-2
20. Lee, M.C. & Tan, O.S. (2004). Collaboration, Dialogue, and Critical Openness through Problem-based Learning Processes. In O.S. Tan. *Enhancing Thinking through Problem-based Learning Approaches : International Perspectives* (127-143). Singapore: Cengage Learning.
21. Markušić, J., & Sabljčić, J. (2019). Problem-Based Teaching of Literature. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 7(4), 20-29. doi:10.11114/jets.v7i4.4066
22. Mohammadi, F. S. (2017). The effect of authentic problem-based vocabulary tasks on vocabulary learning of EFL learners. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 5(3), 35-40. http://dx.doi.org/10.7575//aiac.ijels.v.5n.3p.35
23. Roskams, T. (1999). Chinese EFL students' attitudes to peer feedback and peer assessment in an extended pairwork setting. *RELC Journal*, 30(1), 79-123. https://doi.org/10.1177/003368829903000105
24. Savery, J. R. (2006). Overview of Problem-based Learning: Definitions and Distinctions. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 1(1). doi: https://doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1002
25. Savery, J. R., & Duffy, T. M. (1996). Problem based learning: An instructional model and its constructivist framework. In B. G. Wilson (Ed.), *Constructivist learning environments: Case Studies in Instructional Design*. Educational Technology Publications Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
26. Savin-Baden, M. (2003). *Facilitating problem-based learning*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
27. Savin-Baden, M., & Major, C. H. (2004). *Foundations of problem-based learning*. United Kingdom: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
28. Wood, P. K. (1983). Inquiring systems and problem structure: Implications for cognitive development. *Human Development*, 26(5), 249-265. https://doi.org/10.1159/000272887
29. Yilmaz, C. (2012). Introducing Literature to an EFL Classroom: Teacher's Instructional Methods and Students' Attitudes toward the Study of Literature. *English Language Teaching*, 5(1), 86-99. doi:10.5539/elt.v5n1p86