

Integrating the ELP biography and PBL: Outline of a pilot project

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After several years of experimentation with the ELP, results show that working with the Biography section can be challenging. Teachers and students need guidance. Among other areas, they need support with respect to goal-setting. First, students are not used to setting learning goals, which are usually set for them by teachers and the curriculum. Secondly the term 'goal-setting' is too general and means various things to different people. What type of goals should be set?

Learning to set goals increases personal involvement in learning and motivation and is at the core of self-regulation and autonomy. It is thus crucial to explore ways of guiding students. This pilot project examines the possible contribution of Problem-based learning (PBL) to this particular aspect of working with the ELP Biography.

PBL was created in 1986 by Howard Barrows as an alternative to lecture-based teaching for medical students. Although many other disciplines design their curriculum - entirely or in part - around PBL, it is still at an early stage in language education. In this paper, we first investigate the advantages and drawbacks of PBL as opposed to other approaches, we then review criteria to enable us select and design a suitable 'problem' and, finally, we describe a pilot project for 2nd year business students in tertiary education.