

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY IN SHORT MESSAGE THROUGH PJBL STRATEGY

(A Classroom Action Research at 8th Grade Students of SMPN 43 Surabaya)

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Abstract

Writing is one of skills which is difficult to master. In teaching writing, a teacher must be capable of employing strategies that engage students and motivate them in the learning process. One such strategy is Project Based Learning (PjBL), which aims to make the teaching of writing easier and more interesting. This study utilized a classroom action research design and involved 31 students from VIII F of SMPN 43 Surabaya. It was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of two meetings, and followed four steps: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. After each cycle, an evaluation test was administered to assess the students' improvement in writing short messages. The research utilized test data collection, interviews with the English teacher and students, and an observation sheet as research instruments. The findings demonstrated that the implementation of the Project Based Learning (PjBL) strategy effectively enhanced the students' ability to write short messages, as evidenced by an improvement in the average test scores. In the preliminary test, 7 students (22.58%) met the success criteria, while in the first cycle, 22 students (70.96%) achieved success. By the second cycle, 28 students (90.32%) met the success criteria. Factors such as the teacher's explanation in the classroom and the students' attention, participation, and interest played a significant role in improving the students' writing ability. Consequently, the Project Based Learning strategy is recommended as an alternative approach for English teachers to enhance students' writing skills. Furthermore, future researchers can use this study as a reference for conducting further research on improving writing abilities.

Keywords: *Writing, Short Message text, Project Based Learning Strategy.*

INTRODUCTION

In the process of learning English, there are four essential skills that students should aim to master: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is one of these four skills, and it holds great importance in English language learning. According to Harmer (2004:3), being able to write is a vital skill for speakers of a foreign language as much as for everyone using their own first language. Writing is called a productive skill. It means that writing is a process in which the writer produces something that contains about writer's thoughts, feelings, or ideas. Writing is a significant part of the research and is included in most curricula for undergraduate studies. Aunnurahman, Fuad, and Emilia (2017) claimed that writing at the tertiary level requires knowledge of the writing genres with their unique linguistic characteristics and requires strong critical thinking. In addition, to write long and difficult texts is required to make the statements and do the projects or write papers from all disciplines (Jurecic, 2006).

However, writing skills get very low attention in teaching and learning process in Indonesia. Teachers of writing skills, in teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language at the university level in Indonesia have not been given proper attention. In addition, Nugraha (2015) states that writing is not easy to acquire and provide opportunities to practice to enhance the ability to write well, especially, for tertiary English level as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Writing is a challenging job for them and it makes it more difficult and complicated to learn grammar and other language structures. In addition, students must be able to cohesively and coherently organize and incorporate knowledge within paragraphs and texts. Writing involves some language components (spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation). Writing plays a significant role in enhancing an individual's ability to think with conciseness and clarity. The process of writing involves transforming one's thoughts or ideas into a coherent text through various activities, starting from drafting and continuing with revising and editing.

Writing is distinct from reading or listening as it involves the process of transforming organized ideas in one's mind into written form. Unlike passive information reception, writing requires the skill of effectively expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings through written communication. This idea is in line with Richard's and Renandya's statement (2002:303) who said that writing is the most difficult skill for foreign language learners. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. According to those explanation, the researcher deduces that writing is considered a challenging and intricate language skill. This is due to its requirement for thorough comprehension of the material and utilization of various supporting sources to enhance the chosen topic.

Writing plays a significant role in fostering critical and creative thinking skills among students. It enables them to effectively convey their ideas and opinions through written expression. According to the 2013 curriculum for English in Junior High School at the 8th grade level, students are required to demonstrate their ability to articulate their thoughts and emotions both orally and in writing. Moreover, they are encouraged to apply their analytical and imaginative capabilities in the process of learning English as a foreign language. To produce accurate and meaningful writing, students must have a solid grasp of grammatical rules encompassing structure, grammar, and punctuation. Additionally, they should have a clear understanding of the specific text genre they intend to write. The curriculum emphasizes the development of students' competence in understanding and producing various functional texts, including short message texts.

The overarching objective is for 8th-grade students to be proficient in expressing the intended meaning of functional texts and short essays, particularly in the form of short message texts that are applicable to daily life contexts. In generally a short message is a concise and succinct communication that is composed briefly and transmitted to convey information or make a request to an individual. It is similar according to Husein Rahmad (2017), short message text is a message that contains information or commands in the form of short written text given to someone by texting or writing it on note. Short message texts are not only a text type taught in schools but also a common form of communication in daily life. Students encounter short message texts when providing information or giving

commands to their friends and family members. These instances serve as examples of short message texts that students come across in their everyday experiences.

The significance of teaching students to write short message texts calls for the implementation of suitable strategies by teachers. Utilizing effective strategies not only impacts students' writing competence but also helps alleviate their anxiety and enhance their writing achievement. Furthermore, employing appropriate strategies promotes students' engagement and attentiveness during the teaching and learning process.

In teaching writing there are various strategies that can be employed to enhance students' skills. One such strategy is project-based learning (PjBL). Project-based learning involves engaging students in hands-on projects or activities that prompt them to investigate and explore a specific topic or problem. It provides students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge, collaborate with their peers, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. According to Bell (2010), Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a student-driven, teacher-facilitated approach to learning. Project-based learning (PjBL) is a student-centered pedagogy that involves an interactive classroom approach, where students delve into real-world challenges and problems to acquire a deeper understanding.

In PjBL, students are actively engaged in exploring and investigating a question or problem under the guidance and supervision of the teacher. This instructional method focuses on teaching curriculum concepts through the completion of a project, which is guided by an inquiry question that directs the study and enables students to apply their acquired knowledge. According to Putra (2014), PjBL implementation increases students' writing abilities, particularly in terms of primary concept, topic, details, parts of essay, and word choice. Meanwhile, Kavlu (2015) claims that PjBL is successful in increasing students' reading comprehension. She claims that PBL provides language learners with possibilities to have understandable input and to be able to provide comprehensible material. Furthermore, learners can use PjBL projects to improve their analytical abilities, time management, and sense of responsibility. She also discovered a link between the use of PjBL and the level of reading comprehension skills of the students.

The project-based learning is a versatile strategy that allows for the development of multiple skills in an integrated, purposeful, and continuing activity (Poonpon, 2018). By implementing project based learning could increase the students' language skills. This project requires the steps of the process, important consideration and tasks to be completed by collaboration or a team. It is proven by Shiraz and Larsari (2014) that team projects are the ideal classroom devices for practicing socio-affective strategies because they provide problems to solve, require a lot of teamwork, activate creative thinking skills, and demand the presentation of a product in English. The team projects encourage students to reflect, plan, and deliver items in front of the class in small groups. The following are some steps of PjBL processes as follows (Ell toolbox, 2007): Step 1: Identifying project-related critical skill The first stage in creating a project is determining which skills will be covered. The purpose is to educate both basic course content and workplace skills such as cooperation, professional presentation, and so on. Several of these abilities are also listed in the learning objectives. Step 2: Formulating a driving question Another crucial part of the project is

coming up with a unique inspiring question. When the task is authentic, students are more engaged since they are not doing it because it is a fun class assignment. Step 3: Describing the project. The entering event serves as an introduction to the project and serves to motivate students to work in accordance with the specifications of the final projects or goods. Step 4 : Students-Centered Learning (Know and Need to Know List). The next stage in developing a student-centered learning environment is crucial. Students will build a "know and need to know" list based on the topic – specific wording in the admittance letter, which will guide future instruction in the course. Step 5: Implementing project Two basic parts of the PBL pedagogy must be used during the project's implementation. Students who have a voice and a choice are more likely to make their own decisions and learn from their failures. There should also be time set aside for revision and reflection so that students can consider how to enhance their laboratory work and final result. Step 6: Making a public presentation. At the end of the course, students show their output to the audience in the form of a poster or a piece of paper.

This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 43 Surabaya to address the challenges faced by eighth-grade students in writing. These challenges include difficulties in sentence construction, expressing ideas, and lack of practice in writing both in the classroom and in their social lives. The researcher aims to address these issues by implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and expects that students will enhance their writing skills and experience enjoyment in the learning process.

In this study, several previous studies have been referenced. The first study, conducted by Bayu Pratomo, focused on utilizing project-based learning to enhance students' writing skills in recount text at Class VII of SMP Negeri 7 Magelang during the academic year of 2013/2014. The second study, conducted by Marcela Diaz Ramirez, explored the impact of project work and the writing process method on writing production.

The researcher posited that by implementing Project-based Learning, there exists the potential to enhance students' writing skills. This approach is believed to be motivating, empowering, and challenging for the students, as it offers a student-centered, cooperative, interdisciplinary, and integrated teaching-learning process that contextualizes their real-life experiences.

Rather than solely learning writing, engaging in writing through project completion can be more motivating for learners. This approach allows them to construct language meanings and structures through a series of activities that lead to the successful completion of the project. Additionally, group work within the project facilitates idea sharing and peer correction among students.

Based on the provided descriptions, the researcher utilized the Project Based Learning (PjBL) strategy to investigate its effectiveness in addressing students' difficulties in writing short message text, particularly among the students of grade VIII-F at SMPN 43 Surabaya.

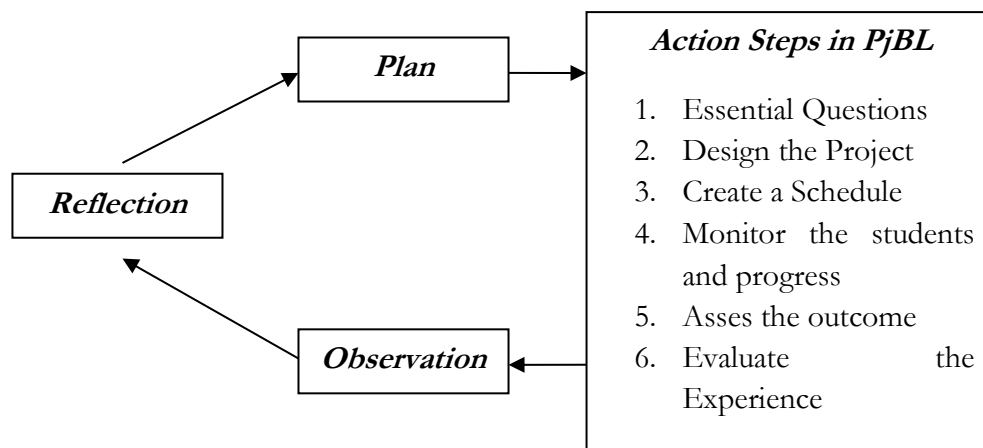
RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study was classroom action research (CAR). Kemmis (2010) stated action research is a form of collective self-reflection research conducted by participants – participants in social situations to improve educational practices and justice reasoning and

their social practices as well as their understanding of their practices and against situations where such practices are performed. According to Parsons and Brown (2002), Action research is a form of investigation designed for use by teachers to attempt to solve problems and improve professional practices in their own classrooms. It involved systematic observations and data collection of more effective classroom strategies. Other definition was stated by Anne Burns (2010: 2), action research is part of a board movement that has been going on in education generally for some time. It is related to the ideas of reflective practice and the teacher as researcher. Action research involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching context.

In this study, the methodology employed was classroom action research (CAR), which did not involve the use of population and sample. Instead, the focus of the research was on the subject itself. The subject of the study consisted of students from grade VIII F at SMPN 43 Surabaya, with a total of 31 students in the classroom, comprising 15 male and 16 female students. The researcher received assistance from ES, who served as a collaborator for the study. ES was an English teacher at SMPN 43 Surabaya.

The following in the Classroom Action Research procedure used which were adapted from Kemmis and Taggart (2000:278) planning, implementation, observation and reflection. The data can be found by observation sheet, written test, and interview guidelines. The researcher collected the students' writing test result after the teaching learning process on each cycle. It was done to know the students' ability through the project based learning as a teaching aid in writing short message text and also to know whether the objective of the learning achieve or not. According to Lewin (2010), there are four steps, they are consisted of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. In the fourth step, a schematic that can be described as follows:



After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the data by evaluating and comparing the result from each cycle to know whether using of Project Based Learning in writing short message text improved the students' ability or not.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the implementation of Project Based Learning (PjBL) strategy in improving students' ability in writing short message text could reach the criteria of success. There was an improvement of students' writing ability before implemented Project Based Learning (PjBL) in writing short message text and after implemented the Project Based Learning (PjBL) of short message text. It was clear that there was improvement of the students' ability from the preliminary, cycle 1 and the cycle 2. On preliminary study, there were 7 students passed the minimal standard score. It meant that 77.42% from 31 students had low ability on writing.

Then on cycle 1, there were 22 students were successful on writing test, 70.96% of all students could pass the writing test and 29.04% students were failed. From the result of cycle 1 it has not reached the criteria of success that 75% should passed the test. So, the researcher conducted the next cycle. On the cycle 2, there were 28 students could pass the standard score. It can concluded that 90.32% of all students passed the test and 9.68% students was failed. It was achieved the indicator of success.

Based on the theory Bell (2010) who stated that project-based learning involves engaging students in hands-on projects or activities that prompt them to investigate and explore a specific topic or problem. It provides students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge, collaborate with their groups, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In addition, Fried-Booth (2002), stated the definition of project-based learning as student-centered and driven by the need to create an end- product. PjBL is a means to create an end-product in real-world environment with confidence and independence.

Moreover, project-based learning has several benefits that can improve language skills. As students engage in meaningful communication to complete authentic activities, they have chance to use language in relative natural context and participate in meaningful activities which require authentic language. Based on Solomon (2003), he stated that project-based is a process of learning that students are responsible for their own education. Students work collaboratively to solve problems that are authentic, curriculum-based, and often interdisciplinary. PjBL strategy can be used by the teacher as the appropriate strategy for improving student's English skills. One of them is writing skill. the finding of this study showed that the PjBL Strategy could improve the students' ability in writing short message text.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that there was a significant difference observed when the PjBL strategy was implemented for teaching short message text. This indicates that utilizing the PjBL Strategy as a means to assist students in generating ideas effectively improved their writing achievement. The implementation of the PjBL strategy enhanced the students' proficiency in writing short message text, resulting in improved scores for their short message writing. Students actively engaged in group discussions to brainstorm ideas and clarify their understanding among their peers. Furthermore, most students employed correct sentence structures commonly used in short message text. The students displayed increased enthusiasm and interest in writing short message text. Moreover, the improvement in students' writing abilities was influenced by

two factors: the teacher's role, specifically their explanations in the classroom, and the students' factors, including their attention, participation, and interest.

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