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IMPROVING STUDENT'S WRITING SKILLS ON DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING: A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif siswa melalui penerapan Project-Based Learning (PBL). Penelitian ini menggunakan desain Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) dengan model siklus yang meliputi tahap perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi, yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus. Subjek penelitian adalah 32 siswa kelas VII SMP Negeri 2 Banguntapan Bantul. Data dikumpulkan melalui tugas dan tes menulis, lembar observasi, catatan lapangan, serta wawancara semi-terstruktur. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan rubrik penilaian menulis yang diadaptasi dari Brown (2010) yang mencakup aspek isi, organisasi, kosakata, penggunaan bahasa, dan mekanik, sedangkan data kualitatif dianalisis secara deskriptif untuk memperkuat temuan kuantitatif.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada kemampuan menulis siswa setelah penerapan PBL. Hasil pre-test menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan menulis siswa masih rendah dengan nilai rata-rata 58,88 dan sebagian besar siswa belum mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM). Setelah tindakan diberikan, nilai rata-rata post-test meningkat menjadi 80,91 dengan 80% siswa mencapai KKM. Peningkatan terjadi pada seluruh aspek penilaian menulis, terutama pada penggunaan tata bahasa, pengembangan isi, dan organisasi teks. Temuan kualitatif juga menunjukkan bahwa PBL mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan, kerja sama, dan motivasi siswa dalam proses pembelajaran menulis.

Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa Project-Based Learning efektif dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis teks deskriptif siswa serta menciptakan pembelajaran yang lebih aktif dan bermakna. Oleh karena itu, PBL direkomendasikan sebagai salah satu pendekatan pembelajaran dalam pengajaran menulis di tingkat sekolah menengah pertama.

Kata Kunci

***Project-Based Learning*; Keterampilan Menulis; Teks Deskriptif; Penelitian Tindakan Kelas; Siswa SMP**

Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in improving students' writing skills on descriptive texts. The research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) with a cyclical model consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection, conducted in two cycles. The participants were 32 seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Banguntapan Bantul. Data were collected through writing tasks and tests, observation checklists, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using a writing rubric adapted from Brown (2010), encompassing content,

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organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, while qualitative data were analyzed descriptively to support the numerical findings.
The results demonstrated a significant improvement in students' writing performance following the implementation of PBL. The pre-test revealed a low level of writing achievement, with a mean score of 58.88 and the majority of students failing to meet the minimum mastery criterion. After the intervention, the post-test mean score increased to 80.91, with 80% of students achieving the required mastery level. Improvements were observed across all writing components, particularly in grammar, content development, and text organization. Qualitative findings indicated that PBL fostered greater student engagement, collaboration, and motivation during the writing process.
In conclusion, Project-Based Learning proved to be an effective instructional approach for enhancing students' writing skills in descriptive texts and promoting an active learning environment. The findings suggest that PBL can be considered a viable pedagogical strategy for teaching writing at the junior high school level.

Keyword
Project-Based Learning; Writing Skills; Descriptive Text; Classroom Action Research; Junior High School Students

Introduction

The ability to write is one of the fundamental language skills, and it is of utmost significance in both learning and teaching. The act of writing requires the use of certain linguistic components, including punctuation, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling among others. In order to construct a sentence that is of high quality, it is necessary for an individual to possess knowledge of the rules of English grammar and pronouns, in addition to commas and other punctuation marks (Braine, 1996: 60). In addition, writing is a productive skill that plays a vital part in communication because oral communication cannot transmit all of the facts and sentiments that are involved in the communication process. Teaching pupils how to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and requirements through written communication is consequently necessary because of the significance of this skill.

In addition to being taught from any sentence or expression, writing skills can also be learned from a wide variety of reading materials. There are only five fundamental texts that have been required for students in junior high school. There are several types of texts, including descriptive, recount, narrative, process, and report. A descriptive book is considered to be one of the fundamental texts because it is more similar to the students' everyday life. Text is considered descriptive when it describes the characteristics of a person or thing. The objective is to provide a description of a certain person, place, or item and to shed light on it. There is no influence of the author's own viewpoint on the description of the thing because it is written in a style that is objective. They must first engage in a mental activity in order to be able to determine what it is that they have picked up through their sensory system. First, they recognise a specific piece of imagery or a genuine thing that is situated in a particular location. They then proceed to, via the use of words, explain the item that they have in mind. D'Angelo (1980) defines creating a descriptive text as "a technique of envisioning images vocally in speech or writing and of arranging those images in some kind of logical or associative structure." In a nutshell, this delineates the process of writing a descriptive text. While this is going on, Corbett (1983) asserts that descriptive writing is an example of expository writing.

Additionally, when the researcher reflected on her experience teaching in class 7 of Smp N 2 Banguntapan Bantul, she frequently discovered a gap in comprehension that existed

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between the teacher and the student. According to the findings of the researcher, the kids' writing abilities were quite lacking. When it came to writing descriptive texts, the pupils frequently struggled with the task. It is the responsibility of teachers at all levels of education to ensure that their students are able to adequately express themselves in writing. Writing teaching, on the other hand, is not without its challenges, since both students and teachers have a tendency to consider writing to be more challenging than listening, reading, and speaking. This challenge arises from the fact that in order for students to become proficient writers, teachers not only need to place a priority on student performance in writing, but they also need to have an understanding of what students require and what they must expect in order to achieve this objective. In addition, teachers have the ability to demonstrate to their students that writing is not only a joyful activity but also a valuable means of conveying their ideas and thoughts. It is possible for teachers to inspire and motivate students to enhance their writing abilities by demonstrating the worth of writing to the pupils.

Due to the fact that this is a subject that the students have already been exposed to during their junior high school years at SMP Negeri 16 Banguntapan Bantul, descriptive text was used for conducting this research. Because of this, the descriptive text is an excellent instrument for teaching kids how to describe these areas, while simultaneously enhancing their writing skills and providing them with the opportunity to engage in promoting or describing their preferred items. Producing relevant writing exercises for kids can be accomplished by providing them with real-world topics to write about that are connected to the activities they do daily. Providing the students with the assignment to produce pieces of writing on genuine things, such as the doll or their other favourite students, will provide them with ideas and guide them to write about something that they already have a baseline understanding of. Despite the fact that it is quite challenging for many students, they participate in writing activities and are also motivated to do so because they are getting involved in terms of sharing ideas and experiences related to what they are producing, and they have an understanding of what they are doing (Eodice, Geller, & Lerner, 2017).

Based on the preliminary study that the writer has conducted, the following are the challenges that the students encountered when writing descriptive text: the first challenge was that they continued to struggle with finding ideas when they wrote something since they did not fully comprehend the task at hand. During that time, they had a restricted vocabulary. Following that, the next scenario was that they were extremely reliant on their instructor. In order to write, they did not have any creatives. It was a spoilt affair. They find the final activity, writing, to be tedious. When it comes to the difficulty that originates from the teacher, the issue is that the method that the teacher employed in the process of teaching descriptive text did not inspire the students to be active and creative learners. Because they do not have sufficient competence in arranging good sentences, they do not have adequate ideas and knowledge to be written into a passage, and they do not have an interest in learning English, students have difficulty producing descriptive writing passages, according to the findings of research conducted by Ismayanti and Kholiq (2020). This condition is supported by the findings of the research that they conducted. In light of this, researchers employ problem-based learning in order to find solutions to these challenging issues.

The concept of problem-based learning refers to the process of utilising one's own intelligence within the context of a community or environment in order to find solutions to problems that are meaningful, relevant, and contextual. Learning through problem-based learning is the most significant innovation in education, according to Boud and Feletti (1997), who argued that educational innovation. According to Margetson (1994), Problem-Based Learning (PBL) curriculum helps to promote the development of study abilities by encouraging open-mindedness, reflection, criticism, and active study. The problem-based

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learning (PBL) curriculum is superior to other instructional methods in terms of its ability to facilitate students' problem-solving, communication, cooperation, and interpersonal skills.

The utilization of problem-based learning in descriptive text is the focus of this research. Students have the potential to develop their critical thinking, organizational skills, capacity to create an argument, and revision abilities through the process of writing if they use a problem-based learning technique within their educational experience. By encouraging students to take an active role in the teaching and learning process, we may make it simpler for them to comprehend and write material in the context of discussion texts.

Method

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) as its research design. According to Yasin (2011), CAR is research conducted by a teacher in the classroom to improve the teaching and learning process by solving identified problems through innovative strategies or techniques. It aims to enhance the quality of learning through carefully planned and purposeful actions (Smith as cited in Srikandewie & A. E., 2021). The participants of this research were 32 seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 2 Banguntapan Bantul, consisting of 16 male and 16 female students. The research was conducted in two cycles following the CAR model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (as cited in Khan, Zaman, & Ghaffar, 2020), which includes four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were obtained from students' writing tasks and tests administered at the end of each cycle to measure their achievement in writing descriptive texts. The students' writing was assessed using Brown's (2010) writing rubric, covering five components: Organization (O), Content (C), Grammar (G), Mechanics (M), and Vocabulary (V), with the total score calculated using the formula TS = O + C + G + M + V, and the final result determined by the average score. Meanwhile, qualitative data were gathered through observation checklists, field notes completed by a collaborator during the teaching and learning process, and interviews conducted with students and the teacher to support and enrich the findings from the classroom observations.

Findings

During the teaching and learning process, the researcher analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data to determine whether Project-Based Learning (PBL) could improve students' writing skills on descriptive texts at SMPN 2 Banguntapan Bantul. The findings are presented based on the pre-test, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2 results.

1. Pre-Test Result

Table 1. The Student's Average Score for Pre-Test

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Content	32	17.53	3.341	0.591
Organization	32	12.97	3.605	0.637
Vocabulary	32	13.06	3.592	0.635
Language	32	13.00	4.725	0.835
Mechanic	32	2.94	0.878	0.155
Total	32	58.88	14.032	2.480

The students' average score in the pre-test was 58.88, which was below the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 72. Only 6 students (23.08%) achieved the complete

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criteria, while 22 students (76.92%) did not achieve it. This result indicated that most students had difficulties in writing descriptive texts, particularly in grammar.

2. Treatment

a. Cycle 1

Based on the pre-cycle data, the researcher found that students' main problem was grammar. Therefore, in Cycle 1, the researcher and the teacher focused on improving students' grammar in writing descriptive texts.

b. Group Task

Table 2. The Student's Average Score for Group Task in Cycle 1

Meeting	*Average Score*	*Theme*
1st	64.4	Lost Pen
2nd	68.6	Lost Bag

From the table above, there was improvement in students' writing skills from the first to the second meeting. However, the scores were still below the KKM.

c. Cycle 2 (Post-Test Result)

In Cycle 2, the researcher analyzed the students' improvement based on the writing task and the post-test administered at the end of the cycle.

Table 3. The Student's Average Score for Group Task in Cycle 2

One-Sample Statistics

	N	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Std. Error Mean*
Content	32	20.19	3.440	0.608
Organization	32	15.53	3.162	0.559
Vocabulary	32	15.94	3.192	0.564
Language	32	17.69	4.314	0.763
Mechanic	32	3.66	0.902	0.159
Average	32	80.91	10.726	1.896

The students' average score increased to **80.91**. There were **24 students (80%)** who achieved the complete criteria, while **6 students (20%)** did not. This means that 24 students passed the KKM (72). It shows significant improvement after implementing the PBL approach.

Table 4. The Student's Average Score Report for All Tests in Cycle 2

	Content	*Organization*	*Vocabulary*	*Language*	*Mechanic*	*Average*
Mean	20.19	15.53	15.94	17.69	3.66	80.91
N	32	32	32	32	32	32
Std. Deviation	3.440	3.162	3.192	4.314	0.902	10.726

These findings show that there was a significant improvement in students' writing skills from the pre-test to Cycle 2.

Discusssion

The findings indicate that Project-Based Learning (PBL) effectively improved students' writing skills in descriptive texts. In the pre-test, most students failed to achieve the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM), especially due to weaknesses in grammar. Therefore, in

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Cycle 1, the teaching focused on improving grammatical accuracy. Although there was improvement in Cycle 1, the results were still below the expected standard.
In Cycle 2, after implementing PBL more intensively, the students showed significant progress. The improvement was evident not only in grammar but also in content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics. The collaborative and project-based activities encouraged students to be more active, creative, and confident in writing. Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of Project-Based Learning significantly improved students' writing skills in descriptive texts at SMPN 2 Banguntapan Bantul.

Conslusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) effectively improved students' writing skills in descriptive texts. The quantitative results showed a significant increase in students' writing achievement, as indicated by the improvement of the mean score from 58.88 in the pre-test to 80.91 in the post-test, and the percentage of students who achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) increased from 23.08% in the pre-cycle to 80% in the post-cycle. The improvement was evident across all components of writing, including content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, with notable progress in grammar and content development, which were initially identified as the students' main difficulties. Moreover, qualitative data obtained from observations, field notes, and interviews revealed that Project-Based Learning enhanced students' engagement, collaboration, motivation, and confidence during the writing process.

The cyclical process of Classroom Action Research enabled the researcher to identify students' difficulties and implement targeted instructional improvements in each cycle. Therefore, Project-Based Learning is recommended as an effective and student-centered instructional strategy for teaching descriptive writing, and English teachers are encouraged to apply it in classroom practice, while future researchers are suggested to explore its implementation in different text types, language skills, and educational contexts with larger samples, and schools are advised to support the use of such innovative approaches to improve the quality of English language instruction.

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