The Implementation of Problem Based Learning Approach to Improve Students' Writing Skills

Adalciza Agusta Ximenes; Margana; Bristshy Rosanandya Huka

Faculty of Language, Arts and Culture, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

Abstract

The aims of this research are to find out how far the effectiveness of problem-based learning (PBL) in enhancing students' writing and identifying the key elements contributing to students' improvement in English learning. This study requires qualitative and quantitative method. The subjects were 30 students from SMPN 2 BANTUL in grade VII and this study was conducted in two cycles. The instruments of this study were tasks, tests and field notes in collecting data. Then, the results indicated that the implementation of PBL positively impacted students' writing abilities. The PBL approach incorporated real-life problems to inspire writing, group discussions, research and inquiry facilitated by worksheets, drafting, creating a descriptive text report, group presentations, and collaborative critique. Assessment through tests demonstrated a significant increase in average scores, rising from 49.38 in pre-test and then in post-test Cycle 1 was 58.88. After that, the post-test in the last cycle was 80.94 after. In summary, the research concluded that PBL was a beneficial strategy for enhancing descriptive text for writing skills among seventh-grade students at SMPN 2 Bantul.

Keywords: *Problem-Based Learning; Writing Skills; Descriptive Text*

Introduction

Over the past decade, the implementation of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in educational settings has undergone notable transformations, driven by advancements in technology, pedagogical research, and an increasing recognition of the importance of cultivating critical thinking and practical skills in learners. This student-centered approach has gained momentum across various disciplines and educational levels, reshaping traditional teaching methodologies. In recent years, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as a dynamic and progressive pedagogical approach, transforming the landscape of education by placing students at the center of their learning journey. The last decade has witnessed a significant evolution in the implementation of PBL, marked by innovative strategies, technological integration, and a growing emphasis on fostering skills essential for the 21st-century workforce. This is also regarding with all skills in English.

Writing skills are not only taught from any sentence or expression, but also from a vast array of reading materials. For junior high school pupils, there are just five basic texts that they must read. Texts come in a variety of forms, such as process, report, narrative, recount, and descriptive. Because a descriptive book is more like the students' real lives, it is regarded as one of the foundational books. When a text explains the qualities of an object or person, it is deemed descriptive. Giving a description and shedding light on a particular person, location, or object is the aim. Due to the objective style of writing, the author's personal opinion has no bearing on the description of the item. To ascertain what they have absorbed through their sensory system, individuals must first participate in a mental activity. Initially, they identify a certain image or real object that is located in a given area. They then go on to describe the object they have in mind using words. "A technique of envisioning images verbally in speech or writing and of arranging those images in some form of logical or associative structure" is how D'Angelo (1980) defines composing a descriptive text. This summarizes the steps involved in creating a descriptive text. In the midst of all of this, Corbett (1983) claims that expository writing includes descriptive writing.

Through the writing process. We may make it easier for students to understand and write content in the context of discussion texts if we encourage them to participate actively in the teaching and learning process.

Related Literature

The researcher suggests using the PBL model as a solution based on the example. PBL was selected because, according to Jumariati and Irawati (2017), a classroom environment that fosters creativity and activity is essential to making students interested and engaged writers. Because they want to write, they must write. It is important to investigate activities with the children that relate to their everyday lives. They are proficient writers who can also use their writing skills in everyday situations. Naturally, this may be learned from the formulation of the PBL problem, which draws attention to the poorly organized or open-ended problem that is developed from a real-life scenario. It may encourage pupils to write down their thoughts (Amalia & Rusfandi, 2020). Furthermore, since they understand why they are doing the activity, students who participate in mini-research activities come to understand the value of the task and the significance of the outcome (Yew & Goh, 2016).

Students can develop as creative writers by using PBL when learning how to compose descriptive texts. According to Othman and Ahmad (2013), PBL is an active learning approach because it involves students in the problem-solving process by letting them seek for and investigate relevant material. This encourages students to become actively involved in the learning process. PBL is therefore a student-centered learning method. It reduces the amount of time spent lecturing because the teacher deliberately crafted the challenge as a starting point for the students' learning process. According to Elizabeth and Zulida (2012), the problem that is presented to the students should be written in an appealing way so that it can be utilized as a catalyst to teach them, spark debate, and compel them to ask questions. Giving students a scenario or case study to work with at the start of their writing class will help them learn how to solve the given case by forcing them to act and write the discussion's outcome based on their critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, educating students to write descriptively entails helping them become proficient detail-oriented writers (Gerot & Wignel in Mardiyah, Saun, &

Refnaldi, 2013, p. 281). Wardani, Basri, and Waris (2014), who assert that in descriptive writing, the writer conveys to the reader the visuals and feelings experienced by him or her, provide support for this point of view. By vividly imagining the subject of the description, the writer attempts to communicate what they see and feel. As a result, teachers ought to prepare their pupils to describe things in writing to readers in a way that makes the subject seem real to them.

Guillaume (2007, p. 127) outlines the following steps for implementing problem-based learning in the teaching of writing descriptive texts: first, students identify the problem; next, they formulate a plan through problem-solving; the use of the Know Need and Do chart is recommended; next, students gather information and generate potential solutions; they then debate and determine which will be the best solution; finally, students present their findings and the results are evaluated. One type of student worksheet that helps students finish all the PBL activity stages is the Know Need and Do Chart. The worksheet includes components that help students observe, gather, and process information in order to complete the problem-solving activity (Trianto as quoted in Rahayu, Verawati, & Islamiah, 2019). Additionally, using a worksheet like this is a fun way to help students' tasks become clearer and more effective. It supports students' exploration, research, and processing of the data as they apply what they learn to real-world situations. Additionally, it is quite helpful to reduce the amount of time that PBL implementation takes.

Amalia & Rusfandy's (2020) earlier research on the application of PBL demonstrated how well it works to improve students' descriptive text writing for vocational school. Because the strategy helped students strengthen their critical thinking skills and produce and develop ideas into well-written passages, the results demonstrated a considerable boost in the students' writing skills.

Additionally, as a result of the previous discussion of the writing problem in writing descriptive text, the researcher became interested in determining the degree to which PBL can enhance students' writing abilities in descriptive text at SMP Negeri 2 Banguntapan Bantul's seventh grade as well as the primary factors that affect changes. Furthermore, upon reflection of her experiences teaching at Smp N 2 Banguntapan Bantul's class 7, the researcher found that there was sometimes a comprehension gap between the teacher and the students. The researcher's conclusions showed that the children's writing skills were poor. The students usually had difficulty with the task of creating descriptive prose. Teachers at all educational levels have an obligation to make sure that their pupils can express themselves clearly in writing. But teaching writing is not without its difficulties, as teachers and students alike often view writing as more difficult than speaking, listening, and reading. This challenge stems from the fact that teachers must not only prioritize student performance in writing but also have a clear understanding of what students need and what they should anticipate in order to help them become proficient writers. Teachers can also show their children that writing is a useful way for them to express their ideas and thoughts in addition to being a fun pastime. By highlighting the importance of writing to their students, teachers can encourage and inspire them to improve as writers.

Descriptive text was employed for this research because the students at SMP Negeri 16 Banguntapan Bantul had already been exposed to this subject during their junior high school years. For this reason, the descriptive text serves as a fantastic tool for teaching children how to characterize different domains, while also improving their writing abilities and giving them the chance to promote or explain the things they like. One way to create writing exercises that are meaningful for children is to give them topics to write about that are related to their everyday activities. Assigning the pupils to write essays about real subjects, like the doll or other students they admire, will give them inspiration and direction for writing about subjects they already understand fundamentally. Many students find writing to be quite difficult, but they still engage in writing activities because they understand what they are doing and because they are contributing to the sharing of ideas and experiences related to what they are producing (Eodice, Geller, & Lerner, 2017).

The following are the difficulties that the students had when composing descriptive texts, according to the writer's preliminary investigation: first

The difficulty was that, because they did not fully understand the work at hand, they still had trouble coming up with ideas when they wrote. They could only use a limited vocabulary at that time. The situation that followed was that they were totally dependent on their teacher. They lacked the creative skills needed to write. It was an arranged marriage. They consider writing, the last task, to be tiresome. Regarding the challenge that stems from the teacher, the problem is that the way the teacher taught

descriptive text did not encourage the pupils to be engaged and imaginative learners. Students struggle to produce descriptive writing passages because, among other reasons, they lack the competence to organize well-chosen sentences, the ideas and knowledge needed to write a passage, and the motivation to learn English (Ismayanti and Kholiq, 2020). The results of their investigation provide credence to this ailment. Because of this, scientists use problem-based learning to try to solve these difficult problems.

The process of applying one's own intelligence in the framework of a community or environment to solve problems that are meaningful, pertinent, and contextual is known as "problem-based learning." According to Boud and Feletti (1997), who contended that educational innovation, learning through problem-based learning is the most crucial. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) curricula, according to Margetson (1994), encourage open-mindedness, reflection, criticism, and active study in order to support the development of study skills. The curriculum for problem-based learning (PBL) is better than other teaching approaches in that it helps students develop their interpersonal, communication, cooperation, and problem-solving abilities.

This study focuses on applying problem-based learning to descriptive literature. If teachers employ problem-based learning strategies in their classrooms, students can improve their critical thinking, organizational abilities, ability to construct an argument, and rewriting skills.

Method

A. Research Design

This investigation utilized a classroom action research (CAR) design. Yasin (2011, p. 7) defines classroom action research as an investigation carried out by an educator within the confines of the classroom with the intention of enhancing the processes of instruction and learning. Its purpose is to resolve the issue by employing an innovative strategy or method. The objective is to enhance the character of the objects under observation by means of purposeful and meticulously organized activities. Smith (2021), as cited in Srikandewie and A. E. Smith.

B. Setting and Participants

The research participants were seventh-grade students at SNP NEGERI 2 BANGUNTAPAN BANTUL, consisting of 32 students, with an equal distribution of 16 males and 16 females. The study was carried out over two cycles.

C. Data Collection

The data collection instruments comprised students' writing tasks and tests, observation checklist, and supported by field notes. The collaborator filled out the observation and field notes while the researcher conducted the teaching and learning process. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with the students following the completion of the writing test

D. The Procedure and data Analysis

The methodology for this study was based on the cyclical model of classroom action research methodology. Plan, action, observation, and reflection were the four steps in the process (Kemmis and McTaggart in Khan, Zaman, & Ghaffar, 2020). The following was the method used to gather the data:

To collect quantitative data, writing tasks and tests were administered to assess students' proficiency in descriptive text writing. Group tasks were assigned in every meeting for each cycle, and tests were conducted at the conclusion of each cycle. The test results were analyzed utilizing writing rubrics.

In order to determine the student's final score, the researcher first evaluated the student's written work using the criteria specified in the writing scoring rubrics. This formula is as follows:

$$TS = O + C + G + M + V$$

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Note:

TS : Total Score

O   : Organization

C   : Content

G   : Grammar

M   : Mechanic

V   : Vocabulary

The pupils' scores were calculated based on each writing indicator, then totaled, and the score was derived from the average. This study used Brown's (2010, pp. 286-287) writing rubric to assign grades to students. It consisted of descriptive writing elements with each score requirement.

Findings and Discussion

The researcher examined that quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the teaching and learning process to assess the potential benefits of project-based learning (PBL) for enhancing students' descriptive writing abilities at the SMPN 2 BANGUNTAPAN BANTUL. This is an outline of the achievements that students have made in the field of writing descriptive texts. The researcher will be able to provide an explanation of the data pertinent to each cycle after the data analysis is complete. The description focused on the students' average scores for the group task, the individual task, and the overall task. score on the writing test that is considered average.

A. The Extent to Which PBL Can Improve the Students' Writing Skill on Descriptive Text at Seventh Grade of SMP Negeri 2 Banguntapan Bantul

Table 1. PRE-TEST
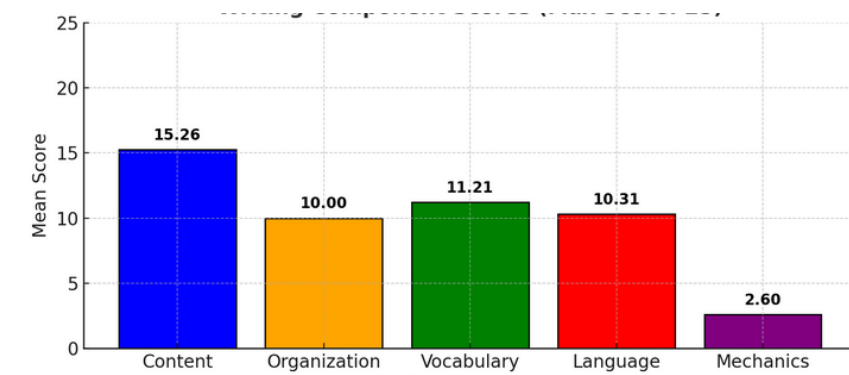
(Source: accepted data)

Based on the displayed diagram, the average writing scores of students across five main components are still far from perfect. The Content component received the highest average score of 15.26, indicating that students demonstrate fairly good ability in developing ideas or content in their writing. However, the other components show less satisfactory results.

The Organization component, which involves the ability to structure writing (such as introductions, body, and conclusions), only scored an average of 10.00, suggesting that students need additional guidance in organizing their writing systematically. The Vocabulary component scored an average of 11.21, indicating that students have a moderate range of vocabulary but have not yet fully optimized their word choices for the context of their writing.

Next, the Language component, which includes the correct use of grammar, achieved an average score of 10.31, showing that students' grammatical skills still need improvement. Finally, the Mechanics component, covering spelling, punctuation, and formatting, received the lowest average score of 2.60, highlighting that mechanical aspects are the students' primary weakness in writing.

The average score of the students was 49.38. Only 6 students (20%) achieved the complete criteria, while 22 students (80.92%) fell short of meeting the complete criteria. This indicated that only 6 students met the minimum achievement criteria (KKM), which was set at 72 for English. The breakdown of students' achievement was further detailed for each indicator. Overall, these results indicate that students require intensive guidance, especially in the mechanical and organizational aspects of writing. Focused teaching and consistent writing practice can help students achieve better outcomes across all components.

1) Cycle 1

Upon analyzing the pre-cycle data, the researcher identified that students faced challenges with grammar. Consequently, in the first cycle, both the researcher and instructor focused on improving students' grammar skills in descriptive text writing. The researcher compiled and presented all data from the initial meeting to the third meeting, encompassing students' performance in writing tasks and tests. The subsequent analysis was presented in various formats, including average scores, frequency distribution, the percentage of students meeting success and failure criteria, and an assessment of students' proficiency in writing descriptive texts based on specific indicators. The details of this analysis are explained below.

Group task

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

Meeting	Average Score	Theme
1st	63.4	Lost pen
2nd	68.6	Lost bag

(Source: accepted data)

Based on the data in the table above, In the **1st task**, with the theme "Lost Pen," the students achieved an **average score of 63.4**. This session likely emphasized basic narrative and descriptive skills as the students explained or described situations involving the loss of a small personal item. The task might have required the students to use simple vocabulary and sentence structures. By the **2nd task**, the theme shifted to "Lost Bag," and the students' **average score increased to 68.6**, indicating progress in their speaking skills. This theme might have required the students to construct more detailed and elaborate narratives, as losing a larger or more significant item like a bag could involve explaining a series of events, identifying specific details, and offering solutions. The consistent improvement in scores highlights the effectiveness of the activities in enhancing the speaking abilities of the seventh-grade students, likely due to continued practice and the structured approach to thematic learning. the students' writing skills improved during the first and second meetings. In summary, students were capable of managing the challenge they presented. The students chose to publicize "lost pen" because it is the item they value the most.   Then, for the "lost bag" motif, the students were instructed to provide a description of the bag that the instructor had supplied.

Table 3. Score of POST-TEST Cycle 1
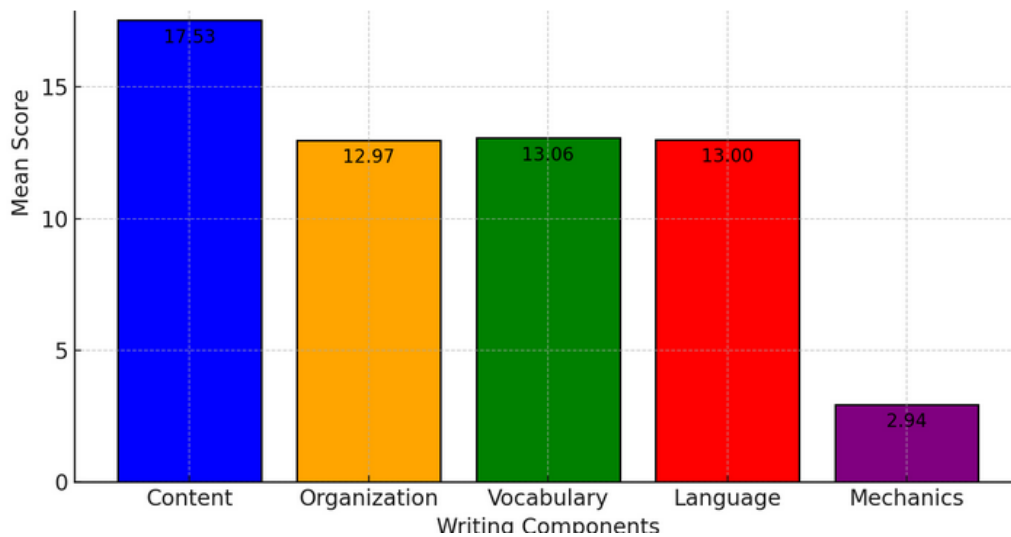
(Source: accepted data)

Based on the latest diagram, there has been an improvement in the average writing scores of junior high school students compared to the previous data. The Content component remains the highest, with an average score of 17.53, indicating that students are becoming better at developing ideas or content in their writing.

In the Organization component, the average score increased to 12.97, signifying an improvement in students' ability to structure their writing systematically, such as introductions, body, and conclusions. Vocabulary also showed progress, with an average score of 13.06, reflecting students' enhanced ability to use appropriate and contextually relevant vocabulary.

The Language component recorded an improvement, with an average score of 13.00, demonstrating progress in the correct use of grammar. However, the Mechanics component remains the lowest, despite a slight increase to 2.94. This indicates that spelling, punctuation, and formatting still require significant attention.

Overall, these results reflect substantial improvements in most writing components, particularly in content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. However, addressing the mechanics aspect remains a top priority to ensure students' writing skills develop comprehensively.

2) Cycle Two

The description of Students' Score on Writing Descriptive Text

Additionally, the researcher assessed the progress of the students' writing abilities by examining the assessment resulting from the final cycle two examination and the assignment completed at the conclusion of the teaching and learning process. The accompanying description provides information regarding the students' progress.

Table 3. Score of POST-TEST Cycle 2
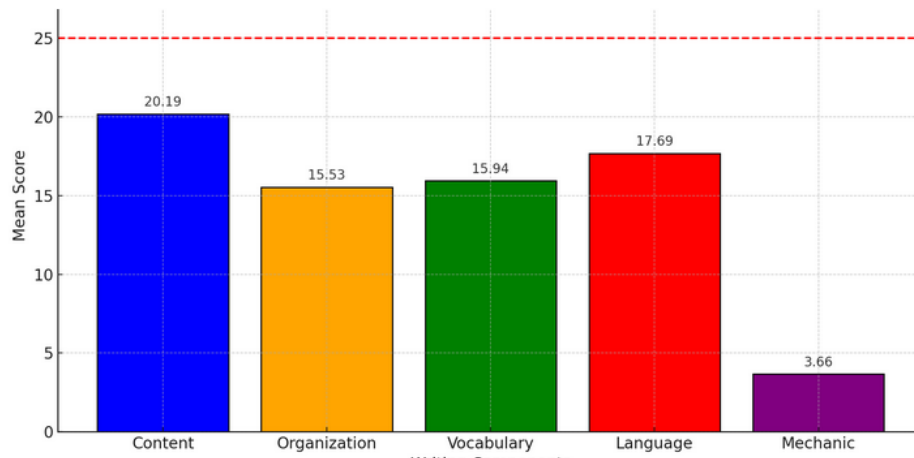
(Source: accepted data)

Based on the latest diagram, the average writing scores of students show significant improvement, reflecting excellent results. The Content component recorded the highest average score of 20.19, indicating that students are highly skilled in developing ideas and presenting the content of their writing effectively. The Organization component achieved an average score of 15.53, demonstrating that students can structure their writing clearly, including introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Students' ability to use Vocabulary is also outstanding, with an average score of 15.94, reflecting their proficiency in selecting relevant and context-appropriate words.

In the Language component, the average score reached 17.69, showing a solid understanding of proper grammar usage. Even in the Mechanics component, which was previously a weaker area, there is notable improvement with an average score of 3.66. Although it remains the lowest among the components, this progress highlights better usage of spelling, punctuation, and formatting. Overall, these results indicate that students' writing skills are now at an excellent level in most components, particularly in content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. The improvement in the mechanics aspect also shows that students are steadily progressing toward mastering writing skills comprehensively.

The average score for the pupils was 80.91. Six students (20%) had incomplete criteria, whereas only 24 students (80%) received complete criteria. It indicates that 24 pupils met the minimal requirements for achievement (KKM). For English, the KKM was 72. Thus, following the application of the PBL approach in learning activities, there is a noticeable improvement.

B. The Factors That Impact the Enhancement of Students' Descriptive Writing Abilities Through the use of Project-Based Learning

The second line of inquiry sought to identify the most important variables impacting the ways in which students' descriptive writing abilities evolve over time. According to the data collected from interviews, field notes, and observations, the following elements had an impact on the students' ability to increase their scores: material. Evidence from interviews and observation checklists suggests that students learned to write descriptive texts about real-world experiences when they participated in project-based learning (PBL) classes. Students' prior knowledge and real-world experiences informed the selection and contextualization of the resources. Their interests informed the selection of these topics. Both the content and style were suitable for the requirements of the curriculum. Because of this, the students were engaged and were able to solve the difficulty provided.

After that, the researcher aided the students in their data search via media pictures, photos, a projector (a creative students' worksheet), and a movie. To make learning more engaging and difficult, try using different types of learning media. Students enthusiastically participated in the process that took place in a variety of locations.

Then, the pupils' actions in class also had a role in shaping their transformation. The fact that both the instructor and the students played an integral role in making PBL a reality in the classroom made this component the most important. Students develop their capacity to work together in teams through PBL exercises. Students are able to actively participate in the interactive process through PBL exercises. They were accountable for their own education and that of the group, and they spoke to one another and shared ideas, and the most important thing is they know how to make simple sentences in describing something.

Conclusion and Suggestion

To sum up, using Project-Based Learning (PBL) to help young students develop their writing abilities and character values is an effective and appealing strategy. By means of Project-Based Learning (PBL), young children enhance their writing skills and cultivate fundamental character attributes that establish a strong basis for their academic and personal development. First, PBL gives young students access to a dynamic and stimulating learning environment where they can express their creativity through practical, real-world projects. In addition to making writing more relevant, the link to real-world and realistic situations inspires students to express themselves creatively and in a variety of inventive ways, which helps to strengthen their critical thinking skills.

Second, because PBL fosters collaboration, communication, and interpersonal skills, it is especially advantageous for younger students. Collaborating on writing assignments enables them to exchange thoughts, gain knowledge from each other, and value diverse viewpoints, which enhances not only their personal growth but also the creative process as they obtain ideas from their colleagues. Furthermore, PBL provides a forum for the explicit teaching and reinforcement of moral principles like accountability, empathy, and resilience. Teachers can help young students grasp the ethical implications of their work and foster a sense of responsibility towards their classmates and the larger community by incorporating these ideals into writing assignments.

In Overall, the results highlight significant progress in students' writing skills, particularly in content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. The **Problem-Based** Learning (PBL) approach played a crucial role in driving these improvements. However, further effort is needed to strengthen the Mechanics component to ensure comprehensive mastery of writing skills.

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