
IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL THROUGH PROJECT BASED LEARNING FOR EFL STUDENT

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate project-based learning can improve the students' writing ability. It was experimental research that consisted of experimental and control group. The samples were 60 students of junior high school. It was used writing test for the instrument in this study. The data was analysed using SPSS. The result showed that there was a different mean score between control class and experimental group in post-test. The mean score of control group was 64.60 (SD = 10.87420) and the mean score of experimental class was 84.83 (SD = 10.19494). Then, it would be calculated using independent sample t-test to know if there was a significant different. The result of t-test showed that sig. (2 tails) was .000 and it was less than 0.05 (standard deviation). It indicates that there is significant difference on students' writing skill between experimental group and control group. It is also supported by Eta Squared value and the results is 0.48 or classified as large effect. It can be said that the use of project based learning can improve students' writing skill. It is recommended to use innovative methods to motivate and improve students' skills.

Keywords: Writing, Descriptive Text, and Mini Project

INTRODUCTION

In digital era, writing is one of the important English skills that should be mastered by students. By mastering writing skills, students can communicate and express their opinion or ideas from different point of view. It is also supported by Nunan (2003) and Harmer (2007) that say writing is the process to discover the ideas through statements and paragraphs in order to communicate clearly to the readers to produce and convey the language through ideas, feeling, and opinion. Writing is a process to express the ideas in the form of written in order to communicate with the readers (Meyers, 2005) so that it is an important skill that must be learned. Moreover, it is known that writing is one of English skill to express writers' thought on a piece of paper to share the ideas. Therefore, during the process of teaching learning writing teacher must implement innovate or creative methods to encourage students to practice their writing skills.

Many benefits can be obtained if teacher uses interactive and innovative method in the process of teaching-learning. First, learners become more creative and enjoyable because the students must express their ideas in the form of written text. It can also explore their critical thinking skills. It is in line with Indonesia 2013 curriculum that

states students must be active, creative and innovative person in order to be able to explore and actively share their knowledge during teaching and learning process, especially in writing skill. Next, by provided effective strategies or methods, students can expand their skills and become independent writer (Sundeen, 2017). Students can implement many kinds of strategies to learn writing in order to be good writers. There are some writing steps that must be engaged by students such as brainstorming, produce multiple drafts, edit writing, and revise writing many times before publishing. Santangelo and Olinghouse (2009) stated that the writing process emphasizes that writers learn by doing: that is engaging in daily writing opportunities. “The writing process enables us to show primary students what it’s like to be a writer” (Culham& Coutu, 2009). It allows students to choose topics, learn skills, and work through problems (Culham& Coutu, 2009). Writing is viewed as a cycle, not a program because students are continuously progressing through the steps of the writing process such as: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Since there are many steps done by students, teachers have the opportunity to teach the process through project based learning and allow them for independent growth during writing time.

However, there are many problem faced by EFL students when they learn writing. Most of them think that writing is difficult when they come in writing activities. The first problem is that they are lack of motivation to start their writing. They do not have any motivation and explore ideas so that they take a long time to finish their work. It means that teacher must help the students to figure out what have been written (Culhan, 2005). In the pre writing step, students should struggle with the ability to independently plan and organize the story. It is important for them to draw upon experiences, observe what’s going on around them, and ask questions. Teacher must provide magazine, good stories or article to help students to get ideas in this step.

The second is students cannot find the right words or vocabulary to describe what is on their mind to develop their writing. It can be said when students have successfully done their work in the prewriting stage, then students get anxious to start writing. According to Culhan (2015) when a student begins drafting their writing, they see the idea in their mind and are ready to write it down on paper. In this step, students are encouraged to just simply write. When they have finished drafting, they learn the role of revision to make their writing more interesting. When teaching students how to write drafting up to revise their writing, the use of Project Based Learning (PjBL) model will help students to successfully produce a piece of writing ready to publish.

PjBL as an innovative learning model can be used in the process of teaching learning to improve the students’ writing since it is an instructional model that is based on the constructivist approach to learning such as discovery learning, zone of proximal development, scaffolding, cognitive apprenticeship, coaching, context, collaborative learning, and the nature of assessment (Duffy & Cunningham, 2005). Through PjBL,

students become intrinsically motivated, more focused, and they develop a range of abilities and skills (Wurdinger, Haar, Hugg, & Bezon, 2007). Project-based learning can build the students' writing skill as they acquire a deeper level of learning and understanding of the subject-matter (Akinoglu, 2008). In addition, PjBL also enables teachers to teach skills beyond the content, make learning more personalized and more varied, and teach academic content more effectively (Ravitz, 2008). Students are able to move from novices to experts in the domain of knowledge (Grant & Branch, 2005). Their critical thinking abilities, their presentation skills, their communication skills, and their ability to work effectively on a team are also enhanced (Neo & Neo, 2009; Wurdinger et al., 2007). Additionally, students value the fact that their projects are situated in real-life contexts (Gubacs, 2004). Furthermore, using PjBL students can practice and continue to develop their writing skill since it requires not only reading but also writing.

Moreover, there are many previous research about project based learning. First, Project Based Learning is a valuable teaching method that equips students adequately. It can also develop both soft and hard skills indirectly. During the process of learning, students construct their knowledge by applying role play (Aslanides, Kalfa, Athanasiadou, Gianelos, & Karapatsias, 2016). Next, project based learning can improve students' critical thinking by motivating student to create questions in education (Sasson, Yehuda, & Malkinson, 2018). Project based learning can motivate students' knowledge in three ways such as system knowledge, domain knowledge, and metacognitive knowledge. Moreover, project-based learning environment allowed the participants to make decisions about their abilities, resources, and plans (Grant & Branch, 2005). The use of project based learning could improve students' creativity for senior high students (Sanif, Hussin, Senom, & Putih, 2013). Having known the success of project-based learning, this study focuses on investigating of project based learning to improve students' writing skills.

METHOD

It was experimental study since the research question is "Is there any significant improvement on students' writing skill through project based learning? In this study consisted of two groups namely experimental and control groups and it would be compared between them (Ary et al, 2010).

The population were all the seventh graders of SMPN 13 Surabaya consisting of 451 students and the sample was chosen randomly so that the total number of samples were 60 students consisting 37 females and 33 male students. The number of control group is 30 students consisting of 18 female and 12 male students and the number of experimental group is 30 students consisting of 19 female and 11 male students.

The research instrument was writing test that asked EFL learner to write composition and create mini magazine to measure students' descriptive writing skill. However, both groups were given pre-test in order to measure students' writing capability. To make sure

that the test (as an instrument) was valid, it must be validated by English teacher. Based on the validator's judgment, the test item was valid. Moreover, the test was tried out to know its reliability to measure how accurate and consistent the data of the instrument (Ary et al, 2010). It was used to know whether the score is consistent to be used in the study or not. After the students' writing tasks were measured, the results showed that the $r=.971$, $n=35$, and $p> .000$ which means that the try out test was high reliable. It means that the test could be used as the instrument of the research.

After pre-test was given, the experimental group would be given treatment in the process of teaching learning using project based learning. It lasted for 8 meetings. After the treatment was finished, post-test was conducted to know students' writing skill.

Finally, all the data would be analysed using SPSS 20 to investigate the significant improvement between control group and experimental group and it would be explained descriptively. After the data were collected, the normality and homogeneity of the test were calculated in order to know whether the test was normal and homogeny. If the score is homogeny, it can be calculated independent sample t-test to answer research question. After that, the p value was checked to see whether there was any significant difference between control and experimental class. If the score less than 0.05, it was concluded that there was significant difference between experimental and control group (Sugiyono, 2011). Then, it was calculated the effect size how much the contribution of PjBL in students' writing skill and it can be said that PjBL could help the students' improvement on their writing skill.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis data, it can be calculated mean score between control and experimental groups in pre-test result. Table 1 showed the result of pre-test score

Table 1 The result of pre test between control group and experimental group

Group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Control	30	67.43	9.15	1.67
Experimental	30	72.13	10.2	1.86

Based on the table 1, it could be said that mean score of the control class was 67.43 and the standard deviation was 9.15643. However, the mean score of experimental class was 71.96 and the standard deviation was 10.00511. It was indicated that the pre-test score of experimental class was higher than the control class. Moreover, it would be calculated the independent sample t-test result to measure whether there was a significant difference on students' descriptive pre-test writing. Table 2 showed how to calculate independent sample t-test.

Table 2 The Result of Independent Sample T-test on Pre-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pretest Score	Equal variances assumed	.234	.631	-1.878	58	.065	-4.70000	2.50260	-9.70951	.30951
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.878	57.337	.065	-4.70000	2.50260	-9.71074	.31074

Based on the table above, it is known that the significant 2 tailed value was 0.65. It could be said that the significant 2 tailed was more than .05 so that it was estimated that there was no significant difference between two groups, control and experimental groups. Both samples had the same competence. After two groups were given pre test, the experimental group was given treatment during the process of teaching writing. The teacher used PjBL model to improve the students' writing competence.

After the treatment was ended, both groups were given post test. It was used to know whether there was any difference in students' writing competence between control and experimental group. Table 3 showed the mean score of post-test between control and experimental group.

Table 3 Post-test mean score of Control and Experimental Group

Group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean
Control	30	64.60	10.87	1.98
Experimental	30	84.83	10.19	1.86

According to the table 3 above, the mean score of control group was 64.60 and standard deviation is 10.87 while the mean score of experimental class was 84.83 and standard deviation is 10.19. It was indicated that the mean post-test score of experimental group was higher than the control class.

After the mean score was gotten, It would be calculated the result of independent sample t test on SPSS 20. It was added to make sure that the score was significant or not. To know the result of independent sample T test on post test would be shown in table 4. Table 4 The Result of Independent Sample T-test on Post-test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.231	.633	-7.435	58	.000	-20.23333	2.72143	-25.68086	-14.78580
Posttest Score Equal variances not assumed			-7.435	57.760	.000	-20.23333	2.72143	-25.68134	-14.78532

Based on the table 4 above, it can be said that the significance (2-tailed) value was .00 or less than .05. According to Pallant (2013) if the significance (2-tailed) value was .05 or less than .05, it could be indicated that there was significant difference in the mean scores between two classes. Meanwhile, if the Sig. (2-tailed) value was more than .05, means that there was no significant difference between two classes. As the result, it could be said that the post-test mean score of control and experimental class was significantly different. So, the alternative hypothesis is achieved.

To make sure the result of independent sample T test, it was also used Eta Square Calculation. It would calculate the effect size of the treatments in order to know the effect of PjBL in experimental group. The result of Eta Square Calculation could be seen in table 5.

Table 5 The Criteria of Eta Square

The Criteria	The Description
Large Effect	.14
Moderate Effect	.06
Low Effect	.01

Here is the eta squared calculation of effect size of independent sample t-test.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Eta squared} &= \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N_1 + N_2 - 2)} \\
 &= \frac{-7.434^2}{-7.434^2 + (30 + 30 - 2)} \\
 &= \frac{55.279225}{55.279225 + 58} \\
 &= \frac{55.279225}{113.279225} \\
 &= 0.48 \text{ (Large effect)}
 \end{aligned}$$

Based on the calculation above, it was known that Eta squared value was 0.48. It showed that it belonged to more .14 and it could be classified in large effect. Therefore, it could be indicated that the treatment have given large effect to the result of experimental class. Moreover, there was significant difference between control and experimental class. In other words, it had been answered the research question which has been mentioned that there was significant difference in students' writing skill between who are taught by project based learning and those who are not.

Discussion

Based on the result, it was known that the mean score of students' writing skills in experimental group was higher (84.83) than control group 64.60. Furthermore, the result of independent sample t-test also showed that the significance (2-tailed) value was .00 or less than .05. It could be considered that there was significant difference on post-test score between two groups. In addition, it is also supported with the calculation of Eta Squared which the value is 0.48 or it can be classified as the large effect size. It can be stated that project based learning has positive effect in improving students' writing skills.

It is in line with Ponpoon (2011) who states project-based learning makes some improvement on students' language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities. Project based learning also makes the students motivate in learning writing since the process of teaching learning writing become more enjoyable. Students could put their idea clearly on the text that would be written. It is also supported by (Ergül & Kargın, 2014) that say project-based learning can improve students' academic since in the process of teaching

and learning writing, students would add several detail information about the person that they described, starting from their physical appearance, their habit or their interest. Besides, they have also learned how to organize their idea in the form of descriptive text easily starting from identification and giving specific information on description text.

Project based learning also encourage students to conduct inquiry or constructivism learning and active learning. It is proposed by Markham (2011) that says project based learning also link students' knowledge with students' skill. It is known that during processing and making the project students were not only learned the knowledge theoretically, but also apply it in a real task situation. When students conducted their project, they would acquire their knowledge by using discussion method or cooperative learning (Wang, Teng, & Lin, 2015). It is also in line with Stoller (2006) who claimed that project based learning made the students understand the material that they had learned by doing real activities collaboratively which was linked with their knowledge. To accomplish students' project, it was quite difficult for the learner that can be done individually. In this case, learners should work in team work to finish their project. It has been trend the idea of cooperative learning. It means that teacher provides students an opportunity to work with their classmates instead of accepting information from the teacher. During working in their group, students must learn how to express their ideas and solve the conflict in their team. Moreover, they also learn how to construct new knowledge and learn new skills in the team. It can also increase the students' motivation. Finally, students' learning motivation can be increased. It is known that during the process of teaching learning writing using project based learning students construct their knowledge actively in which the learners had to present and express their project that had be done. This enables them to integrate their new knowledge with the old ones. Moreover, learners are able to reach and achieve the best performance.

Project based learning helped the students got deeper understanding about descriptive text that had been taught. According to Wang there were many activities that could be done by students to get their understanding (Wang et al., 2015). In order to finish their project, that is wall magazine, learner would learn how to use internet tools such as google, yahoo or google translation. According to (Makaramani, 2015) teaching learning writing using project based learning could present framework for 21 century learning. One of them is information, media and technology skills. In this activity, students try to use digital media to find any resources that help them how to accomplish their project. After that, students would try how to collect their data. It means that they would integrate their information that had been got to enhance their project. Then, in their group, students would work cooperatively to develop team spirit. It means, they discussed some stages that could be done in their group and it could be seen that they interact each other's. This make the process of teaching learning more active. Also, students can apply their English knowledge when they are writing descriptive text. When students have finished their

project, students must present their project in front of the class. In this opportunity, students learned the English presentation skill. Students needed to prepare PPT and read aloud their presentation in front of the class. It must show students centred classroom.

Students' learning achievement had been increased. The PjBL course inspired their creativity and gave them an opportunity to find out their merits and weaknesses. Based on their self-evaluation forms, students showed positive attitudes toward the Project Based Learning or soft skills. In teaching learning writing using project-based, all member of team would learn how to cooperate with the others. They also learned how to communicate and adjust to different personality of the members. They also take part in finishing the project. Moreover, every member of the team would develops ways of managing his time while on the same time being flexible. They also learned how to work under pressure while they are being productive. Throughout a project, members had different roles to finish their project. They are likely to emerge and be undertaken by the team members. For example, one of the member of team is leader. In this case, he has a role to lead his members to conduct this project and he also needs to interact with every member on a daily basis. The leader of the group should manage the team members effectively. In this chance, students try to develop further his/her leadership skills (Aslanides et al., 2016). It is also supported by (Makaramani, 2015) that says leadership and responsibility in one of 21st century skills that must be mastered by students. In this skill. Learner try how to adapt, how to collaborate and how to communicate.

Furthermore, it also support 2013 government curriculum that says students are expected to be active and creative during teaching and learning process nowadays. In the process of learning writing text, students had to create magazine. It should be started by composing their descriptive text. They were did some stages of writing process. First, they discussed and classified about the information that would be written. Then, they had to arrange the descriptive text on a piece of paper. They also discussed with their friends and asked the teacher whether their work still need improvement or not. If everything can do well, the students continued by making the project, magazine. From those activities, students work collaboratively with their friends to discuss their difficulties and to solve them. Here, they are active learners in the process of making project so that they get deeper understanding to make descriptive text.

For those reasons, project based learning is suitable to be applied during teaching and learning process. Since project based learning was applied, students were allowed to work as a team when making their project. It is supported by Simpson (2011) who said that project based learning make the students more active because they have to plan, complete, and present the project they have done. When students work collaboratively to make their magazine, they were actively share and discuss about the lesson with their friends. They also could fix the difficulty cooperatively with their group. In this case, the teacher was just as a facilitator who could monitor the students' progress and helped them if they had

difficulties. It is also in line with 2013 curriculum that use student centered during teaching and learning process.

In addition, by implementing project based learning, students are not only can make a good descriptive text, but also can express their creativity to make a good project. They also design their project creatively by putting colours, pictures, and stickers. It means that the objectives of 2013 curriculum are achieved.

On the other hand, there are also some problems faced by the teacher when teacher implemented project based learning in the process of teaching learning writing. The first problem is time limitation. It is known that during the process of teaching learning in the classroom is limited that is 90 minutes per meeting. In Indonesia, English subject is twice in a week so that time limitation was a big problem. Teacher only have few minutes to introduce the example of project to students. It is in line with Aslanides that says project based learning makes students stress since they have limited time and limited resources (Aslanides et al., 2016).

Second, most of the students could not control their presentation volume which cause the audience could not pay attention to their friends' presentation. Since their friends' voice is low so that other students are busy with themselves and they do not give to much attention to their friends' presentation. It was also caused that the students do not have a chance to practice before they perform in front of the class. To avoid making mistakes or it will be laughed by their friends so that they do not speak aloud. It is also supported by (Wang et al., 2015) that say since the time was limited so that students do have a chance to practice before they present their project in front of the class and it made the students do not feel confidence in front of the class.

Next, during the group discussion, there are also some students who do not join in discussion. Some of them were chatting and even slept when the teacher was not around. Although the group was heterogeneous, there were still some free-riders in the group. (Wang et al., 2015) also say that to solve this problem, teachers should encourage the weak students to learn from their team members and guide them how to finish their project. Moreover, teacher also provides that help weak students that have any brave to perform in front of the class.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, project based learning can improve the students' writing ability. It was proven by the means of experimental post-test score was higher than the pre-test score. It means the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It is recommended that EFL teachers should implement EFL model that motivate students to learn writing. The teachers should provide materials that attract students to get idea in pre writing, drafting and revising. Teacher also monitor and help students to publish their writing. Moreover, teachers should make Project-Based Learning Method widespread in

the curriculum, arranging and implementing appropriate units according to this method to increase students' success. For this purpose, the use of the project-based learning method by teachers in English more frequently will make positive contributions in attaining acquisitions and increasing student success.

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