

# The Role of Project-Based Learning in Improving the Students' English Writing Skill

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**Abstract:** Writing becomes one of the most difficult skill to be experted by the students in especially in high school levels. Therefore, Project Based-Learning is offered to solve the difficulties that were faced by the students in writing especially in 21st century learning which includes 4C (Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity). Some experts believe that Project Based-Learning can help the students to develop their writing skills through the projects that given by the teacher. This research reports on the implementation of Project Based-Learning in teaching writing especially narrative text. The objectives of this research are to describe the improvement of the student's writing skill through Project Based-Learning and to describe the students' attitudes in learning English writing skill through Project Based-Learning. This research uses qualitative method and classroom action research as a research design. The participants of the research were 21 students of tenth grade of MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta. The collected data were obtained through observation, writing test, and interview. The data were analysed based on triangulation. As result, it was found that the implementation of Project Based-Learning in teaching writing worked well. It could be seen from the student's reponses and development during the implementation of this method. They showed an improvement especially from their post-test scores. Design Project Based Learning is suitable to be using Implementation in KBM especially improving students English writing skill. PBL could help the students to learn writing well, the students could enjoy the learning activities. On the other hand, this project developed the writing skill of the students.

**Keywords:** English, Project Based Learning, students, teaching, writing.

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## Introduction

One of the most crucial abilities that students should acquire is the ability to write in English because it can increase their vocabulary and the level of their English. According to Ismayanti&Abdul (2020), because writing is a useful ability, it also aids students in improving their capacity for expressing their thoughts and feelings. By writing, people can share their opinion each other. Nation (2009:113) stated that writing is a task that can be used to prepare for work other than listening and speaking.

Learning English writing becomes something hard for high senior high school students. According to Muhammad (in Nasser, 2019), the

students may experience a variety of writing challenges and issues at various learning levels, so many students feel difficult in writing skills, and also some of them feel lazy because they think that writing is something difficult. There are many difficulties faced by the students in writing, including students do not feel confident because they do not have many vocabularies (Purwanti & Kastuhandani, 2023). When the teacher tells them to write, they always feel afraid even though students actually have opinions related to the topic being discussed, but they always feel afraid. Difficulties in writing experienced by the students can also be caused by a teacher (Gunawan, 2022). Teachers have an active involvement in accompanying and teaching the students. If the

teacher cannot choose a good method to teach writing skills, the students will feel difficult and not interested in the writing skill. In this case, the teacher plays a very important role in increasing the students' interest in writing. According to Gezmiş (2020), students can achieve proficiency in English writing as long as they get appropriate feedback and help with the difficulties they are facing. Besides, Weijen et al (2009) also state that cognitive skill are also important for the writing skill. The cognitive activities are content generation and organization, text organization and production, and revision. These cognitive activities make writing activities become difficult if the students do not learn it properly.

The previous problems or difficulties that students have need to be addressed, and one way that the school can achieve this is by utilizing various models of learning. According to Ur (2012), some learning paradigms are project-based, problem-based, and explorative and discovery-based. According to Belles-Calvera (2018), a teacher must take consideration a number of factors when selecting a learning model since learning might become ineffective if the model is not in line with the goals and conditions of the pupils. These include social attitude, knowledge, and skill characteristics as well as religious ones. Based on these recommendations, MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta students in the tenth grade are students who have good writing skills, but they require more development since MA Diponegoro students still face a number of difficulties. Richard (2001) stated that project-based learning is a viable learning strategy for fostering the development of practical skills like writing abilities. Project-based learning is ideal for helping students to improve their writing abilities since it not only gives theory on the craft of writing, but also encourages students to write directly while being supervised by their teachers (Fadhilah et al, 2023)

Usmeldi & Risda (2022) said that project-based learning is one of the learning models that can develop students' creative thinking skills, so the students can produce good work. Sa'diyah & Bambang (2019), stated that project-based learning is one of the learning models in which the product of learning is a project. The project will be carried

out by the students where the students will use the skills they have both creativity skills and academic skills. In the project-based learning model, students have to participate more actively than in other models. In addition, in the project-based learning model, the teacher only acts as a facilitator, so the class system is not teacher-centered. Therefore, students can give their contribution in the projects they do, and they will not feel bored like what they felt before when they only paid attention to the material from the teacher. In this study, the teacher applied the project-based learning model, and the students of MA Diponegoro grade X got a project as a product of learning that was done in groups. The students made the name of their respective groups and took the theme of the country as the group name, so there were four groups, namely England group, Turkey group, Singapore group, and Japan group. The project that they had to do was to create a narrative text.

Soffiany et al (2020) explain that in learning writing, there are several factors that influence the students' success, and the factors are included in a psychological aspect, such as creativity, self-esteem, self-confidence, liking-disliking, interest, and motivation. On the other hand, it can be said that when students have good self-confidence, they will believe in the abilities they have and believe that by trying, they can definitely master the writing skills. Besides, when the students also have good interest and motivation, they will always be enthusiastic in learning writing skills, so in the end of the day, their writing can be good, and even it will be better (Alzubi, 2021)

Based on those explanations discussed above, some previous research has investigated project-based learning and English writing skill. W. Sumarni, S. Wardani, Sudarmin, D.N Gupitasri (2016) conducted a research entitled "Project Based-Learning (PBL) to Improve Psychomotoric Skill: A Classroom Action Research". The research shows that sets, mechanical response, complex response, adaptation, and origation which are aspects of psychomotor were placed in high category. Furthermore, Argawati and Suryani (2020) conducted a research entitled "Project Based-Learning in Teaching Writing: the Implementation and Student's Opinion". The

result of this research showed that Project Based-Learning was proved on helping the students wrote well. Moreover, Karyawati and Ashadi (2018) also conducted a research entitled “Innovation in the Classroom: Engaging English as a Foreign Learning Students Using Project Based-Learning”. This research shows that the students dominated the class to improve their speaking skill, and the lecturer provided new learning atmosphere. Besides, Asfihana (2021) in her research entitled “Lecturer’s Design in Enacting Project Based-Learning to English Language Teaching” aimed to generate the design employed by the lecturers in implementing the Project Based-Learning in the English class. This research results adds pedagogical implications to the research related to PBL enactment in terms of its practical design in English teaching classroom implementation.

Even though many previous researchers have been studied project-based learning and English writing skill, they mostly researched about project-based learning in improving the teaching not for improving the English writing its self. Then, none of previous study that researched project-based learning in improving the English writing skill of students at MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta. Therefore, the current study addresses such knowledge gaps by researching the role of project-based learning in improving the students’ English writing skill at MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta. The study is guided by the research aims which is on describing the improvement of the students’ writing skill through project-based learning and on describing the students’ attitudes in learning English writing skill through project-based learning.

### Methods

The method used on this research is a qualitative research with a classroom action research. According to Zamzami et al. (2023), qualitative research generates descriptive data as either written or spoken form. Besides, Lubay & Andari (2019) also stated that classroom action research is a study that aims to improve the learning system in the classroom. The researcher uses a qualitative

research because the researcher wants to describe the improvement of the students’ writing skill through project-based learning and to describe the students’ attitudes in learning English writing skill through project-based learning.

Yatima et al (2020) said that classroom action research is a study where a teacher chooses an approach to teaching in the classroom by using planning, action, and reflection in each cycle, and the teacher has a role as a researcher in the class (Mertler, 2009). On the other hand, it can be stated that one of the people who know the problems in the classroom is the teacher. The teacher can know the problems in the classroom faced by students because they accompany the students during the learning process. Therefore, the teacher can know the right solution to solve the problems faced by the students. In this research, the problem faced by the students is that they have difficulty in writing narrative text, and the solution used by the teacher is by using project-based learning.

According to Argawati (2017), classroom action research consists of four steps that be used in a research. Those steps are planning, action, observation, and reflection. Depending on the researcher needs, the researcher can use those steps. Every cycle of a classroom action research project must include a pre-test and post-test to assess the students' progress in their writing. Some students may demonstrate improvement on pre- and post-tests, while others may demonstrate regression. In order to collect the data for this study, the researcher conducted two cycles.

This research was completed from February to April of 2023, which is the second semester of 2023/2024. The students of MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta's tenth grade served as the study's subjects. There were 21 students from the social and science in one classroom. Tests, observations, and interviews served as the instruments. The test was provided to the students as a pre-test and a post-test, and it took the form of an assignment that was connected to the instruction that the students had to write a narrative text. While the observation and interview were done during the action conducted in the classroom. All of the tenth grade students were observed in the classroom, but it selected few students to be interviewed to

understand more about their attitudes toward learning English writing through project-based learning. The data were triangulatedly analyzed. It served as a tool for identifying similarities and differences in the data. The following section of this research will examine the data's findings.

## Results and Discussion

This research has two results. The first result is the improvement of the students' writing skill through project-based learning, and the second result is the students' attitudes in learning English writing skill through project-based learning.

### The Improvement of the Students' Writing Skill through Project-Based Learning

As previously stated, this research was carried out using two cycles of classroom action research. The researcher used pre-cycle to initiate this activity before beginning Cycle 1. Due to the fact that each student's talents are unique, the researcher created a pre-test for the students to take before the PBL began. Some students are competent at writing in English, but others are not competent enough. The details are in the data below.

#### Pre cycle

The research was completed during a period of three months, from February to April 2023. Every cycle consists of four steps, including planning, action, observation, and reflection. The researcher conducted a pre-test during the first meeting by requiring the students to create a narrative text about the parent meeting, which is typically held at the start of every month. The topic of discussion is one that might be expanded into a narrative text. For 30 minutes, the students were instructed to write it. The researcher assigns a certain topic to the students since they are required to complete the activity each month, and the researcher wants the students to work completely on developing the topic. Before the project-based learning is implemented, the students' score is used as the initial score. Based on the minimal score, the average of this score is 60, and it is regarded as a "not good" score. The researcher uses project-based

learning as a result to address this issue. The next step is cycle 1.

#### Cycle 1

Planning is the next action that the researcher did. The discussions about the lesson plan and the suggested topic were asked for by the teachers to the students. Cycle 1 consists of one meeting for the post exam and three meetings for the discussion and the content.

##### 1. *The first meeting*

The teacher wrote four topics on the whiteboard throughout this meeting. These included the parent meeting, the Kompetensi Sains Siswa Muslim Indonesia (KoSSMI), the Pekan Olahraga dan Seni Ma'arif NU (PorsemaNU), and the Entrepreneurship Workshop by Wirausaha Muda Nusantara (Wimnus). The students were asked to divide into four groups and give each group a name before selecting the topic that the teacher had assigned. The groups were those from Turkey, Singapore, Japan, and England. Following the assignment of groups, each group was instructed to select a topic, so there will be no groups would have the same topic. They decided on the subject after consulting with all of the group members. The concepts were then briefly described by the teacher, so the students could better understand them.

##### 2. *The second meeting*

The researcher briefed the students on the project that they were required to complete and turn it to their teacher during this meeting. The project was a mini magazine which contained a narrative text. The teacher outlined the processes for carrying out project-based learning after describing the project that they would do. These processes were broken down into four categories: starting the project, developing it, reporting it, and evaluating it. The teacher continued to describe how the teacher would help with the editing and proofreading process.

##### 3. *The third meeting*

The teacher instructed the class to begin writing narrative texts based on the topics that their groups

had selected. They began the writing process by talking about what they needed, starting with the content, vocabulary, and the writing style. After they had done the writing, they performed a peer correction with the teacher's explanation and assistance.

#### 4. The fourth meeting

A post-test 1 was carried out during this meeting. In this post-test, the students were required to write on a brief narrative text on a subject of their own choosing. When they were done, they submitted their writing to the teacher, who revised it based on the narrative text's creativity, topic, and the content. The outcome of post-test 1 revealed that their average score was 65. This outcome demonstrated a change from the preliminary examination that had been conducted earlier.

The students made good progress in the reflection step. As evidence, their post-test score of 65 increased from 60 that they received in the pre-cycle. The majority of students were able to engage in the discussion and activities. Additionally, they started actively replying to one another's viewpoints. Additionally, their creativity in carrying out this exercise improved, and it was proved by the way they created the narrative text. However, several students still struggled to develop the subject that they chose. They lacked sufficient vocabulary, and the quality of their critical thinking was also lacked. There were still some grammatical and punctuation problems in this work. To summarize, table 1 below shows the activity that the students completed.

**Table 1.** Activities on cycle 1.

Meeting	Activities	
	Lecturer	Students
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gave four topics to be chosen by the students</li> <li>▪ Giving explanations briefly about the topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Made groups into four groups</li> <li>▪ Chose one topic for each group</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Giving explanation about the project</li> <li>▪ Giving explanation about the steps, editing, and proofreading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Made a plan</li> <li>▪ Made an understanding to the teacher's explanation</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Asked the students to start and finish the writing</li> <li>▪ Guided the peer correction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Started the writing</li> <li>▪ Did a peer correction</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gave a post test that is to write a short narrative text</li> <li>▪ Corrected the student's short narrative text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wrote a short narrative text</li> <li>▪ Submitted the short narrative text to the teacher</li> </ul>

## Cycle 2

In March 2023, this cycle was completed. A reflection was done in cycle 1 by the teacher and the students, and cycle 2 was improved as a result, particularly in the planning phase. The teacher explained the grammar problem and the punctuation fault because the students still made mistakes in post-test 1. Following that, students continued to edit their writing as the teacher offered comments. Cycle 2 included five meetings, including

#### 1. The fifth meeting

The students were required to do individual assignments during this conference. The students individual project required them to compose a

narrative piece based on the teacher-provided topics. The purpose of the individual project is to judge each student's creativity in their own narrative prose.

#### 2. The sixth meeting

The students performed a peer correction during this meeting. Peer editing was used to detect and to fix the writing faults made by students as well as to develop their critical thinking skills. In this meeting, the students may also offer revisions to each other's works because occasionally they had trouble spotting errors in their own work but were able to do so in others'. The students were able to improve and make their narrative prose more readable through this peer correction practice.

### 3. The seventh meeting

The students were asked to create a layout for their small magazine during this meeting. The narrative material they created served as the small magazine's content. The students used the Canva application to create the mini magazine since it was more user-friendly and intuitive for most students to use. Each student was required to compile their story writing, which was then assembled to create a miniature magazine. The students completed peer editing of the layout and writing before turning the mini magazine to the teacher.

### 4. The eighth meeting

The students presented their final mini magazine, which they had created and revised, at this meeting. The writing and work of every student in class X MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta was used for creating the small magazine. The students' mini magazine was then graded by the teacher. The grade was taken into consideration as a writing subject grade. The teacher also gave the students their second post-test during this eighth meeting. Two post-tests were conducted separately. The students were expected to create a narrative paragraph for this post-test that described their daily activities, which included conducting and gathering mini magazines. They have 30 minutes to compose a short narrative part. Their average grade after finishing and turning in their assignments was 70. It was clear that the students had made progress in their ability to write English narrative prose when post-test 1 was compared to

post-test 2. Although certain grammar and punctuation mistakes continued, they had reduced, and it also represented a somewhat positive growth. Project-based learning, which helped the students become more focused and enjoy working on their projects, was one of the factors contributing to this improvement. Additionally, because they could collaborate, the students found working on assignments in groups less challenging and learnt how to complete one another. In conclusion, the students might get benefit and appreciate this activity.<sup>20</sup>

### 5. The ninth meeting

The students were given opportunity to ask questions throughout this discussion, and they engaged in active question-asking, particularly with project-based learning. As seen by their enthusiastic response regarding the use of project-based learning in the instruction of English writing, their growth and attitude toward writing through project-based learning appeared to be highly favorable. These findings also demonstrated that the majority of the students made good progress and had a positive outlook on project-based learning. Since this strategy might make individuals feel at ease while learning and conversing, they could feel and act in this way. The findings of the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 could also be used to measure this. The mini magazine project engaged the students in solving a real problem and answering it by discussing with other students and asking the teacher. Below is a table of cycle 2 activities.

Table 2. Activities on cycle 2

Meeting	Activities	
	Lecturer	Students
5	▪ Asked the students to do the individual assignment	▪ Did an individual assignment
6	▪ Did a peer correction	▪ Corrected their writing and gave feedbacks to their friend's writing
7	▪ Did a peer correction	▪ Designed a layout for the mini magazine
8	▪ Gave scores ▪ Gave post test 2	▪ Submitted their mini magazine ▪ Did a post test 2
9	▪ Gave a time to give a question	▪ Gave a question about the Project Based-Learning

Based on the results of the application of Classroom Action Research, the researcher can

provide an analysis of the scores obtained by the students from test to test below

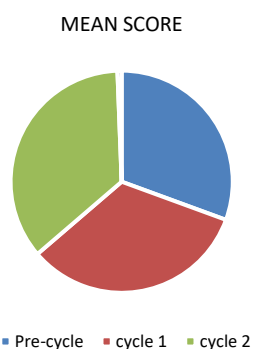


Figure 1. The mean score of cycle 1 and 2.

According to figure 1 above, students improved from the pre-test in the pre-cycle, where their score was 60, to the post-test in cycle 1, where their score was 65. It was then carried on to cycle 2's second post-test, which gained 70. Based on this development, it is clear that using project-based learning to strengthen the English writing abilities of the class X MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta students

may be beneficial. Additionally, there were less grammatical and punctuation problems in the work of the students. In conclusion, project-based learning might help students in improving their writing abilities.

### The Student's Attitudes in Learning English Writing Skills through Project-Based Learning

The second objective of the research is to describe the student's attitudes in learning English writing skills through project-based learning. Through observation and interviews, the researcher gathered information related to the second research goal. The results were then subjected to data triangulation analysis by the researcher. The interview and observation were conducted while the entire class was engaged in a writing activity. The details of the data obtained using triangulation are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2. Triangulation data.

Finding	Observation	Interview	Result
1	They did a discussion in their groups about the topic they had chosen	They said that a discussion in a group about writing is interesting, and it can increase their critical mind	Students felt happy and they felt that Project Based-Learning is a good choice to increase their participation and English writing skill
2	They wrote new vocabularies that they got from the teacher	They stated that they could understand the explanation of their teacher	Students thought that they were more motivated because they could know many new vocabularis
3	They found their own ideas and ways to do the project given by the teacher and started to create it	They said that they could find the design and ideas for the group project	Students were very creative and they made their group project well with the ideas from all group members
4	They revised some errors that they made in their group project, such as grammar and punctuation	They felt that they could learn many something new during they did the group project. They said that in group, they could find more beautiful ideas which they did not find in a personal project	They developed their knowledge during doing their group project
5	The students seemed happier during they did their group project. They worked together and helped each other	They gave their ideas and corrected it together with full of smiles. They said that they could work better with their group	The students seemed happier during the learning process. The project could be so great because they felt happy during doing it

The researcher received five points in order to respond to the second aim. According to these findings, the students' performance improved

throughout the teaching and learning process. Participation, motivation, creativity, knowledge, and the students' positive attitudes or happy

feeling during the writing-learning process were all improved.

For students, a writing assignment could be challenging because good writing requires the mastery of a number of abilities. As a result, the researcher was forced to employ a strategy for instructing writing, particularly narrative text. The project-based learning approach is a great way to help students improve. Giving the students a project and allowing them to do it on their own or in groups using their own ideas and creativity are the best ways (Patton, 2012 as cited in Riswandi, 2018).

PBL was conducted during the second semester to teach narrative text writing at senior high school level. The teacher gave a project to the students. The project was to make a mini magazine that contained narrative text based on the topic given by the teacher. The teacher gave five topics, and one group could choose one topic. They did the project in group, and they worked to find an idea, to design, and to revise their mini magazine.

The use of the project-based learning approach to teach writing to MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta's tenth grade students was successful. First, implementing PBL might help students' writing assignments achieve higher grades. The students' higher test scores could serve as evidence for this. Their average score was just 60 during the pre-cycle, but it increased to 65 during cycle 1. Then, they received a higher score—70. In other words, it may be claimed that the students' writing abilities improved.

In particular, when creating narrative texts without using project-based learning, students' attitudes regarding teaching and learning writing had already established. However, the students started to enjoy the teaching and learning process once the researcher applied project-based learning. Additionally, the students started to enjoy working in their groups to complete the project. The research group structure could inspire the students to enjoy English, especially writing, and also to support their original ideas. Bagheri & Abdullah, who were quoted in Eliana, Senam<sup>20</sup>, further confirm this claim by saying that project-based learning is the best strategy for inspiring the students to be more engaged and inventive.

Additionally, project-based learning can improve the students' communication skills, which they developed while working on the project in groups. The students claimed that project-based learning allowed them to learn optimally and with enjoyment because there were no outside pressures placed on them.

Second, it can be inferred from the findings of the observation and interview that the students responded well to the teaching and learning in class. The triangulation of the data revealed certain points of discovery. The students believed that project-based learning may boost their motivation for learning, according to the research findings. In addition, the students believed that project-based learning may boost their creativity and knowledge as well as their enjoyment of the educational process. Therefore, it can be claimed that project-based learning enhances students' motivation and enjoyment for studying English in addition to their writing skills.

## Conclusions

Eight meetings were held to perform the research from February to April 2023. In a single meeting, the pre-cycle was conducted. Cycle 1 was completed over the course of three meetings, and its post-test was administered at the final meeting. Three meetings made up Cycle 2, with the last one being an interview. The study's findings showed that students' writing abilities had improved both before and after the researcher introduced project-based learning. Only 60 points were averaged for the pre-cycle, 65 for cycle 1, and 70 for cycle 2. Besides, they also had a good attitude towards the teaching learning process in the classroom. PBL could help them to be excited to participate actively in class. Projects given to the students could also increase their creativity in finding ideas and working in groups. PBL can be said to be very successful in improving the writing skills of MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta students.

**Conflict of Interest:** This research does not have conflicts of interest concerning the publication of this article.

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