

## ENHANCING STUDENT ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

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**Abstract:** Writing becomes one of the most difficult skills to be experted by the students, especially in high school level. Therefore, Project Based-Learning is offered to solve the difficulties that were faced by the students in writing. Some experts believed that Project Based-Learning could help students to develop their writing skills through the projects given by the teacher. This research reports on the implementation of Project Based-Learning in teaching writing, especially news text. The objectives of this research were 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 used 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. This research found that project-based learning can help students improve their writing skills. This is evident from the scores that students receive, which are gradually increasing from 55 to 65. Besides, students are getting more engaged in teaching and learning activities.

**Keywords:** *Project based-learning; students; writing.*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial abilities that students should acquire is the ability to write in English as this will help them to expand their vocabulary because they will learn new words as they write. Petersen et al. (2020) stated that writing skills provide many benefits, especially in the field of English. Aside from speaking English, writing in English can also improve people's ability in English. Writing is a way for someone to share an idea or point of view that other people can read (Tyson, 2024). People who possess this writing ability can read the writer's writing and form similar or dissimilar opinions. Writing ability is particularly crucial since according to Zhang (2022), it is one of the ways that people communicate and share knowledge with one another, and writing skills will also support other skills, especially in English.

Writing in English is difficult to learn, especially for high school students who have little leisure to devote to the subject. Besides, writing skills also become more difficult when the

learning media used is inadequate for the learning process (Thompson & Gina, 2021). The number of subjects they have to take in school is what caused the time limitations. According to Ahmed & Xiao (2023), writing is a talent that most individuals struggle with because they have to express their opinions in a way that other people can comprehend them. In addition, simple sentences should be used in writing, so others can understand it. It takes a long time to develop these abilities. In order to learn how to write, many students work very hard. When learning to write, students frequently get into problems. An issue commonly encountered by students is a deficiency in self-assurance while embarking on the process of learning how to write, as they harbor concerns over the potential inadequacy of their written work. Zotzmann & Richard (2021) reported that students with little self-assurance will exert less effort. This significantly influences the student's learning process. Conversely, the students persist in experiencing worry whenever they engage in writing. Cronin & Caroline (2019) stated that

students tend to always feel anxious before they start writing. Additionally, due to the seldom obligation for students to engage with books or articles, they frequently encounter difficulty in selecting appropriate vocabulary to effectively articulate their views in writing. According to Driel et al. (2022), reading has a more beneficial effect on individuals' writing. The challenge of acquiring writing skills may stem from the instructor. The teacher plays a crucial role in providing instruction and assistance to pupils as they develop their writing skills. According to Alharbi (2022), it is essential for a teacher to provide feedback to pupils in order to minimize faults in their writing. Furthermore, the issue stems from the teacher's incapacity to choose a proficient instructional approach, resulting in student disinterest and reduced engagement in the process of learning English writing. Pawlak et al. (2020) identified that pupils may experience emotions of boredom when teachers have inadequate guidance skills. In addition, if the teacher fails to engage the students, they will lack the motivation to acquire the language, namely English. Zare (2023) suggests that the learning environment plays a role in the process of learning English writing, including the impact of a positive and enjoyable learning atmosphere. The utilization of multiple cognitive processes simultaneously can make English writing tough. Furthermore, there exists a correlation between cognitive processes and writing proficiency (Kim et al., 2021). The cognitive processes encompass the generation and organization of material, the organization and production of writing, and the act of revising. Ineffective learning of writing by kids can pose challenges in performing cognitive activities related to writing.

Since students must have outstanding models of the learning process, there are multiple approaches to address the problems mentioned above. Those several learning models are explorative and discovery model, problem-based model, and project-based model. According to Pinto (2022), selecting a problem-based learning model is difficult and requires teachers to take into consideration a number of factors that may affect their decision. Those factors are religious factor, social attitudes factor, knowledge factor, and skill factor. According to this suggestion, the tenth-grade students at MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta are students with good writing skills who still require improvement in order to produce a better learning outcome. According to Guo et al (2020), a project-based learning model can be used to build a

concrete skill, such as writing skill.

According to Saad and Suhaila (2022), a teacher who employs project-based learning employs a number of ideas, such as learner-centered teaching, learner autonomy, collaborative learning, and learning through activities. According to Naghdipour (2022), Project-based learning is a social activity that divides the learners into various activity groups, such as language, content, and skill learning. Therefore, it can also be said that project-based learning model engages student participation more than other models because in this model, the students collaborate with their friends to complete their projects. One way that project-based learning differs from other models is that students are encouraged to participate in the project by contributing their thoughts or opinion. Project-based learning can motivate students to be more actively involved in the learning process (Santos et al, 2023) in learning English (Widiyati & Wulan, 2022). According to Ilham (2022), students' writing can be better, and they can create another writing well after they finished their writing project.

In this research, the researchers asked for the tenth-grade MA Diponegoro students to do a group project. The students are divided into four groups. They got to pick their topics to be printed as a mini magazine, so they could read their own work afterwards. Along with their opus, this could serve as motivation for them to continually improve their writing abilities.

Some scholars have conducted studies about project-based learning. These researchers include Argawati and Suryani (2020) who demonstrated that the project-based learning approach may effectively support the students' writing. Another study conducted by Karyawati and Ashadi (2018) shows that students took charge of the class to improve their public speaking skills, and the lecturer created an innovative learning environment.

Although the research on project-based learning has been conducted frequently, MA Diponegoro's background has never been studied, and based on the previous research, there has been no research that discussed student attitudes about the learning process. Most of the research focuses on whether project-based learning helps students enhance their writing skills. Therefore, this research study aims to describe the improvement of MA Diponegoro students' writing skill through project-based learning and to describe the MA Diponegoro students' attitudes in learning English writing skill through project-based learning.

## METHOD

This research applied qualitative design and Classroom Action Research as the method. According to Zamzami et al. (2023), qualitative research produces descriptive data either in spoken or written form. Additionally, Luo and Cecilia (2022) reported that a qualitative study is one that seeks to identify and describe in a narrative form. The data of this research were analyzed using descriptive qualitative, and the researcher employed descriptive qualitative in order to describe the improvement of the students' writing skills through project-based learning and to describe the students' attitudes toward learning English writing through project-based learning.

Classroom action research is one of the types of research used to create the best learning system especially in class (Neve et al, 2020) and the teacher has a role as a researcher in the class (Burgess et al, 2023). On the other hand, it may be stated that the teachers are aware of the problem that has arisen and that students are experiencing in the classroom, and the teachers know the best solution for the problem. As a result, in this study, the students' lack of writing ability is the problem, and the project-based learning approach is the suggestion made by the teachers to address it.

In doing classroom action research, the researchers need to apply four steps, including planning, action, observation, and reflection (Monem & Elizabeth, 2022). These steps could be used by the researchers in both the learning and research processes, depending on their individual needs. Pre-test and a post-test are required for each cycle of classroom action research in order to understand students' writing growth. Between the pretest and the posttest, some students could show improvement while others might exhibit decline. The researcher used two cycles in this study to gather the data.

The second semester of 2023/2024 was used to carry out this study. The participants in this study were MA Diponegoro's tenth-grade students. There were 21 students in the class. Tests, observations, and interviews served as the research instruments. The test took the form of a task instructing students to write a short news text and was presented to students as a pretest and post-test. Observations and interviews were conducted while teachers were in action in the classroom. Observations were conducted with all tenth-grade students in the classroom, while interviews were conducted with only some of the

students to learn more about their attitudes toward learning English writing through project-based learning. To analyze and to validate the data, it used triangulation. It is employed to identify similarities and differences in the data. The data results are discussed in the following sections of this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *The improvement of the students' writing skill through project-based learning*

As previously mentioned, two cycles of classroom action research were used in conducting this study. The researchers applied the pre-cycle to initiate this activity before starting the Cycle 1. Because each student was unique, the researcher used a pre-test in the pre-cycle to determine each student's ability before beginning the PBL. While some students wrote in English rather well, others did not write sufficiently. The following data is the detailed information.

### *Pre cycle*

The study was carried out by the researchers from January to March 2023. Each cycle consisted of four steps such as planning, action, observation, and reflection. During the first meeting, the researchers gave the students a pretest in which they had to compose a text message regarding the parent meeting that happened at the beginning of every month. The given subject was one that could be expanded into a news article. For thirty minutes, students were expected to write. The reason of the researcher assigned the students a specific topic was to urge them to concentrate on developing it because it was a monthly task that would include this issue, which would provide them with plenty of ideas for their writing. Before the project-based learning was implemented, the students' results would have been used as the initial score. Based on the lowest score, the mean score was 55, which was classified as "not good". To address this problem, the researchers decided to use project-based learning. The next step was cycle 1.

### *Cycle 1*

The next step was planning. The students were asked to discuss the lesson plan and the topic that they wanted to use. Cycle 1 was divided into three meetings for the discussion and the material and one meeting for the post test.

### *The first meeting*

The teacher wrote four topics on the whiteboard for this meeting. Parent meetings, Pekan Olahraga dan

Seni Ma'arif NU (PorsemaNU), Kompetisi Sains Siswa Muslim Indonesia (KoSSMI), and Wirausaha Muda Nusantara (Wimnus) Entrepreneurship Workshop were among the subjects that were presented. The students were instructed to divide into four groups and give each group a name before selecting the topic that the teacher had provided. The groups were England group, Japan group, Singapore group, and Turkey group. The Following group assignment was that each group was instructed to select a topic, so there would be no groups with the same topic. All of the group members agreed on the topic that they decided to discuss. In order to help students comprehend the themes better, the teacher then gave a brief explanation of each of them.

#### *The second meeting*

During this meeting, the researchers explained the project to be done to the students and presented the project to the teacher. This project was a mini magazine project containing news. The teacher went over the steps that needed to finish the project-based learning after describing the project that they would be working on. These processes were broken down into four categories; starting the project, developing the project, reporting the project, and assessing the project. The teacher went on to describe the editing and proofreading procedure, and the teacher would offer help.

#### *The third meeting*

The teacher instructed the class to create news articles on any topic that their group chose to discuss during this meeting. They started the writing process by talking about what they would need, including content, vocabulary, and writing style. Once they had completed their writing, they worked with a peer to revise it, and the teacher offered suggestions and encouragement to help them improve.

#### *The fourth meeting*

This meeting's objective was to carry out posttest 1. The students were required to produce news articles on any subject of their choice for this posttest. When the students finish, they turned in their writing to their teacher, who graded it according to several factors, such as creativity, topic, and the content of the news. The average score was 60 points based on the post-test 1 results. This outcome showed improvement over the prior pretest that was conducted.

The students made significant progress during the reflection step, scoring 55 points on the pre-

cycle test and 60 points on the post-cycle test. The majority of the students had the chance to engage in discussion and active participation in the event. They also began to respond positively to each other's perspectives. They also became more creative while working on this project, and it showed improvement in the way they wrote their news. However, some students got difficulty with the subjects that they had chosen. They still required assistance from their peers and teacher since their vocabulary was too weak, and their critical thinking was too weak. The letter had a number of punctuation and grammar mistakes. In summary, the activities carried out by the students are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1. *Activities on cycle 1*

Meeting	Activities	
	Lecturer	Students
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Giving 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>● Making groups into four groups</li> <li>● Choosing 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>● Making a plan</li> <li>● Making an understanding to the teacher's explanation</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Asking the students to start and to finish the writing</li> <li>● Guiding the peer correction of the students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Starting the writing</li> <li>● Doing a peer correction</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Giving a post test that is to write a short news</li> <li>● Correcting the student's short news</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Writing a short news</li> <li>● Submitting the short news to the teacher</li> </ul>

#### *Cycle 2*

This cycle was conducted in February, 2023. In cycle 1, the teacher and the students conducted a reflection, and the reflection was used to make cycle 2 more perfect especially in the planning part. Due to the fact that the students' post-test 1

grammar and punctuation errors persisted, the teacher had to explain the errors. After that, students kept editing their writing, and the teacher gave them comments. In cycle 2, there were four meetings, including:

#### *The fifth meeting*

The students were instructed to complete an individual task for this meeting. The students individual project required them to compose a news text based on the teacher-provided topics. The purpose of the individual project was to assess each student's level of creativity in creating a news text.

#### *The sixth meeting*

The students conducted a peer correction during this meeting. Peer correction was designed to help the students to develop their critical thinking skills, to identify, and to fix the writing errors. The students might edit each other's works during this meeting since occasionally they were able to identify errors in each other's work even when they were unable to do it themselves. The students were able to improve and to increase the readability of their news text through this peer correction exercise.

#### *The seventh meeting*

During this meeting, the students were given instructions to design a layout for their miniature magazine. The news content they had generated was the content that was included in their little publication. The students employed the Canva application to create the mini magazine due to its user-friendly nature, simplicity, and the majority of students' familiarity with it. Every student had to gather their news articles, which were subsequently compiled into a little magazine. Prior to submitting the mini magazine to the teacher, the students collaborated to revise it, specifically focusing on the issues related to the writing style and arrangement.

#### *The eighth meeting*

In this meeting, the students submitted their final mini magazine that they had made and revised. The mini magazine was the result of the writing and work of all students. The teacher then scored it. The score was considered as writing subject score. In this meeting, the students also got post-test 2 from the teacher. The post-test two conducted individually. In this post test, the students were asked to make a news text that talked about their activities in that day, namely

conducting and collecting mini magazines. They were given thirty minutes to write a short news text. After completing and submitting their assignments, the average score they got was 65. When it was compared to the post-test 1, it could be seen that there was an improvement made by the students in writing English news text. Some errors in grammar and punctuation still existed but had decreased, and it also showed a fairly good development. One of the reasons for this development was the project-based learning which made the students more focused and enjoyed working on their projects. In addition, group projects helped the students to feel less overwhelmed since they could collaborate and learn how to support one another and their peers who struggled with the assignment. In conclusion, the students could enjoy and find great value in this activity.

#### *The ninth meeting*

The students were given enough opportunity to ask questions during this discussion, and many of them did so with particular interest in project-based learning. Their positive reactions to the use of project-based learning in English writing teaching suggested that their improvements and attitudes toward writing through project-based learning appeared to be extremely good. The majority of students make good progress and had positive views about project-based learning based on these statistics as well. They completed the project in a pleasant manner because this method helped the students to feel more at ease during their conversations and studying. The outcomes of the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 could also be used to assess this. The students had to deal with a real-world problem for this mini magazine assignment by talking to other students about it and getting advice from the teacher. The second cycle's activity table is shown below.

Table 1. *Activities on cycle 1*

		Meeting	Activities	
			Lecturer	Students
5	●	Asking the students to do the individual assignment	●	Doing an individual assignment
6	●	Doing a peer correction	●	Correcting their writing and gave feedbacks to their friend's writing

7	● Doing a peer correction	● Designing a layout for the mini magazine
8	● Scoring ● Giving post test 2	● Submitting their mini magazine ● Doing a post test 2
9	● Giving a time to give a question	● Giving a question about the Project Based-Learning

Based on the results of the application of Classroom Action Research, the researcher provided an analysis of the scores obtained by the students from test to test as follows.

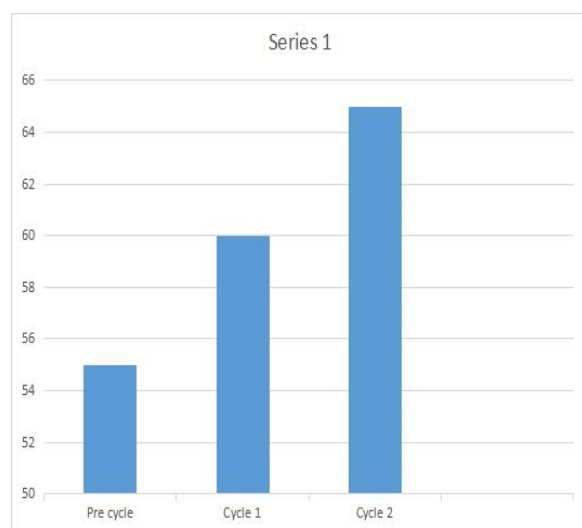


Figure 1. *The mean score of cycle 1 and 2*

Figure 1 above shows that the students have improved in the pre-cycle as compared to the pre-test, going from 55 to 60 in cycle 1 post-test 1. After that, this development persisted in cycle 2's second post, which was 65. This development indicates that X MA Diponegoro students in Yogyakarta could improve their writing abilities by implementing a project-based learning to their English writing capabilities. Furthermore, in writing, the students made less grammatical and punctuation mistakes. To sum up, a project-based learning might help the students' writing skill development.

#### *The student's attitudes in learning English writing skills through poject-based learning*

The second aim of the study was to describe students' attitudes toward learning English writing skills through project-based learning. The researcher employed observation and interviews to gather data for the second objective of the study. Then, the researchers used data triangulation to examine the findings. Activities were created for the entire class, and observations and interviews were done while the teacher was instructing. Table 3 below provides details of the data obtained through triangulation.

Table 3. *Triangulation data*

Finding	Observation	Interview	Result
1	They did a discissuion in their groups about the topic they had chosen	They said that a discussion in a group about writing was interesting, and it can increase their critical mind	Students felt happy and they felt that Project Based-Learning was 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	They developed their knowledge during doing their group project

		not find in a personal project	
5	The students seemed happier during 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 collected five points in order to address the second objective. Based on these observations, the findings demonstrated that students made progress throughout the teaching and learning process. The students' participation, motivation, creativity, knowledge, and happy feelings were all improved.

Writing projects can be challenging for the students because good writing requires the mastery of several different abilities. On the other hand, it could be said that the students need a new regulation in writing either from the teaching strategy and from other parts of teaching (Teng & Ying, 2023). As a result, the researcher had to develop a strategy for teaching writing, particularly news texts. Students could improve greatly through project-based learning, both in terms of their performance and writing. This was achieved by giving students an assignment that they could complete independently or in groups, using their imagination and creativity (Legget et al, 2019; as cited in Maros et al, 2021).

In order to teach news writing to senior high school students, PBL was implemented during the second semester. The students were given a project by the teacher. Making a mini-magazine with news on a teacher-assigned topic was the project's goal. The group selected one of the five subjects that the teacher offered. They worked on the project in groups and worked hard to find ideas, design and revise their mini magazine.

The project-based learning approach has been successfully used in Yogyakarta MA Diponegoro's tenth grade writing class. First, using PBL could help the students to be better on writing assignments. Higher test results from the students served as a proof of this. In the last cycle, their average score was only 55 points, but in the first cycle, they made progressto 60 points. Then they got 65 points, which was an improved outcome. Put otherwise, it might be claimed that the students' writing abilities had increased.

Students had developed their attitude towards the teaching and learning writing, especially in writing news text without Project Based-Learning. They showed little desire to learn writing.

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 groups to complete the project. The researcher's group structure could encourage the students to enjoy writing in English and foster their original thoughts. This is also supported by Marnewick (2023) who stated that Project Based-Learning was the best method that could motivate students to be more active and more creative, because in project-based learning, the students construct their own knowledge. In addition, because project participants had to communicate with one another during the project, project-based learning might help students to improve their communication skills. The students said that they could learn more optimally and enjoyably with project-based learning since they could enjoy the process without feeling under pressure from their peers or the teacher.

Second, it can be concluded that the students responded well to the teaching and learning process in the classroom, based on the findings of the observation and interview conducted during the learning process although researchers address different challenges, one of which is the students' varying skills. It makes the teacher have to put in stronger attempts to ensure that students with lower abilities do not feel anxious about their peers who are smarter than them, particularly when working on projects. they. Several findings were revealed by the triangulation of the data. According to those research findings, students believed that project-based learning might boost their enthusiasm for studying. Additionally, the students believed that project-based learning might improve their knowledge and creativity as well as making them experience more enjoyment from the learning process. Thus, it can be concluded that project-based learning enhances the students' motivation and enjoyment of studying English in addition to their writing abilities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research was conducted in eight meetings from January to March, 2023. the pre-cycle was

conducted in one meeting. Cycle 1 was conducted in three meetings, and the last meeting was for the post test of cycle 1. Cycle 2 was conducted in three meetings, and the last meeting was used for interview. The result of this research indicated that there was improvement in student's writing skill before and after the researcher implemented the Project Based-learning. The pre-cycle's average score was only 55, cycle 1 was 60, and cycle 2 was 65. Besides, they also had a good attitude towards the teaching in the learning process in the classroom. PBL could help them to be excited to participate actively in class and to work together with their group, so their skill in group work was also increased. Projects given to the students could also increase their creativities in finding the ideas. Project based learning can be enhancing the writing proficiency of students at MA Diponegoro Yogyakarta. Their writing abilities have shown significant improvement compared to their previous learning experiences. The future research in this field can employ project-based learning and incorporate additional theories to identify effective strategies for enhancing students' English writing proficiency and fostering a positive attitude towards English.

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