

## PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN TEACHING WRITING: THE IMPLEMENTATION AND STUDENTS' OPINION

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**Abstract:** Writing becomes the most challenging skill for the students as it needs more time to develop and tend to raise problem to students. Therefore, project based learning is offered to solve the problems in writing. Some experts believe that project based learning (PBL) can provoke the students to get new knowledge through their own project. This research reports on the implementation of project based learning in teaching writing. The objectives of the research are to know the implementation of project based learning in elevating the students' ability on writing and to know the students' opinion of the implementation of project based learning in teaching writing. Qualitative was used as a research method and classroom action research as a research design. The participants of the research were fourth semester students in one university in Cimahi, West Java. The collected data were obtained through observation, writing test and interview. Then, 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 students' responses during the implementation of this method as they gave positive opinion toward the method used; they actively involved in learning process. PBL was proved on helping the students wrote well. Besides, the project given engaged the students in solving a real problem and answering it. In other word, this project could develop the students' critical thinking and it could be a meaningful project for them.

**Keywords:** *project-based learning; writing; classroom action research.*

### INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of productive skills that should be mastered by the students. As stated by Hyland (1996), writing is a way of sharing personal meaning and writing course emphasize the power of individual to construct his or her own views on a topic. It can be inferred that a person delivers his/her own ideas through his/her own writing and everyone can have different perspective about something that they think. Through writing, students can express feeling, describe something, discuss an idea, present a point of view, and share experience they have in the form of written product (Argawati & Suryani, 2017). Besides, writing is a means of extending and deepening student's knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Graham & Perrin, 2007).

Moreover, Nunan (2003, p. 88) believes that writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium, whether it is hieroglyphics inked onto parchment or an e-mail message typed into a computer. On the other hand, writing is the

mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader.

Concerning to study in higher education, students are necessary to attain academic writing ability since it influences their academic achievement (Oktarina, Emzir, & Rafli, 2018). Students in university level should master the way to write well. It has to be done to fulfill the purpose of learning writing for them as students. Bailey (2015) wrote that the purposes of writing, as follow: 1) to report what the writer has done, 2) to answer writer's questions, 3) to discuss one specific topic and provide writer's opinions, 4) to synthesize research conducted by someone about one topic.

Nevertheless, writing is not an easy skill to do, especially for EFL students. Although they learn English since elementary school but writing is still the biggest problem for the students. This problem is faced by university students too. They

are in trouble to start writing and to express ideas through writing. This is in line with Kim and Kim (2005) as cited in Agustiana (2017) who say writing is considered to be difficult and challenging for most students. It is supported by Heaton (1998) who states writing skill is complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements. Therefore, this indicates that writing is hard because there are several components or aspects to consider in writing, and it can cause that the students are afraid to write because they do not want to do mistakes.

The components or aspects of writing that need to be considered by the teachers based on Jacobson (2003) are covering:

- 1) Content – refers to the substance of writing, the experience of main idea. i.e., group of related statements that a writer presents as unit in developing a subject. Content of the paragraph do the work of conveying ideas rather than fulfilling special function of transition, restatement, and emphasis.
- 2) Organization – refers to the logical organization of content. It is scarcely more than attempt to piece together all collection of fact and jumbled ideas. Even in early drafts it may still be searching for order, trying to make out patterns in its materials and working to bring particulars of its subject in line with what is still only a half-formed notion of purpose.
- 3) Vocabulary – refers to the selection of words those are suitable with the content. It begins with the assumption that writer wants to express the ideas as clearly and directly as he/she can. Choosing words that express his/her meaning is precisely rather than skews it or blurs it.
- 4) Language use – refers to the use of correct grammatical form and synthetic pattern of separating, combining, and grouping ideas in words, phrases, clauses, and sentences to bring out logical relationship in paragraph writing.
- 5) Mechanic – refers to the use graphic convention of the language, i.e., the step of arranging letters, words, and paragraphs by using knowledge of structure and some others related to one another.

Writing needs process and it will take time for the students to write well. According to Harmer (2007), writing is different from speaking; the final product of writing is not nearly

instant. It means that process is needed for the students; they have to think the ideas, select vocabulary, write, edit, and then publish it. Besides, the teachers have important role to help the students to develop their writing. So, the teachers are expected to implement suitable method or strategy in teaching writing.

Dealing with the problem, teachers need to continue seek for some methods or approach to implement in teaching writing. Process approach seems appropriate to be used to this case. One of the methods belongs to process approach is Project-Based learning (PBL). PBL is a method that allows “students to design, plan, and carry out an extended project that produces a publicly exhibited output such as a product, publication, or presentation” (Patton, 2012; as cited in Riswandi, 2018). It is in line with Task-Based Instruction which gives the opportunities for students to feel free doing their task in their ways. The most different thing is dealing with the term “project”. This project is be able to engage students on doing things done based on their own plan, idea, and creativity. In this research, the researchers asked the students to do such a project; it was mini magazine project. They chose their own topic, group, and design.

This research aims on describing the implementation of project based learning in elevating the students' ability on writing and on describing the students' opinion of the implementation of project based learning in teaching writing.

## **METHOD**

Method of research used on this study was qualitative with Classroom Action Research. There were two objectives of the research, they were, it described the implementation of teaching writing using Project-Based Learning (PBL) to improve the ability of the students on writing. Beside, it also revealed the students' opinion toward the implementation of the method of teaching used.

Classroom action research is defined as a research that is used to improve better learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) and teachers as researchers in the classroom (Mertler, 2009). In other word, teachers know the problems in the classroom and find out the solution to solve the problems. In this research, writing became the problem of the students and lecturer offered project based learning as the solution of the problem that were faced by students.

The Classroom Action Research has four steps to be implemented in the research; they are covering Planning, Action, Observation, and reflection. Those four steps are bond together in a cycle which can be repeated based on the researchers' need. In every cycle, there must be pre-test and post-test to measure the improvement of the students' ability on writing. On this study, the researchers conducted two cycles to collect the data.

The study was already done on the even semester of 2017-2018, during February to April 2018. The participants of this study were the fourth semester students of a university in Cimahi. It consisted of 30 students in one classroom. The instruments used were test, observasion and interview. Tests were in the form of essay test related to the instruction for the students to build a descriptive text, and given to the students as a pre-test and a post-test. While the observation and interview were done during the action conducted in the classroom. The observation done towards all of the students in the classroom, while the interview was only done toward students to dig in depth information related to their responses on the instruction conducted. The data were then analysed through triangulation. It was used to find out the similarities and differences the data. The result of data would be discussed in the following section of this research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the research is divided into two parts; the first is the implementation of project based learning to improve students' writing ability and the second is the students' opinions toward project based learning in learning writing.

### Implementation of PBL to improve students' writing ability

The first point of finding reflected the result of students' learning writing using Problem-Based Learning. The research was conducted using Classroom Action Research which consisted of two cycles. Before doing the cycle 1, the researchers began with pre-cycle. In this step, the researchers did the pre-test for the students to know their ability before the PBL was implemented. Here is the detail information of the result of implementing CAR to the students:

#### *Pre cycle*

The researchers conducted the research within three months from February – April 2018. Every cycle consists of four steps; they are planning,

action, observation, and reflection. In the first meeting, the researchers did pretest by asking the students to write two paragraphs regarding to the topic that the students chose. The topic given were related to descriptive text. They were getting the opportunity to choose the topics by themselves to make them felt free to write, so that it could reflect their genuine ability of writing. The result was then used as the beginning score before implementing project based learning as the score of pre-test 1. The mean score of pre-test in this pre cycle was 65 and it was considering as a 'not good enough' score regarded to the minimum standart of score. Therefore, project based learning was offered to be implemented to solve this problem. Then, the next step done was cycle 1.

#### *Cycle 1*

After getting the score from pre-test in the pre cycle, the researchers did a planning step. They discussed about lesson plan and the topics that would be implemented in the classroom. Cycle 1 was conducted into three meetings and post-test for the fourth meeting.

##### 1) The first meeting in cycle 1

The lecturer wrote down six topics, they were: healthy, business, mind, education, leisure, and technology. Every student could choose the topic based on his/her passion. Then, they made a group of 5 and 6. In one group, every student was given a chance to choose subtopic about education and every student could not choose same sub topic, they had to have different perspective but the point was the same, education. They could choose the topic based on real problem in society and find out the solution. The lecturer explained about topic sentences and supporting sentences, she also asked the students to analyse one text in pre cycle.

##### 2) The second meeting

The students were introduced about the project and at the end of the project; the students had to submit mini magazines. The lecturer explained the steps in doing project based learning. There are four steps in doing project based learning; they are starting the project, developing, reporting, and assessing the project. The lecturer also explained about editing and proofreading.

##### 3) The third meeting

The lecturer asked the students to write a text in a group. They could discus with their friends related to the content, vocabulary, etc of the text. Then, the students did peer

correction. Peer correction was based on the criteria of proofreading that the students have already got in the previous meeting.

4) The fourth meeting

This meeting was used for conducting post-test 1. The post-test done by giving the students instruction to write down a composition in descriptive text. In this section, they could freely choose the topic with their preference by their own. After the students wrote the text, then the researchers analysed the result based on writing component rubric. The result showed that the mean score of post-test 1 on cycle 1 was 70. It means there was an improvement based on pre cycle result of the students.

In the reflection step, the students gained good improvement from pre cycle, 65 to cycle 1, 70. Most of the students had good responses and they could discuss actively. Critical thinking of the students appeared in learning and it was meaningful for them. It can be seen from peer feedback that they did with their friends in their own group. They could share and analyse text. Nevertheless, some of the students were confused and they did not have idea to write. Some of them could not develop and write down the topic sentences and supporting sentences when they made the composition. Grammar errors and punctuation were still found in the students' writing. In summary, the activities done by the students can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. *Activities on cycle 1*

Meeting	Activities	
	Lecturer	Students
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gave topics to students to be chosen</li> <li>gave examples of topic sentences and supporting sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made group of 5-6 persons</li> <li>chose the topic given</li> <li>then analyzed the topic and supporting sentences given</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explained about the PBL used in the teaching and learning activities</li> <li>gave them a project (wrote a text in a group)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>set their plan and idea on the project given</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>asked the students to finish the text.</li> <li>Peer correction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wrote a text and discussed it with his/her friends in a group</li> <li>submitted the text</li> <li>peer correction with another group</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gave a post-test</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the post-test</li> </ul>

**Cycle 2**

Cycle 2 was conducted in March, 2018. Reflection in cycle 1 was used to revise planning in cycle 2. The lecturer tried to explain more to the students about topic sentences and supporting sentences. The lecturer showed some examples of grammar error and punctuation, so the students could revise it. The lecturer gave feedback and correction to the students. Cycle 2 was divided in four meeting. Here are the meeting conducted:

1) In fifth meeting,

The lecturer asked the students to do individual exercises based on the sub topic. In this step the lecturer gave them some topics and the students were having the opportunity to practice and develop their skill on building concept and making composition. They wrote text based on their own topic.

2) In sixth meeting

This meeting was conducted to do peer correction. Peer correction was done to know

the students' error in writing and they could revise it. It was also be done to give oportunity to students to recognize error from their friends' work. Recognizing error could help them to build a better writing and make a good composition. Besides, beeing corrected by their own friends rose less intimidation feeling if compared with corrected by the lecturer. Through peer correction, students could study better and could fix their error or mistakes if they had any.

3) The seventh meeting

The students designed their own layout of mini magazine containing their coposition they had already made in descriptive text by using some digital appllications like canva, lucidpress, or adobe in design. The students were more creative in using some applications that can be used in designing their mini magazine. Every student had to collect his/her own text and compiled in a

group to attach in mini magazine. The final result of the project was in the form of mini magazine. The students revised their composition and their mini magazine again and made final revision before submitting it in the next meeting.

4) The eighth meeting

After doing some revision, the students submitted the complete mini magazines as the unity of their result of writing of all the member in team to the lecturer. Then, the lecturer assessed the students' composition as their score of writing subject. In this meeting the lecturer also conducted post-test for cycle 2. The post-test was individual test which was done in the classroom. The students needed to make their own composition regarded to the mini magazine they made before. They only had thirty minutes on making the composition of descriptive text by their own. After doing the post-test, their final score was revealed. The mean score in cycle 2 was 74. It means that quantitatively there was an improvement for the students from pre cycle to cycle 1, and from cycle 1 to cycle 2. Grammar errors and punctuation decreased even though there were some mistakes and errors which were still found. However, it was considering having a good improvement since the mistakes and

errors were not as many as in the first meeting. It was as the result of several steps implemented regarded to the Project-based learning which had been chosen. Beside, this project could develop the students' critical thinking since they had to work both in group and in individual work. It means that they had opportunity to discuss the material with their friends, then they were given opportunity too to improve themselves individually. In addition, the project done could be a meaningful project for them.

5) The ninth meeting

In the last meeting, the students were asked some questions related to project based learning. It was done to reveal their responses toward the use of Project-based learning in teaching writing descriptive text in their class. Interview was conducted to the students. The result showed that most of the students had positive responses to project based learning. It could happen since they felt that the method use could effectively improve their ability which measured through several test; pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. Moreover, the project given engaged the students in solving a real problem and answering it. For an easy checking, Table 2 serves the summary of the activities in cycle 2.

Table 2. *Activities on cycle 2*

Meeting	Activities	
	Lecturer	Students
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asked the students to write individual text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wrote a text</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer correction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The students read and revised their friends' writing.</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design layout</li> <li>Gave a post-test for cycle 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the project with their group</li> <li>Collect his/her own text and compiled in a group to attach in mini magazine</li> <li>revised it again and made final revision</li> <li>Did the post-test on cycle 2</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gave a post test</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students did their writing activities</li> </ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted an interview to 6 students related to their opinion toward the use of PBL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students answered some questions delivered by the researchers</li> </ul>

As a result of the Classroom Action Research which had been applied, the researchers could analyze the mean score of the students from test

to test. Here is the detail information of the students' scores as served on Figure 1.

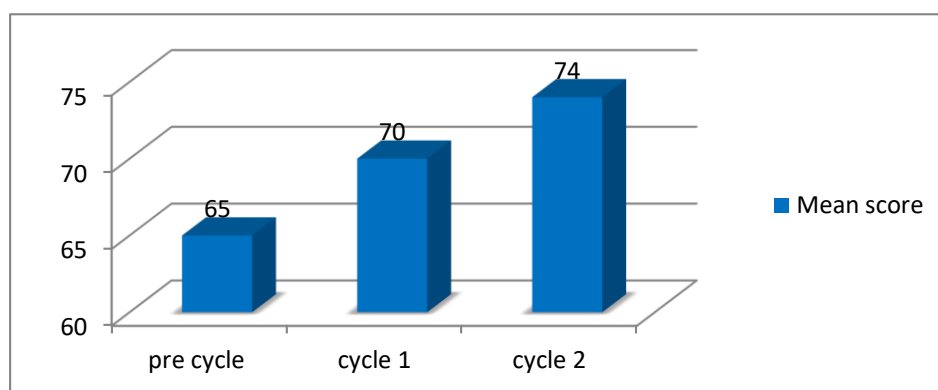


Figure 1. *The mean score of cycle 1 and 2*

Based on figure 1.1 above, it can be seen that there was an improvement from pre-test in pre cycle, which was 65 became 70 on the post-test 1 in cycle 1. Then, it was continued to the second post-test in cycle 2 which gained 74. Through this finding, it can be inferred that project based learning applied to teach writing descriptive text to the fourth semester students can help the students in improving their ability on writing measured from their three different test above. Besides, the students' error in writing got decrease from pre cycle into the last cycle, in other words, project based learning could help the students to write well. It can be inferred from peer feedback that the students did in each cycle.

**Students' opinion toward the implementation of Problem-Based Learning in Teaching Writing**

The second objective of the research is to describe the students' opinion towards the implementation on Project-based Learning in teaching writing descriptive text. The researchers collected the data regarded to the second aim of study through observation and interview, then analyzed the result through data triangulation. The observation was done during the teaching and learning process of writing activities to the whole class. While the interview was conducted to 6 students represented their groups. Table 3 serves the detailed presentation of the data gained through triangulation.

Table 3. *Triangulation data*

Finding	Observation	Interview	Result
1	They did the discussion with their friends in group willingly. The interaction was increased from meeting to meeting	They stated that they had willingness to do discussion with friends in group. They had many things to discuss with their friends.	Students felt that the Project-based Learning they did was good to increase their <b>activeness</b> during learning process
2	They searched some vocabularies on dictionary and some meaning of words in the internet	They stated that they needed dictionary to look for the meaning of some words and vocabularies	Students thought that their <b>motivation</b> was improved from time to time by doing the project in group
3	They found their own way to do the project given by the lecturer and created their mini magazine based on their group idea	They said that they had already found their own design for their mini magazine, and the way to make it based on their discussion	Students' <b>creativity</b> was overwhelmed during their work on their project of mini magazine. They created their own and made it into something they like the most.
4	They seemed to revise their work due to the new finding of something new. They made some corrections on some errors occurred during their work. They fixed the grammatical errors and the incorrect punctuation	They felt that they knew something new during their work in group. Most of them said that in group they found many grammatical errors which could not be found if they did their work individually. Many	Students admitted that they study more. They sharpened their <b>knowledge</b> during constructing their project.

	together in their group	corrections they made during the making of their project.	
5	They laughed more. They smiled more. They interacted more. They build connection through the project worked. They helped each other and seemed so comfortable being in their group making their mini magazine	They answered the questions with smile and said that it was fun during the discussion and work. They said that they could work better with their friends and felt that their mini magazine was great.	Students seems to be happier during the learning process. Their project could raise so much fun. On top of that, they did <b>enjoy</b> their class activity.

There were five points that the researchers got highlighted to reveal the information related to the second objective. Those five points were also be the issue in the observation list when it was conducted. The result showed that there were several things that could be an improvement during the teaching and learning activity covering: activeness, motivation, creativity, knowledge and they way the enjoy the writing activities.

Writing activity to the students could be so difficult to master. Students had many things to deal with in order to improve their ability on writing. This situation raised the willingness of the researchers to use new method in teaching writing especially in descriptive text. Project-Based Learning is one method which worth-trying. It is a method which based on the project given to students and let them do that with their own creativity and effort (Patton, 2012; as cited in Riswandi , 2018).

PBL was conducted during the even semester to teach writing descriptive text in university level. The lecturer gave them a meaningful project to do. The project was to make a mini magazine based on the topic given by the lecturer. However, the topic given were so many that they could choose whichever topic they wanted. They did the project in group as they work together to design and create the mini magazine by their own.

The implementation of this method to teach writing to the fourth semester students of university level seemed to gain many results. First, the use of PBL could literally improve students' score of writing assignment. It could be seen from their increasing movement of their score of writing. On the pre-cycle, their mean score was only 65, but they showed their improvement on score on the cycle 1, which was 70. It was then continued to their result of cycle 2. They gained 4 more point to 74. In other word, we could say that they statistically improved on the field of knowledge and ability.

Moreover, the researchers could tell that they had improved their attitude qualitatively during teaching and learning activity. When they were asked to make a composition in descriptive, they showed their less desire since they felt that writing is difficult. However, by implementing Project based learning, their attitude started to move to the good one. They could work and discuss the project with their friends in their group duringthe writing session. Working in group to complete the project seemed to make them be more active and increase their motivation to write. It is supported by Bagheri & Abdullah (2013) as cited in Eliana, Senam, Wilujeng, and Jumadi (2016) state that PBL could be more effective result by allowing the students to participate actively in the learning process and allowing the students to produce something in collaborating with others. They also felt enjoy on making new composition related to the description on thing they had chosen.

Second, the researchers revealed the students' opinion toward the use of PBL on their writing class. It could be seen from the result of observation and interview conducted during the teaching and learning activity. They had and showed good responses during the activites of writing. The data triangulation showed some points of finding. Those findings were: students thought that PBL was able to increase their activeness during discussion in writing class, and the motivation as its effect was also elevated. Besides, they felt that the application of PBL was able to improve not only their knowledge but also their creativity during writing activity on creating mini magazine. Last but not least, they stated that they were so much happier on joining the lesson. It could be proven from their way of learning in the classroom. They laughed more, they smiled more, and they interacted more. So, project based not only help the students learn well but also the good atmosphere of learning.

## CONCLUSION

The research was conducted into eight meetings, from February to April, 2018. Pre cycle was conducted one meeting, cycle 1 was conducted into three meeting, cycle 2 was conducted into three meetings, and last meeting for interview. The result showed that there was an improvement before and after implementing project based learning. Pre cycle mean score was 65, cycle 1 was 70, and cycle 2 was 74. In addition, they had positive opinion toward the method used; they actively involved in learning process and they were motivated well. PBL was proved on helping the students wrote well and raised their creativity. Besides, the project given engaged the students in solving a real problem and answering it. Moreover, PBL could make them happily join the writingclass. In other word, this project could develop the students' critical thinking and it could be a meaningful project for them. It was proved that PBL could be use to improve students writing ability and gained positive opinion from the students.

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