

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers background of the study, formulation of research questions, purpose of the research, formulation of hypotheses, significances of the research, scope and limitation of research, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of the study

Writing is often considered the most difficult skill to master compared to the other three skills.¹ This activity is not merely arranging words into written form, but involves a complex and structured thinking process. Writing skills require the ability to adapt content and style to the context, purpose, and intended audience.² Writers need to be able to develop ideas, organize them coherently, and use language that conforms to the rules of grammar and the appropriate writing style to produce meaningful texts.

Writing descriptive texts is one of the basic competencies that must be mastered by junior high school students,³ especially those in grade 8, as stated in the Deep Learning. This learning aims to enable students to describe people, animals, objects, or places clearly, in detail, and vividly, so that readers can imagine the objects being described as if they were seeing them directly. The skill of writing

¹ Muminova Surayo Akramovna, Tangirova Aziza Alimovna, and Fayzullaeva Nasiba Djurakulovna, 'Difficulties in Teaching Writing Skill', *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 3.12 (2020), pp. 453–57.

² Charity Givens, 'Analyzing Writing Style and Adapting to a New Writing Culture: A Teaching Practice', in *Journal of Academic Writing: EATAW Conference 2019 Special Issue*. (European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (EATAW), 2020), x, 213–20.

³ Susanti Marsono, 'Penerapan Metode Cooperative Script Untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Menulis Descriptive Text Pada Siswa Kelas VIII-E Semester 1 SMP Negeri 1 Rejotangan Tahun Pelajaran 2017/2018', *Jurnal Pembelajaran Dan Riset Pendidikan*, 1.1 (2021), pp. 180–98.

descriptive texts also plays an important role in training students' language sensitivity, observation skills, and creativity in composing effective and expressive sentences.⁴

Students often experience difficulties in writing descriptive texts, these difficulties commonly include limited vocabulary mastery, the use of simple and repetitive sentence structures, and weak organization of ideas.⁵ Consequently, the descriptive texts produced by students tend to be less engaging, lack clarity, and fail to convey detailed imagery to readers. Research has also indicated that such problems are frequently associated with the use of conventional teaching methods that are teacher-centered and emphasize mechanical exercises rather than meaningful writing practice.

Traditional teaching approaches generally focus on lecturing and drilling grammatical patterns.⁶ While this may help students understand basic language structures, it is insufficient for developing higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and independence in writing. As a result, students often struggle to express ideas freely and imaginatively, particularly when required to produce longer and more complex texts such as descriptive writing.⁷ These findings suggest the need for more innovative and student-centered learning models to enhance students' writing abilities.

⁴ Tira Nur Fitria, 'Creative Writing Skills in English: Develop Students' Potential and Creativity', *EBONY: Journal of English Language Teaching, Linguistics, and Literature*, 4.1 (2024), pp. 1–17.

⁵ Merliana Duha, 'STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT', *FAGURU: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Keguruan*, 1.2 (2022), pp. 13–25.

⁶ Dawit Dibekulu Alem, 'Teaching Grammar: In the View of Conventional vs Contemporary Approach', *An International Journal of English Language*, 10.2 (2021).

⁷ Esma Şenel, 'The Integration of Creative Writing into Academic Writing Skills in EFL Classes', *International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching*, 6.2 (2018), pp. 115–20.

In response to this problem, educators and researchers have begun to explore various innovative learning models that place students at the center of the learning process (student-centered learning). One approach that is gaining attention is Project-Based Learning (PjBL). This model emphasizes the active involvement of students in learning activities through complex, authentic, and contextual projects over a period of time.⁸ According to Chiang and Lee, PjBL provides opportunities for students to build knowledge independently through direct experience, thereby increasing student motivation, creativity, and writing skills because the learning process focuses on exploration, reflection, and the creation of meaningful real-world work.⁹

Unlike traditional learning methods that place teachers at the center of learning activities, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) places students as the main actors in the learning process.¹⁰ Students are encouraged to actively engage in investigative activities, collaboration, and the creation of real products in the context of writing, which take the form of structured, interesting, and communicative descriptive texts. PjBL provides space for students to experience a more meaningful learning process, because they not only learn theory, but also apply it directly in contextual situations that resemble the real.¹¹

⁸ Mohammed Abdullatif Almulla, 'The Effectiveness of the Project-Based Learning (PBL) Approach as a Way to Engage Students in Learning', *Sage Open*, 10.3 (2020), p. 215.

⁹ Chin-Ling Chiang and Huei Lee, 'The Effect of Project-Based Learning on Learning Motivation and Problem-Solving Ability of Vocational High School Students', *International Journal of Information and Education Technology*, 6.9 (2016), pp. 709–12.

¹⁰ Irfan Rizkiana Raja Nugraha, Udin Supriadi, and Mokh Iman Firmansyah, 'Efektivitas Strategi Pembelajaran Project Based Learning Dalam Meningkatkan Kreativitas Siswa', *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pendidikan IPS*, 17.1 (2023), pp. 39–47.

¹¹ Ciptro Handrianto and Muhammad Arinal Rahman, 'Project Based Learning: A Review of Literature on Its Outcomes and Implementation Issues', *LET: Linguistics, Literature and English Teaching Journal*, 8.2 (2018), pp. 110–29.

According to Bell in Brahmandika, the PjBL model has great potential in increasing student motivation, independence, and practical skills.¹² Through challenging projects that are relevant to their lives, students are encouraged to think critically, solve problems, and develop the ability to work together in groups. This kind of learning experience helps students understand that writing is not just an academic task, but a communicative skill that has real value in everyday life.

Empirical evidence from previous studies supports the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in English language learning, particularly in improving writing skills. Alvi, Hendi and Priajana found that the implementation of PjBL contributed significantly to write achievement of class X at Al Musyawirin Vocational School for the 2023/2024 academic year.¹³ Similar results were also shown by Asrul, et al., study, which proved that this model was able to improve students' ability to write narrative texts.¹⁴ These findings show that PjBL not only enriches students' learning experiences but also encourages them to be more active and creative in producing writing.

Most previous studies tended to focus on general writing skills or specific types of texts, such as narrative and procedural texts. This condition leaves a gap in research regarding the extent to which PjBL affects the ability to write descriptive texts, especially among eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo. To fill this

¹² Pande Gede Brahmandika and I Made Utama, 'Pengembangan Strategi Pembelajaran Inovatif Berbasis Proyek Pada Kurikulum Merdeka', *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 9.4 (2024), pp. 234–39.

¹³ Alvi Nur Amali, Hendi Hidayat, and Nana Priajana, 'The Effectiveness Of Project-Based Learning On Students' writing Achievement In Descriptive Text At Vocational High School', *Journal of English Teaching and Linguistics*, 1.01 (2024), pp. 24–34.

¹⁴ Nurmahyuni Asrul and others, 'The Effect of Project-Based Learning on Students' Achievement in Writing Narrative Text', *Journal of English Language and Education*, 6.2 (2021), pp. 103–9.

gap, this study attempts to present a more focused and contextual review, focusing on the application of the PjBL model in improving descriptive text writing skills.

Based on the background description above, this study is placed within the theoretical framework of constructivist learning and student-centered pedagogy. The constructivist approach emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by students through experience and direct interaction with their learning environment. In line with this principle, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is seen as a learning model that provides opportunities for students to build their own understanding through collaborative, exploratory, and reflective activities.¹⁵

This study aimed to examine the effect of Project-Based Learning on the descriptive writing skills of the eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo Tulungagung. The hypotheses proposed were that the application of PjBL would have a significant positive effect on students' writing skills compared to conventional learning methods. This was based on the assumption that PjBL was able to provide a more interesting, contextual, and collaborative learning experience, thereby directly overcoming various weaknesses previously found in students' writing, such as limited vocabulary, simple sentence structure, and lack of organization of ideas. Based on these considerations, the researcher determined the title of the study **“The Effectiveness of Using Project Based Learning on Students' Writing Descriptive Text Achievement at SMPN 1 Karangrejo Tulungagung.”**

¹⁵ AnselmusY Mones and Deasy Irawati, 'Project Based Learning (PjBL) Perspektif Progresivisme Dan Konstruktivisme', in *SIPTEK: Seminar Nasional Inovasi Dan Pengembangan Teknologi Pendidikan*, 1.1, (2023).

B. Formulation of Research Questions

Based on the explanation of the research background, the problem formulation can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the class scores taught by using Project-Based Learning (PjBL) of eighth grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo Tulungagung?
2. What are the class scores taught by using non-Project-Based Learning (PjBL) of eighth grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo Tulungagung?
3. Is there any significant difference scores on writing descriptive text achievement of the students taught by using PjBL and taught by using non-PjBL of eighth grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo Tulungagung?

C. Purposes of The Study

1. To find the writing descriptive text achievement scores taught using Project-Based Learning (PjBL) of the eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo Tulungagung.
2. To find the writing descriptive text achievement scores taught using non-Project-Based Learning (PjBL) of the eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo Tulungagung.
3. To find the significant influence of use Project-Based Learning (PjBL) on students' writing descriptive text achievement of the eighth grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo Tulungagung.

D. Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses in this study are divided into 2, namely H0 (Null Hypotheses) and H1 (Alternative Hypotheses).

1. H0 (Null Hypotheses)

- There is no significant difference in writing descriptive text achievement scores the students taught using Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and those taught using non-PjBL of the eighth grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo.

2. H1 (Alternative Hypotheses)

- There is significant difference in writing descriptive text achievement scores the students taught using Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and those taught using non-PjBL of the eighth grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo.

E. Significance of The Research

1. Theoretical Benefit

This research can contribute to develop research in the academic field regarding the use of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in improving students' writing descriptive text achievement.

2. Practical Benefit

The findings of the present study are expected to be contribute to students, tutors and other researchers:

a. For the students

This study is significantly important for students of SMP as the direct subjects of the research. It is expected that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can offer a more engaging, contextual, and

meaningful learning experience. Through PjBL, students are anticipated to improve their achievement in writing descriptive text by actively constructing their knowledge, enhancing their creativity, and collaborating with peers.

b. For teachers

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights and empirical evidence for English teachers and other similar educational contexts. It can serve as a reference for teachers seeking effective and innovative teaching strategies to overcome challenges in teaching writing. If proven effective, Project-Based Learning can be adopted as an alternative pedagogical model to enrich their teaching repertoire, moving away from conventional, teacher-centered methods toward a more student-centered approach that fosters 21st-century skills.

c. For other researchers

This research can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the application of Project-Based Learning in English language teaching, specifically in the context of writing skills. For other researchers, the results of this study can be used as a source of reference or baseline data for future research. It opens opportunities for further studies, such as replicating the research in different contexts, exploring the effect of PjBL on other English language skills (e.g., speaking or reading), or investigating its impact on non-cognitive aspects like students' critical thinking and collaborative abilities.

F. Scope and Limitation

This research is specifically scoped to investigate the effect of implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) on the descriptive text writing achievement of eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Karangrejo. The study focuses on writing skills, exclusively for the descriptive text genre. Using a quasi-experimental design, the research compares the outcomes between a class taught using PjBL and one taught with a conventional method, with all research activities confined to the specified grade and school. The limitation of this study is that it was only conducted at SMPN 1 Karangrejo, so the findings cannot be generalized to a wider population. This study only focused on one text genre, namely descriptive text, so the impact of PjBL on writing skills in other genres, such as narrative or procedural, is not yet known.

G. Definition of Key Terms

In order to avoid misunderstandings of the terms used in this study, they need to be defined as follows:

1. Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

Project-based learning is a learning model that applies the concept of student-centered learning. Students will be involved in the learning process and they will face problems in their surroundings directly. This will make students more skilled in solving problems when making projects.¹⁶

¹⁶ Emira Hayatina Ramadhan and Hindun Hindun, 'Penerapan Model Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek Untuk Membantu Siswa Berpikir Kreatif', *Protasis: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Budaya, Dan Pengajarannya*, 2.2 (2023), pp. 43–54.

2. Writing Achievement

Writing achievement is the level of a student's ability to produce English writing, which is assessed through writing tests covering content quality, organization, language use, and the ability to convey ideas in writing according to assessment criteria.¹⁷

3. Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is a type of text which is used by the writer or speaker to describe particular thing, person, animal, place and or event to the readers or hearers.¹⁸

¹⁷ Jyi-yeon Yi, 'Defining Writing Ability for Classroom Writing Assessment in High Schools.', *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 13.1 (2009), pp. 53–69.

¹⁸ Linda Gerot and Peter Wignell, 'Making Sense of Functional Grammar: An Introductory Workbook', (*No Title*), 1994; Eko Noprianto, 'Student's Descriptive Text Writing in SFL Perspectives', *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)*, 2.1 (2017), pp. 65–81.