

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses background of the research, statement of research problem, objective of the research, scope of the limitation, and definition of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

In today's educational landscape, there is a growing emphasis on developing not only students' academic abilities but also problem-solving skills. The Merdeka Curriculum, implemented in several schools in Indonesia, encourages student-centered learning and fosters creativity and independence. This curriculum provides teachers with the flexibility to apply various teaching approaches, one of which is Project-Based Learning (PjBL), a method that encourages active participation and hands-on learning. Solomon (2003) states that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is potentially empowering, motivating and challenging to the students. It proposes a student-centered, cooperative, interdisciplinary and integrated teaching-learning process which contextualizes their real life.¹

¹ Gwen Solomon, "Project-Based Learning (PjBL): A Primer," *Technology and Learning-Dayton*- 23, no. 6 (2003): 20.

English becomes the most important language in many countries and is used widely all over the world and is used in many field such as politics, education, business, trading and culture. English is used by people to communicate with other people who come from different countries. If we want to communicate with people from different country we have to be able to use English, at least orally. In Indonesia, English has become a compulsory subject in school, from elementary school until university. It means that English is important to be learnt by all students in every level of education. Also, in the hope of that the students are ready to face the globalization era by studying it in formal education.

However, in many schools, including MTs Aswaja Tunggangri, students often struggle with fundamental academic skills, particularly in learning English. English writing, speaking, listening, and vocabulary mastery are significant challenges for 8th-grade students at the school. Despite their academic weaknesses, these students demonstrate remarkable creative potential, and they are more engaged when presented with tasks that allow them to express their creativity. This presents an opportunity to explore how PjBL can be utilized to bridge the gap between their academic difficulties and creative strengths.

One specific type of project that aligns with both the students' interests and the goals of the curriculum is the creation of congratulation cards.

Congratulation cards provide students with a practical, creative task that encourages them to think critically, express themselves artistically, and apply English writing skill in a meaningful context. Additionally, this project allows for the integration of vocabulary, sentence structure, and basic writing skill, making it a suitable tool to engage students who may struggle with more traditional academic tasks.

Harmer (1998) points out, the writing skill has finally been recognized as an important skill for language learning, the writing process can be interpreted as stages of changes in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor behavior that occur within students'.² If the more things students are able to write or summarize, the more it will determine the students' understanding the material of learning.

Writing is not simply about putting words into sentences; it is a productive language skill that requires a combination of several competencies, including grammatical accuracy, sufficient vocabulary, clear idea development, logical organization, and proper writing mechanics such as punctuation and spelling. Without mastering these elements, students may struggle to express their thoughts effectively in written English.

To be able to write a proper congratulation card, students are expected to understand the social function of the text, use appropriate expressions of

² Jeremy Harmer, *How to Teach English*, vol. 62 (Oxford University Press, 2008).

congratulations, apply correct grammar and sentence structure, and demonstrate creativity in delivering sincere messages. These elements are essential in helping students communicate meaningfully in written English.

Although Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has been widely recognized as an effective teaching approach, there is limited research on how this method, specifically through the creation of congratulation cards, can enhance English writing skill among students with low academic performance. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the impact of PjBL on writing abilities, focusing on 8th-graders at MTs Aswaja Tunggangri.

Previous studies, such as those by Fitriyani et al. (2022) and Wulandari (2020), have shown that both greeting cards and Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can positively influence students' writing skill. However, these studies did not specifically combine PjBL with the creation of congratulation cards in a junior high school setting, especially during the curriculum transition period. This study attempts to fill that gap by integrating PjBL and a creative writing project in a real classroom context.

Given the creative tendencies of the students and their academic challenges, the application of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through congratulation card creation is expected to foster improvement in this area. Therefore, this study is essential in evaluating the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing students' writing skill, which are critical for their overall academic

development. Based on the problem explanation above, the writer is interested to conduct a research entitled “THE EFFECT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING (PjBL) THROUGH CONGRATULATION CARD CREATION ON ENGLISH WRITING SKILL OF THE 8TH GRADERS AT MTS ASWAJA TUNGGANGRI”

B. The Research Problem

Based on the background of the study, the research problem is formulated as, “Is there any significant difference in the English writing skill of the 8th graders at MTs Aswaja Tunggangri before and after the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through congratulation card creation?”

C. Objective of the Research

Based on the research problem, the objective of the research is formulated as, “To determine whether there is a significant improvement in the English writing skill of the 8th graders at MTs Aswaja Tunggangri as a result of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through congratulation card creation.”

D. Significance of the Research

The findings of this study are expected to be useful for:

1. English Teachers: This research provides English teachers with valuable insights into the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as an instructional strategy. By implementing creative projects

like congratulation card creation, teachers can engage students in a more meaningful learning process that foster language skills. The findings can inform teaching practices and encourage educators to adopt innovative methods tailored to the needs of students who may struggle with traditional learning approaches.

2. Students: The study holds significance for students by demonstrating how Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can enhance their English writing skill. By participating in hands-on projects, students are likely to feel more motivated and engaged in their learning. This approach allows them to express their creativity while developing essential language skills, ultimately building their confidence in using English both in writing and in other contexts.
3. Further Research: The findings from this study can serve as a foundation for further research in the field of English language education. It opens up opportunities to explore the impact of various Project-Based Learning (PjBL) activities on different aspects of language acquisition, including speaking and listening skills. Future studies can also investigate the effectiveness of PjBL in diverse educational settings or with different age groups, contributing to a broader understanding of innovative teaching practices in language learning.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Research

This research focuses on examining the effect of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) through congratulation card creation on the English writing skill of eighth-grade students at MTs Aswaja Tunggangri, specifically class VIII-A. The study is conducted within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, although the school is still in the transition phase from the 2013 Curriculum (K13). The research is limited to assessing writing skill only, which include content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, using an analytical scoring rubric.

This study has several limitations. First, the research was carried out in only one class, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other classes or schools. Second, the study focuses exclusively on writing skill and does not explore the impact of PjBL on other language skills such as speaking, listening, or reading. Lastly, the project implemented in this research is limited to congratulation card creation, which may not fully represent the range of possible outcomes from other types of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) activities.

F. Definition of Key Terms

To understand the research significance and objectives in this study, a few important phrases are necessary. Effect, Project-Based Learning (PjBL), Congratulation Card, and English writing proficiency are some of these terms.

The learning process and results in this study are greatly influenced by each of these ideas.

The term "effect" describes the quantifiable improvement in students' English writing abilities following Project-Based Learning (PjBL) instruction through the making of congratulations cards. A pre-test and post-test are used to compare the students' writing performance before and after the treatment in order to ascertain the effect. A notable variation in scores suggests that the students' writing skills have been impacted by the educational approach.

With Project-Based Learning (PjBL), students actively participate in real-world and personally significant projects to learn. In this study, PjBL refers to the method of instruction where students' main objective is to improve their language and creative skills by making congratulation cards.

One kind of card designed to congratulate someone on a particular occasion or accomplishment is the congratulation card. In the context of this study, students create and write these cards as part of a Project-Based Learning (PjBL) assignment that calls for both the use of English writing skills and creative design.

Writing skill refers to the students' ability to produce written English that effectively communicates their ideas in a clear, structured, and grammatically correct manner. It covers four main components: content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (including spelling, punctuation, and

capitalization). Writing skill is assessed through students' performance in creating congratulation cards, where they are expected to apply their language knowledge in a meaningful and creative context. The students' writing is evaluated using an analytical scoring rubric adapted from Brown (2007).