Enhancing Students' Writing Ability and Creativity through Project Based Learning on Greeting Card

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Abstract. This study focuses on the implementation of Project Based Learning (PjBL) in writing greeting card to enhance students' writing ability and creativity. It is based on the classroom action research at the eighth grade of SMPN 1 Sumber, Cirebon, in the academic year of 2019/2020. The subject of the study were 32 students, they were 16 females and 16 males. This study was conducted into two cycles, and each cycle consisted of two meetings. The data were taken qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data were taken from classroom observation, interview and pictures documentation. While quantitative data were taken from the writing test, including the students' score on pre-test and post-test in each cycle. The findings showed that the use of PBL was able to enhance students' writing ability. The implementation of PjBL strengthened students' creativity since it enabled students to explore themselves while developing the greeting card. They were enthusiastic and active in participating during the teaching and learning process of writing. The findings showed that the students' mean score in the pre-test was 67,8 and it increased to 94,15 in their post-test with the gain score 26,35, which indicated that the improvement was very significant.

Keywords: writing ability, project based learning, greeting card

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a process of communicating with others in which a writer sends his ideas and thoughts in written forms to readers. It can be used as the parameter of a result of students' linguistic knowledge longitudinal development. In Indonesia, writing is taught from elementary to university level. Even though writing is an essential skill to acquire by students, they still have difficulties in mastering it. This is because writing involves great integrated activities and processes such as cognitive effort, attention control, and self-regulation to make it become coherent and meaningful (Graham & Harris, 2003).

Nowadays students are required to explore knowledge and information beyond the material provided by teachers and more independent in the learning process. Student activity needs to be improved by taking an active role in completing the task of learning by working small groups and explain ideas to others. Teaching and learning process does not only increase student's knowledge but also develop student's creativity, critical thinking skill, characters which are included the character to have responsibility, social skills, tolerance, productivity, and adaptive skills. Writing activities involve the process of transforming communication that is processed into written ideas. This activity involves a process of thinking that is not simple, it makes students more creative, skilled, and brave to express the information and ideas they have obtained (Susilawati, et al, 2018).

This study is conducted in junior high school, whereas English is one of the subjects in the national exam. Writing has become a major problem for the students, such as lack of vocabulary related to the topic given, they are not able to use part of speech and make a meaningful sentence with a good structure and grammar. Based on the observation, most of the students were passive learners and less developing idea and creative in responding the learning process. There are challenges of teaching writing to EFL learners. Because writing is complex activity, students feel that writing is difficult and they feel bored to do writing activities in the classroom. It becomes a challenge for the teacher to enhance students' writing ability and to motivate them to be active learner. Teaching English writing skills involves developing linguistic and communicative competence of the learner which makes it quite a challenging task (Bilal, Tariq, et al, 2013). In order to enhance students' writing ability and to make writing become an interesting activity, teacher can choose Project Based Learning (PjBL) as a method in teaching writing.

This study is focused to enhance students' writing ability at the eighth grade of SMPN 1 Sumber, through PjBL. PjBL is a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects. As a result, students develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills. This teaching method unleashes a contagious, creative energy among students and teachers. By doing the project, the students are hoped to practice more in writing, enjoy in the process to improve their writing and increase their creativity in designing the card. PjBL requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. To create high-quality work, students need to do much more than remember information. They need to use higher-order thinking skills and learn to work as a team.

Based on the preliminary observation conducted at the eighth grade of SMPN 1 Sumber, it was found that the students seem to be passive, lack of motivation, less creative and unconfident to express their ideas in English both verbally and in written form. The problems come from their low level of vocabulary, grammar and organization, so they feel difficult to make a meaningful sentence.

Therefore the present study, reports the findings of the question: How can students' writing ability and creativity enhance through PjBL on greeting cards at grade VIII SMP N 1 Sumber, Cirebon in the academic year of 2019/2020.

Project Based Learning

Project Based Learning (PjBL) is an approach that holds meaningful projects as its base (Lamar & Mergendoller, 2010). Knowing how to solve problems, working collaboratively and thinking innovatively are considered to be 21st century essential skills. Therefore, PjBL is generally accepted as an effective method for teaching processes, such as problem solving and decision making (Thomas, 2000).

PjBL is believed to be able to increase students' higher order thinking skills (Fragoulis: 2009) and potentially enhances students' motivation towards the teaching and learning process and it also works well for the classroom with mixed-ability students which enable the students to share ideas and thoughts to one another (Stoller: 2002; Phillips: 1999).

Other positive outcomes by using PjBL are the reduction of student's anxiety (Boaler, 2002), and the enhancement. Poonpon (2011) states that project-based learning is suitable with the English teaching and learning need as PjBL is an instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or product to develop. Furthermore, Solomon (2003) emphasizes that PjBL focuses on learning through student-centered, interdisciplinary, and integrated activities in real world situations.

Based on the theories defined by the experts above, it can be inferred that PjBL is a teaching technique in which students are given a problem or challenge as means of gaining new knowledge or skills. PjBL is a student-centered approach as it requires students to be an active learner and gives them a chance to explore knowledge and skills through the given project. It engages students to critical thinking and also enables students to work cooperatively with others.

The Steps of Conducting PjBL in a Language classroom

PjBL has a procedure to follow in order to help the teacher to develop the project as well as to guide students with the project that they take. The procedure consists of the phases on how to implement project based learning and functions as the foundation to carry out the PjBL process in the classroom. There are different steps in developing PjBL which are proposed by the researchers, education practitioners and higher institutions, such as Stoller (2002) and The George Lucas Educational Foundation (2005).

Nevertheless, the steps of project development proposed by The George Lucas Educational Foundation seem to be the most effective and appropriate procedure to be implemented in this study. The procedures are (1) start with the essential question, (2) design a plan for the project, (3) create a schedule, (4) monitor the students and the progress of the project, (5) assess the outcome, and (6) evaluate the experience.

METHOD

This current study was a classroom action research conducted to enhance students' writing ability and creativity through PjBL. Action research is regarded as a research which aims at identifying problematic situation and finding a deliberate way of solution to bring about changes and better improvements for the problems, (Burns, 2010: 2).

Research site and Participant
This study was conducted at VIII K of SMPN 1 Sumber, Cirebon, of the first semester in the academic year of 2019/2020. The subject of the study were 32 students, they were 16 females and 16 males.

Instruments
Classroom observation
Classroom observation plays a central role in practice teaching. The classroom observation was conducted twice, the first was before the implementation of the actions to get information about the students' writing ability and the second while PjBL was conducted in the classroom. The observation included students' creativity in writing on greeting card, students' attitude, and their skill in designing and creating greeting card.

Interview
The interview was conducted twice, the first with the English teacher and the students to discover the problems during the teaching and learning of English before applying PjBL. The second, the interview was conducted to know the students' perception after PjBL was implemented in their classroom.
Test
Writing tests were used to measure students 'comprehension on greeting card. The tests consisted of pre-test and post-test.

Data Collection Procedures

This research was conducted in two cycles through four stages: planning, action and observation, and reflection. The data were taken qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data were taken from classroom observation, interview and pictures documentation. While quantitative data were taken from the writing test, including the students' score on pre-test and post-test in each cycle. There were two variables in this study. Students' writing ability was as dependent variable and project based learning was as independent variable. Student achievement obtained from the test score at each of cycle. The enhancement of students' writing ability on greeting card was shown on their post test score in each cycle. This study would be successful if 85% of the students could pass the passing grade score as 75.
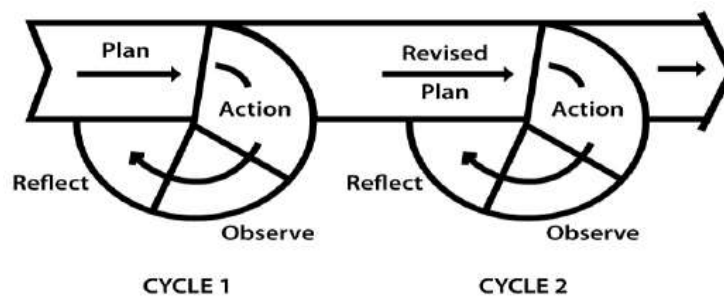

Figure 1 Research Design

The steps of the research represented on can be explained as follows:
Planning
In this step, after the problems had been identified, the researchers started to develop plans of implementing PjBL to enhance students' writing ability on greeting cards. The researchers prepared the instruments, the materials, teaching media and the technique to be implemented in the classroom.
Action
The second step was action. In this step, the researcher put the plans into action. After deciding the plans, the actions were implemented in the classroom. The plans were done in two cycles in which each cycle took two-times classroom meetings.
Observation
In the observation step, the implemented action is being observed. During the implementation of the action, the researchers observed and monitored the students'

attitudes and behaviors towards the teaching and learning activity as well as took notes about everything which happened in the classrooms. The effects of the actions were all observed. The observation helped the researchers to make reflection on the actions applied and determine the following actions. In this step the researchers involved documentation in the form of pictures to capture the situation on the classroom.

Reflection

In this step, the researcher reflected, evaluated and described the effects that the action brought. The researchers discussed to draw a conclusion whether the action was successfully implemented and was proven to be able to enhance students' writing ability as well as the teaching and learning process. If the actions which were carried out were successful, the research would continue to implement with different topic. However, if it was proven to be unsuccessful, the actions would be modified into the ones which were more suitable.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the data of the finding are discussed in details. There are two types of data obtained from the research, namely qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data dealt with the general findings of research on each cycle. Meanwhile, the quantitative data explained the exact numbers of the results on the students' works on writing. The findings found during the research were elaborated as follows:

Cycle 1
Planning
In this step the researcher gave the students explanation about greeting card, provided them the example of greeting cards, and explained the language features used on greeting card.

In the first meeting the researcher and the students planned to ask the students' to make greeting card, and created a schedule to do the project work. Then the researcher monitored and assessed students' work, gave corrective feedback on the results of students' writing. While in the second meeting, the researcher reviewed the previous meeting, provided them several greeting cards to be analyzed and grouped them based on its topic such as birthday card, congratulation card, mother's day card, teacher's day card, thank you card and get well card. And provided them the list of vocabularies mostly used on each topic.

Action and Observation
In the first meeting the researcher showed the students greeting card and asked them in detail. The questions were about mentioning the type of greeting card, the sender, the purpose, the content and the vocabularies used on each type of card. Sometimes she also asked the synonym and the antonym of the adjectives used. Then she asked the students if they met difficult words or some confusing parts and told them to ask question. Then the students and the researcher made an agreement to make greeting card in a piece of paper, and with their group, they chose the type of greeting card themselves. They created and designed the card by using color pencil and marker on a piece of paper. They used dictionary to help them to write. In doing this project, they were very enthusiastic and focus. They enjoyed creating the card and writing the content of the card.

In the second meeting, the researcher reviewed the activities on the previous meeting. She displayed the students' project on the board. Each of the cards was analyzed and identified based on each topic. The researcher asked the students to ask the questions and give comments. Afterward the researcher grouped the students into six groups, and explained to do the second project.

Reflection

In this step, the researcher summarized that the students were successful to make positive change not only in their writing on greeting card but also their attitudes and behavior through PjBL.

Cycle 2
Planning

In the third meeting, the researcher gave more controls on the students' behavior and attitudes. Gave them more detail explanation and complete knowledge of greeting card. Gave the students project work and gave reward to the best design. It motivated the students to make it more beautiful.

While in the fourth meeting, the plan were giving the students more opportunity to ask questions related to the language features and vocabulary used on greeting card and giving some notes and correction to the project that they have done.

Action and Observation

In this step the researcher gave task and exercise, they were enthusiastic to answer the questions and enjoyed the activity. The researcher gave the students jumbled words, so they have to arrange into a good order, then put them into a good text for greeting card. The next task was making the project, but before doing the task, the researcher announced the best three cards and gave them reward. Then the students were asked to make a greeting card that the topic should be different from the previous card. The researcher monitored and guided the students when they found difficulty. After that, the students will exchange the card and analyzed their friend's card.

Reflection

The researcher summarized that there were positive changes of the teaching and learning process in the second cycle. The result of the reflection in cycle 2 showed that the students' motivation and their writing skill were improved. In making the project, they were also followed the process of writing, begun with planning, drafting, and revising the draft. The researcher monitored the students so that they were not afraid of making mistakes in their writing. After they have finished doing the project, the researcher gave them feedback so that they can revise it into a good one. It can be concluded that the students got the complete knowledge on writing greeting card.

The Students' Score

Table 1 The Students' Mean Score in Pre-Test and Post-Test of PjBL

Score Pre-Test	Score Post-Test

	Score	"0-4	Predicate	Score	"0-4	Predicate
Mean	67,8	2,7	C	94,15	3,8	A
Maximum	82	3,28	B	100	4	A
Minimum	60	2,4	C	82	3,28	B

Table 1 shows students' individual test in writing on greeting card. The data consist of pre-test and post test score. The post test score generally were better than the pre-test score. It indicates that PjBL can improve students' writing ability and creativity on greeting cards. the students' pretest mean score is 67,8 and it increase to 94,15in the posttest with the gain score of 26,35 which indicated that the improvement was very significant.

Table 2 The Students' Attitude on PjBL

	Score Pre-Test			Score Post-Test		
	Score	"0-4	Predicate	Score	"0-4	Predicate
Mean	65,72	2,6	C	83,62	3,3	B
Maximum	93	3,72	B	100	4	A
Minimum	65	2,6	C	75	3	B

Table 2 shows students' attitude toward PjBL in writing greeting card. It can be seen that the mean score of students' attitude before the implementation of PjBL is 65,72 and it increase to 83,62 in the post test with the gain score of 17,9 which indicated that PjBL gave positive impact to students' attitude on greeting card.

Table 3 The Students' Creativity on PjBL

	Score Pre-Test			Score Post-Test		
	Score	"0-4	Predicate	Score	"0-4	Predicate
Mean	67	2,6	C	81,6	3,2	B
Maximum	82	3,28	B	95	3,8	A
Minimum	65	2,6	C	75	3	B

Table 3 shows students' creativity toward PjBL in writing greeting card. It can be seen that the mean score of the pretest is 67 and it increase to 81,6 in the post test with the gain score 14,6 which indicated that PjBL improved students' creativity in writing on greeting card.

The use of PjBL made the students more curious towards the lesson. They showed active participations towards the learning activities. They looked motivated as they were very enthusiastic during the teaching and learning process. The implementation of PjBL enhanced students' motivation which improved the classroom atmosphere as well. The students were enabled to work cooperatively within the groups and shared their knowledge and information. They worked enthusiastically to create their best greeting card. They completed and fulfilled each other's roles within the project development. Hence, they felt less nervous and awkward and were able to work at their best performance. Furthermore, there were rewards for the groups with the best greeting card. It made the students appreciated and wanted to do better in making and designing the card. The implementation of PjBL empowered students' creativity. They could explore themselves while developing

the greeting card. They were supported to think creatively and critically when they worked on their project.

The implementation of PjBL caused the bond between the researcher and the students closer as the researcher monitored the students' work and gave them feedback. In addition, she supervised the students by going around the classroom and approaching the students personally to ask about their project and the difficulties they might find. The researcher helped and guided students to find solution upon their difficulties. The students were also willing to share and asked the researcher if they found something they did not understand.

CONCLUSION

It was found then that the various actions and the use of PjBL could improve students' writing abilities and their creativity, particularly on greeting card. The students were successful in making considerable improvements in the first cycle and continued to make significant progresses in the second cycle. The students showed positive changes and improvements not only on their aspects of writing but also their attitudes and creativity as well. It was justified based on the gain score that they got since the beginning until the end of the research which showed improvements on students' writing ability before and after the implementation of the research. The gain score was the real evidence which displayed that the students' writing skills were significantly improved. The materials and the use of the teaching aids which provided the students with various activities, tasks, and exercises also became the contributing factors which helped the students to understand the language meanings and construction better.

The implementation of PjBL during the English teaching and learning process enhanced the students' motivation. PjBL offered motivating and challenging series of activities to students which stimulated them to be enthusiastic, critical and creative towards the teaching and learning process. PjBL also gave students more chances to practice writing. This technique facilitated the students to understand the lesson effectively and easily as they solved the real-world problem while developing the project.

In addition, the group activities which the students had during the project development enhanced their involvement in the learning activities. The group activities enabled the students to work by sharing their knowledge, experience, and information to each other. Based on the facts and explanations, it could be concluded that the use of PjBL enhance students' writing ability of grade VIII K students of SMPN 1 Sumber. The actions conducted during the implementation of the research enriched students with more knowledge and understanding. The activities, tasks, and exercises also gave students more opportunities to practice the target language.

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