

Exploring Project-Based Learning on Facilitating Secondary EFL Writing Instruction

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in secondary EFL writing instruction, with a focus on how PjBL facilitates students in learning to write procedure texts. A case study design was employed, involving ninth-grade students at SMPN 1 Cikampek. Data were collected through observation and interview and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that PjBL facilitated students in several ways: (1) providing a structured approach that enabled them to complete the writing project more effectively, (2) fostering problem-solving through group discussions, (3) supporting students through teacher feedback, and (4) offering flexibility in managing their writing tasks.

Keywords: PjBL; Procedure Text; Writing Instruction

INTRODUCTION

There are four important aspects of English that EFL students should master: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills enable clear communication in both written and spoken forms. When discussing written communication, writing is the aspect of English that conveys messages from a person's mind. It is especially important for EFL learners to share their ideas accurately. Writing is defined as the process by which students think about and formulate ideas before putting them into words. Furthermore, the ability to write is often seen as a measure of a student's proficiency in English (Citra Utami and Apsari, 2020). Writing is a challenging skill, particularly for students learning English as a foreign language. Despite studying English since elementary school, many learners continue to face difficulties with writing. Agustiana (2017), citing Kim and Kim (2005), explains that writing is generally considered difficult and demanding for most students. Heaton (1998) also points out that writing skills are complex and hard to teach because they require students not only to master grammar and rhetorical techniques but also to develop ideas and make judgments. This suggests that writing feels overwhelming due to the many aspects involved, which often leads students to fear making mistakes. Harmer (2007) argues that writing differs from speaking because it does not produce instant results. Instead, students must follow a process that includes brainstorming, selecting words, drafting, revising, and publishing. Therefore, teachers play a significant role in guiding students to improve their writing abilities. For this reason, it is important to apply appropriate methods and strategies in writing instruction. According to Alharbi (2022), teachers should provide feedback to help students minimize errors. However, challenges often arise when teachers fail to choose effective approaches, which can make students feel bored and less engaged. When students lose interest, they become less motivated to study English. To make lessons more engaging, teachers can relate writing tasks to activities students commonly do in their everyday lives, such as planning their day, spending leisure time, or playing computer games. In English, there is a type of text called a procedure text. Knapp and Watkins (1994) define procedure texts as texts that offer instructions for completing a task, which can be

presented in various formats. Traditional teaching methods often involve long explanations before giving assignments, which may limit student interaction and participation (Ratri and Nawawi, 2024). One effective method for encouraging students to think creatively is Project-Based Learning (PjBL) (Satria et al., 2020). This model makes learning more engaging by allowing students to collaborate and work independently while applying their knowledge and skills. The decision to use PjBL is based on its innovative features, as it can improve student motivation, teach them new abilities, and guide them in completing meaningful projects. Several studies have confirmed these benefits. For example, Batara et al. (2023) found that second-grade students at SMKN 1 Makassar improved their procedure text writing through PjBL. Similarly, Argawati and Suryani (2020) demonstrated that PjBL effectively supported students in writing better texts. Sahayu (2024) also reported that PjBL increased students' participation in learning activities. Nevertheless, there are some obstacles. Ilmiawan et al. (2024) noted that teamwork and technical issues were the main challenges in implementing PjBL, but these could be addressed through better project management and teacher assistance. Rosli et al. (2025) also highlighted limitations such as the need for adequate resources, careful time management, and proper teacher training. To address these issues, this study aims to examine how the process of teaching procedure text writing through Project-Based Learning is implemented in the classroom. Specifically, it seeks to explore the use of PjBL in secondary EFL writing instruction. Accordingly, the research question for this study is as follows: How does PjBL facilitates secondary EFL students in learning to write procedure texts?

METHOD

This research employed a case study design by Yin (2013). This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Cikampek with the participants were ninth-grade class comprising 38 students. This site was chosen due to accessibility, and ninth graders were selected for their prior experience in learning English writing. Purposive sampling from Creswell (2015) was used to identify six participants for interviews, based on criteria including active participation, communication skills, teacher recommendations, and involvement in the writing project. The data collection carried out from observation and interview. And thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke (2006) used to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Providing a Structured Approach

The stages followed Bell's (2010) PjBL framework, which included planning, designing activities, conducting activities, and evaluation, and this structured sequence was crucial in supporting students throughout the project. Before the groups began drafting their procedure texts, the teacher provided a clear overview of each step, set deadlines, and patiently explained how the process would unfold. This preparation helped students feel confident, reducing the anxiety that often comes from uncertainty.

Vignette1(Septa):

"Because Miss explained everything step by step and was very patient, I understood better. It helped my group complete the text more quickly."

The clarity of the steps made it easier for students to start the project, identify a relevant theme, and construct their drafts by defining the goal, selecting materials, and organizing the procedures. As they progressed through each stage one at a time, students felt more at ease and were able to focus on the quality of their work rather than feeling pressured to finish in haste.

This process-oriented approach gave them valuable experience in collaborating with their peers, showing them how important it was to approach a task with careful preparation, patience, and a shared commitment to completing it successfully. They learned to discuss ideas openly, respect different opinions, and divide responsibilities so that everyone contributed meaningfully. As a result, students reported improvements not only in their writing skills but also in their ability to work as a team and manage a project systematically. These findings reinforce what Argawati and Suryani (2020) have emphasized: that PjBL promotes active participation and engagement by breaking complex tasks into clear, manageable steps. Overall, this experience helped students develop a stronger sense of ownership over their learning, increased their confidence, and demonstrated how structured guidance can transform a challenging task into an achievable and rewarding.

2. Supporting Problem-Solving through Teacher Feedback

Students encountered various challenges during the project, such as selecting appropriate vocabulary, determining the goal of the text, and using correct sequencing expressions. Teacher feedback played a crucial role in clarifying these issues.

Vignette 2 (Nadifa):

“Miss’ feedback helped me and my group. I wasn’t sure about the correct words for the steps, so I asked, and it really helped us finish our text.”

With the teacher’s feedback, students found it easier to work on their writing projects. When they felt confused about determining the goal of their procedure texts, they could ask the teacher for clarification, and the teacher provided the necessary guidance to help them complete their work. Observation data also indicated that teacher feedback was effective in enabling students to finish their projects more efficiently. It was noted that Project-Based Learning facilitates the development of students’ writing skills by providing targeted feedback to groups experiencing difficulties. After receiving feedback, students discussed it directly with their group members, actively exchanged ideas, and collaboratively decided on revisions. This created a positive learning environment in which students felt comfortable expressing their thoughts. As a result, they were more engaged and motivated to produce better procedure texts. In addition to benefiting from teacher support, students were able to share their ideas with each other and complete the project collaboratively. Through this process, students became more confident in revising their drafts. Teacher support not only clarified language use but also encouraged discussion within groups. These findings are consistent with Andargie et al. (2025), who highlighted that feedback in PjBL promotes continuous improvement and fosters collaborative learning.

3. Enhancing Collaboration

Students worked together to discuss topics, divide responsibilities, and develop their projects in a collaborative environment. While most groups demonstrated effective teamwork, some encountered challenges related to unequal participation and difficulty in maintaining cooperation. As one student shared:

Vignette 3 (Nadifa):

“Everyone had their own task. It helped us finish faster because if someone didn’t work, it delayed everything.”

Vignette 4 (Rhea):

“There were one or two people who didn’t get tasks because they found it hard to cooperate.”

Despite these obstacles, students often resolved issues on their own by reallocating tasks or encouraging reluctant members to take part, rather than depending on the teacher’s intervention.

This approach not only fostered independence but also built their confidence in managing group work. One student reflected on this dynamic:

Vignette 5 (Nadifa):

"It's better if we divide tasks ourselves because we know each other's abilities."

Students tried to solve problems related to collaboration within their groups, even though they could have asked the teacher for help when assigning tasks to each member. Observation data also revealed that Project-Based Learning provides teacher assistance when students face difficulties; however, many groups intentionally chose to handle these challenges independently. For instance, when a group member did not have a clear role in drafting the procedure text, other students encouraged them to contribute in other ways, such as preparing materials or organizing resources needed for the presentation. This decision to involve every member, regardless of their initial participation level, reflected a growing sense of responsibility and mutual respect among students. Through this social interaction, they learned to negotiate roles, manage group dynamics, and resolve conflicts constructively. Moreover, they developed skills in understanding their peers' strengths and limitations, which helped them allocate tasks more effectively. Through these experiences, students developed essential interpersonal skills, such as negotiation, delegation, and empathy. They also gained a deeper understanding of how collaboration requires not only sharing responsibilities but also supporting each other to achieve common goals. Ultimately, this process reinforced the collaborative dimension of Project-Based Learning, as described by Soffiany and Purbani (2020), by showing students the value of collective effort and the importance of respecting each member's contributions.

4. Providing Flexibility

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) provided students with flexibility in deciding when and how to complete their writing project, enabling them to adapt the work to their own priorities and schedules. This flexibility emerged as an important factor in supporting students' autonomy, especially because they often needed to balance English assignments with other school demands. Interview data showed that some students preferred to begin their project as soon as it was assigned to avoid feeling overwhelmed later. For example, Rhea (pseudonym) explained that she chose to start right away because her group members tended to delay their work, which created stress and made it difficult to finish tasks on time. By initiating the project early, she hoped to motivate her peers to contribute and prevent last-minute pressure. In contrast, other students adopted a different strategy. Isha (pseudonym) described that she and her group decided to postpone working on the writing project until closer to the deadline, because they were prioritizing other assignments that were more urgent and required immediate attention. This difference in approach demonstrated how PjBL allowed students to exercise judgment about their own workload management. With a deadline of one week, they had sufficient time to negotiate responsibilities with their group members and determine when it was most practical to work on the writing project. Although the timing varied among students, the main priority remained the same: ensuring the final output was completed and submitted by the agreed deadline. The ability to choose when to focus on their English project also supported students in maintaining balance between academic responsibilities and personal well-being, reducing the likelihood of stress caused by overlapping deadlines. One student expressed appreciation for this strategy:

Vignette 6 (Septa):

"I did the project right after it was given, so it wouldn't pile up."

Meanwhile, another student shared a different perspective:

Vignette 7 (Randeas):

"I preferred to finish more urgent assignments first so I could focus on this project later."

These experiences suggest that providing flexible timelines empowers students to take responsibility for their learning and develop essential skills in planning, prioritizing, and collaborating with their peers. Consistent with Yunus et al. (2020), the findings reinforce that PjBL promotes learner autonomy and accommodates diverse learning styles, allowing students to find strategies that best fit their circumstances while still meeting the learning objectives.

Discussion

A structured sequence of steps was essential in helping students stay focused and complete their writing projects effectively. By following clear stages in Project-Based Learning, students could approach tasks systematically and gain valuable experience in organizing their ideas and collaborating with peers, as understanding what to do at each stage reduced confusion and improved their confidence. In addition, Hakimah (2023) emphasized that PjBL allows students to give clear instructions, arrange steps in the correct order, and explain procedures so others can understand them easily. Teachers also played a crucial role in this process by providing guidance and resources that supported students' learning, as noted by Asman, Abdul, and Goh (2024). While drafting their texts, students encountered challenges such as choosing suitable vocabulary and organizing sentences, and teacher feedback helped them overcome these difficulties and progress more easily. Besides receiving input from teachers, students exchanged feedback with their peers during group discussions, which encouraged them to reflect on and improve their work continuously. PjBL further supported the development of problem-solving skills when students faced issues in group participation; when some members were less involved, the groups assigned them alternative responsibilities, such as preparing materials or taking on extra roles during presentations, which taught students how to manage teamwork, delegate tasks, and ensure everyone contributed. Additionally, PjBL offered flexibility in managing deadlines, as with a one-week timeframe, students could decide when to work on the project: some began immediately, while others prioritized other assignments first. This autonomy helped students balance their workload and develop time-management skills, demonstrating that PjBL not only facilitated writing instruction but also encouraged collaboration, responsibility, and independent learning.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how Project-Based Learning facilitates secondary EFL students in writing procedure texts, and the findings demonstrate that PjBL provided structured steps to guide the writing process, supported problem-solving through teacher feedback, encouraged collaboration and social interaction, and offered flexibility to accommodate students' diverse commitments. While this approach proved effective for teaching procedure texts, applying PjBL to more complex genres, such as reports or argumentative texts, may present additional challenges. Therefore, future research could investigate how PjBL can be adapted for these genres to further enhance EFL writing instruction.

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