

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL USING PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

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Abstract: The purpose of this classroom action research was to investigate whether Problem-Based Learning (PBL) could effectively address the students' writing difficulties; to improve their writing skills in the descriptive text as well as to identify the factors that contributed to the improvement. The research participants were 26 students from grade X MIPA 2 of SMAN 6 Kerinci. The study was conducted over two cycles, and data were collected using various instruments, including tasks, tests, observation checklists, field notes, and interviews. The results of the study revealed that the implementation of PBL was effective in improving the student's writing skills. The PBL process involved giving students a real-life problem to stimulate their writing, group discussion, research, and investigation using worksheets, drafting, writing a descriptive text report, presenting, and evaluating the report as a group. The students' writing skills were evaluated using test scores, and the average scores significantly improved from 63.1 before the application of PBL to 75.67 after the first cycle and 84.19 after the second cycle. The study also identified several factors that contributed to the improvement, including the quality of the teaching material, the use of appropriate media, and engaging classroom activities. In conclusion, the study demonstrated that PBL was an effective approach to enhancing students' writing skills in the descriptive text at grade X MIPA 2 of SMAN 6 Kerinci.

Keywords: Problem-based learning; writing skill; descriptive text

INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are essential for students because they enable them to express themselves effectively in written form. Writing helps students develop their ideas, organize their thoughts, create compelling arguments, and revise their work. To develop strong writing skills, students require four key elements: ideas or content to express, a strong vocabulary to convey those ideas, an understanding of structure to arrange the words effectively, and proficiency in spelling to produce error-free writing. By mastering these elements, students can not only articulate their ideas in well-crafted sentences and paragraphs but also ensure their writing is easily understandable to their audience.

Considering the importance of writing skills, it is crucial for teachers at all levels of education to ensure their students can write well. However, teaching writing can be a challenging responsibility, as writing is often perceived as more difficult than other language skills such as listening, reading, and speaking. This challenge stems from the fact that teachers must not only focus on their student's achievement in writing but also

understand what their students need and expect to become proficient writers. Furthermore, it is important for teachers to demonstrate that writing can be a fun and enjoyable activity that allows students to express their thoughts and ideas. By showing students the benefits of writing, teachers can motivate and encourage them to improve their writing skills.

For this study, descriptive text was chosen as it is a topic that the students have previously learned during their junior high school years and it is continued in the first semester of grade X at senior high school. Furthermore, SMAN 6 Kerinci is situated in Kerinci Regency, which is renowned for its tourist spots such as Kerinci Lake, Kayu Aro Tea Plantation, Mount Kerinci, and many other picturesque places. This makes the descriptive text an ideal tool for teaching students how to describe these locations while simultaneously improving their writing skills and enabling them to participate in promoting tourism places in their regencies through written products. Additionally, this approach aligns with the based competence in Curriculum 2013, which includes teaching

students how to describe historical buildings and popular places.

Giving the students real topics to be written which are related to their daily activities and environment will produce meaningful writing activities. Instructing the students to produce pieces of writing with real topics such as tourism places located in their living area will give them ideas guiding them to write something that they already had background knowledge. They take part and are also motivated in writing activities because they are getting involved in terms of sharing ideas and experience related to what they are producing, and they understand what they are doing (Eodice, Geller, & Lerner, 2017).

Moreover, based on the preliminary data taken from the daily test on the students of grade X MIPA 2 after some indicators of based competencies on the descriptive text had been taught to them, it was found that the result of the student's writing on descriptive text is only 23.08 % (6 students) who got a satisfied score above and within the minimum achievement criteria (KKM). From those six students, 2 of them (7.69%) got 80, then 1 student (3.85%) got 75, and 3 students (11.54%) were at level of KKM was 70, and the rest 76.92% (20 students) was below the minimum achievement criteria. The mean score was 63.1. It meant that their achievement on writing was in unsatisfied condition.

The problems faced by the students in writing descriptive text such as; The first was they still had difficulties to find ideas when they wrote something because they did not understand the task. Then, they had limited vocabulary. The next case was they were so dependent to their teacher. They did not have creativities to write. They were spoiled. The last, writing is boring for them. Then, the problem coming from the teacher is the technique used by the teacher in teaching writing descriptive text did not encourage them to be active and creative learners. This condition is supported by the result of research conducted by Ismayanti & Kholiq (2020) who state that the students get

difficulties producing descriptive writing passages because they don't have sufficient competence in arranging good sentences, they do not have adequate ideas and knowledge to be written into a passage, and they do not have interest in learning English.

From the case above, the researcher offers the PBL model as the solution. PBL is chosen because in order to help the students become active and eager to write, their classroom atmosphere should encourage them to be active, and creative person in doing writing tasks (Jumariati & Irawati, 2017). They need to write because they want to do it. The students should be explored activities that have a relationship with their daily life. They know how to write and they also can apply it in their real-life activities. This of course can be gained from the development of the problem used in PBL which highlights the ill-structured or open-ended problem which is created based on the real-life situation. It can stimulate students to get ideas in writing (Amalia & Rusfandi, 2020). And the activities that ask students to do mini-research make them realize that the task is valuable for them and that the result will be meaningful for them because they know the purpose of doing the activity (Yew & Goh, 2016).

The implementation of PBL in teaching writing descriptive text can help the students become a creative writer. Othman and Ahmad (2013) state that PBL is an active learning because by exploring the problem to the students and let them find out the solution by searching and investigating any important information, they become actively involved in the activity. Then, PBL is learning process which is centered to the students. It minimizes lecturing, the teacher carefully designed the problem as a source of learning process which will be solved by the students. Elizabeth and Zulida (2012) suggest that the problem given to the students should be created attractively so that it can be used as a trigger for students to learn and generate interest and controversy and cause the learners to ask questions. By giving them a scenario or case study as the beginning of their learning activity in their writing class, will facilitate them to do

something based on their need in order to solve the case given to them, and write the result of the discussion based on their critical thinking result.

Moreover, teaching writing skill on descriptive text means that the teacher should facilitate the students to be good writer on describing something in detail (Gerot & Wignel in Mardiyah, Saun, & Refnaldi, 2013, p. 281). This point of view is supported by Wardani, Basri & Waris (2014) who say that in descriptive writing the writer transfer images, feelings experienced by him or her to the reader. The writer tries to convey what they see and feel by picturing clearly the object being described. Therefore, the teacher should train the students to be able to write the description of something to the reader as if the subject being talked is seen by the reader.

Regarding to the implementation of Problem Based learning in teaching writing descriptive text, Guillaume (2007, p. 127) propose some stages, they are, first the students meet the problem, next, create a plan from problem solving, the use of Know Need and Do chart is suggested, then the students gather information, generating possible solution, discuss and decide what will be the best solution for the problem, the students present the result, and the results are finally evaluated. *Know Need and Do Chart* is a kind of student's worksheet that guides them to complete all the stages of the PBL activities. The worksheet consists of items which facilitate them to do observation, collecting and processing any information toward the problem-solving task (Trianto as cited in Rahayu, Verawati, & Islamiah, 2019). In addition, the use of such worksheet is interesting to make the students activities clearer and more efficient. It helps the students investigating and searching and processing the information, integrating what they comprehend into practice. And it is very useful to minimize the time consuming happens when PBL is implemented.

Previous study related with the implementation of PBL has been conducted by Amalia & Rusfandy (2020) highlighted its effectiveness in improving students' writing

descriptive text on vocational school. The result showed that it increased the students' writing skill significantly because the method could develop their critical thinking guiding them produce and develop ideas into good writing passage.

Moreover, due to the writing problem discussed previously in writing descriptive text, the researcher gets interested to find out the extent to which PBL can improve the students' writing skill on descriptive text at grade X MIPA 2 (Science Program) of SMAN 6 Kerinci, and to find out what main factors influence the changes of the students' writing skill on descriptive text by using PBL. The themes of learning are focused on describing popular tourism places in Kerinci Regency.

METHOD

Design

The design of this research was classroom action research (CAR). According to Yasin (2011, p. 7) classroom action research is research that is conducted in the classroom by a teacher in order to improve teaching and learning processes. It is done to solve the problem through the use of innovative strategy or technique. It aims at improving the quality of the objects being observed through carefully planned and purposive activities. (Smith as cited in Srikanawie & A. E., 2021).

Setting and Participants

The participants of the research were the students at grade X MIPA 2 of SMAN 6 Kerinci. There were 26 students; 11 males and 15 females. This research was conducted in two cycles if the target of 85% of students who got the achievement within and above the minimum achievement criteria (KKM) was reached at the second cycle. Each cycle consisted of three meetings, two of them were for learning and teaching process using PBL, and another was for the writing test.

Data Collection

The instruments used to collect the data were the students' writing tasks, and tests, observation checklist, which was supported

by field notes, then, the last was interview. The tasks were given at the end of every meeting in each cycle, the test was administered at the end of every cycle. The test given was in the form of pictured cued test. The observation and field notes were filled by the collaborator during the learning and teaching process done by the researcher, then interview was given to the students after conducting the writing test.

The research was done on August up to September, 2022. There were two cycles in the research, and each cycle consisted of three meetings. The first and second meeting was for the action as well as the observation, and the third meeting was for the test. The action in the class was started on August 2nd, 2022. The time allocation for English lesson was once a week. Therefore, the cycle one has completed within three weeks, and the other three weeks was for the second cycle.

The procedure of this research followed the model of classroom action research procedure which used cyclical model. The process consisted of four steps, plan, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart in Khan, Zaman, & Ghaffar, 2020).

The technique of collecting data was as follows:

1. Quantitative data were collected by giving writing task and test that were used to identify students' achievement of writing skill on descriptive text. The group task was given in every meeting for each cycle, and the test was given at the end of each cycle. The results of the test were analyzed by using writing rubrics.
2. Qualitative data were collected through observation checklist and field notes which were filled by the collaborator. Then, the data were also collected by giving interview to the participant to support the data that were not covered by the observation checklist and field note.

Data Analysis

The technique of data analysis was described below:

1. Quantitative Data

The researcher scored the student's writing result based on the component of writing which was stated in the writing scoring rubrics, then the student's final score was calculated by using the following formula:

$$TS = O + C + G + M + V$$

Note:

TS	: Total Score
O	: Organization
C	: Content
G	: Grammar
M	: Mechanic
V	: Vocabulary

The students' scores were calculated based on each indicators of writing, then they were sum up, and the score would be taken from the average.

2. Qualitative Data

The qualitative data in this research were gathered from the observation sheets, field notes, and the result of interview. Observation and field notes were taken by the collaborator during the teaching and learning process, and interview was taken after the teaching and learning process.

This research applied writing rubric proposed by Brown (2010, pp. 286–287) in giving the student's scores. It consisted of elemen of descriptive writing with each score criteria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The extent to which PBL could improve student's writing skill on descriptive text.

To identify whether PBL could improve student's writing skill on descriptive text at grade X MIPA 2 of SMAN 6 Kerinci, the researcher analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data derived during the process of learning and teaching was done. The following was the description of students' achievement in writing descriptive text. After analyzing the data, the researcher could show the description of the data for each cycle. The description was about the students' average score for group task, individual task and the

average score of writing test result. Then, the result of observation checklist, field notes and interview were also described to show the factors influencing the students' change.

Pre-cycle

The students' average score was 63.1. There were 6 students (23.08%) who got complete criteria, and there were 20 students (76.92%) who got incomplete criteria. It meant that there were only 6 students who passed the minimum achievement criteria (KKM). The KKM for English was 70. The description of the students' achievement for each indicator was described in Figure 1.

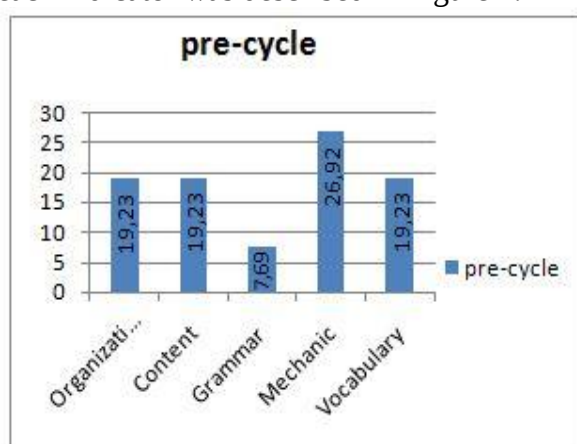


Figure 1. The percentage of students' achievement of each indicator in pre-cycle

The graph showed that the percentage of the students' score on each indicator was still unsatisfied. This could be seen from each indicator, the highest percentage was only 26.92% (7 students) of the total 26, who got achieved criteria for mechanic. Then, the lowest was in Grammar. The percentage was only 10% (2 students) who passed the KKM. Meanwhile the organization, content, and vocabulary were in the same level. There were 5 students (24%) who reached the KKM.

Cycle one

The description of students' score in writing

Table 2. The percentage of student's achievement in each indicator of writing skill on descriptive text (Group task)

No.	Cycle 1	Indicators of writing descriptive text									
		O		C		G		M		V	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	1 st	3	50	3	50	2	33.33	2	33.33	2	33.33

descriptive text in cycle one

After analyzing the data, the researcher could show all the data from the first meeting up to the third meeting for student's result on writing task and test. Then, the description was in the form of its average score, frequency distribution, the percentage of those who fulfilled the criteria achieved and unachieved, and the student's achievement in writing skill on descriptive text per indicators. The explanation was below.

a. Group task

Table 1. The Student's Average Score for Group Task in Cycle 1

Meeting	Average Score	Theme
1 st	64.4	Mount Kerinci
2 nd	68.6	Lake Kerinci

From the table above, there was improvement on student's writing skill in the first and second meeting. They could cope with the problem given by them. The students decided to promote "Mount Kerinci" because this place is famous for having adventurer. They interviewed Mr. Wel to ensure what information he needed to write for the email, then asked the scout members of the school because the scouts were ever climbing Mount Kerinci. Then, at the theme about 'Lake Kerinci', the students were asked to go directly searching online information and find out any related information about the lake by also interviewing students and teacher living around the lake. Both themes were familiar to them because the two places were situated in their regency. There was significant improvement on the second theme because Lake Kerinci is more familiar compared to Mount Kerinci. It was because most of the students were living in villages around the lake. They did interview in order to ensure and broaden the information they already knew about the place.

2	2 nd	4	66.67	4	66.67	2	33.33	2	33.33	2	33.33
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Moreover, the researcher and collaborator as the second rater also analyzed the result by paying attention at the student's improvement for each indicator. The indicators of writing descriptive text were organization, content, grammar, mechanic, and vocabulary. The organization was related to the students' score on how well they develop the idea and focused only in one subject to be described. The content was related to whether the students could make the descriptive writing by following the identification first, then followed by the description. The grammar referred to the appropriate use of simple present tense, noun, adjective, and action verb. The mechanic was the use of punctuation, and spelling. And the last, vocabulary, it focused on the appropriate choice of word and the amount.

Table 2 showed the percentage of the group improvement on each indicator in writing skill on descriptive text in each indicator for group task. From the table and graph, it could be seen that the percentage of grammar, mechanic, and vocabulary was low. In the first there was 33.33% (2 groups) got 'achieved' criteria for grammar, mechanic, and vocabulary, then for the second meeting, the percentage remained the same as before. Meanwhile, the percentage of organizing idea and content was 50% (3 groups) at the first meeting, and at the second meeting, both increased significantly in which there were 4 group (66.67%) got achieved criteria for both elements.

b. The test

The researcher also gave the students writing test on descriptive text at the end of the first cycle. The researcher asked the students to write description about "Wonderful Kayu Aro". In this test, the researcher gave the test by giving picture cued test for writing. There were three different pictures given for each student. Then, they wrote the description with the same title. They could see the dictionary but they could not ask their friends. They worked alone. From the result of the test, it was calculated that the

average score was 75,67. The student's score of each writing indicator in cycle one test could be seen in the Figure 2.

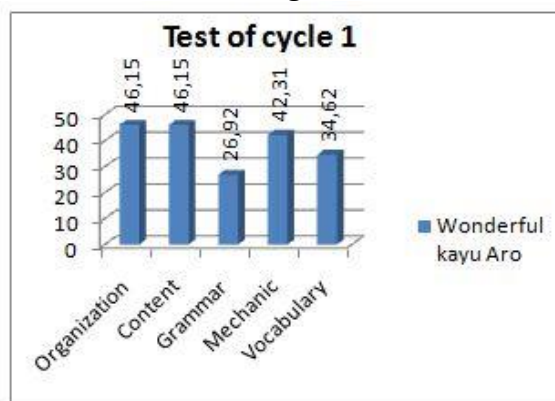


Figure 2. The students' achievement on each indicator in cycle 1 test

Moreover, based on the result of writing test looked from each indicator, it could be seen that from 27 students, for organization, there were 12 of them (46,15%) who achieved the minimum achievement criteria (KKM). Then, for content, there were also 12 students (46,15%) who got the KKM. There were 7 students (26,92%) who achieved the KKM for grammar, 11 students (42,31%) got complete criteria in mechanic and for vocabulary, there were 9 students (34,62%) who passed the KKM. Then, the average score of them was Even though there was improvement compared to the result of group task, the target of 85% for students to get score within and above KKM for each indicator has not achieved yet, therefore, the researcher needed to do improvement more in order to achieve that target. Therefore, the next cycle was done.

Cycle Two

The description of Students' Score on Writing Descriptive Text

Moreover, the researcher analyzed the improvement of students writing skill based on the task given at the end of teaching and learning process, and the result of the test administered at the end of cycle two. The data of the student's improvement could be seen in the following description.

a. Group task

In the first meeting the students were given a vlog about Pasir Panjang Beach created by student from previous different class. The problem orientation here was the students were asked to find out any important information about the place. Since each group had member living in the area of the place discussed, he/she became the second respondent to add more ideas related to the place. The researcher gave guidance by using know need and do chart as their instrument to get the information. Pasir Panjang Beach is located for about 2 kilometers from SMAN 6 Kerinci. And most of the students are living near the area. Then in the second meeting, they were given list of questions related to 'Lake Gunung Tuhuh' and they were completing the worksheet by having short conversation and interview to anybody he/she liked to ask. They could do searching outside of the class; they could ask other teachers; or

students from other classes to get the data based on the questions given. The students were eager to do so because they already had previous knowledge about the place. Lake Gunung Tuhuh is one of the most famous tourism objects in Kerinci Regency.

The average score of group task for the second cycle could be seen in the table below. Table 3. The Students' Average Score for Group Task in Cycle 2

Meeting	Average Score	Theme
1 st	79.85	Pasir Panjang Beach
2 nd	80.54	Lake Gunung Tuhuh

Moreover, the researcher also calculated the percentage of student's improvement in writing skill on descriptive text in each indicator for group task which was described in the following data description.

Table 4. The student's achievement on each indicator (Group task)

No	Cycle 2	Indicators of writing descriptive text									
		O		C		G		M		V	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	1 st	3	50	5	83.33	3	50	3	50	3	50
2	2 nd	4	66.67	5	83.33	5	83.33	5	83.33	5	83.33

Table 4 showed the percentage of the group improvement on each indicator. From 6 groups, the percentage of organization showed that in the first, and second meetings, there was improvement from 50% (3 groups) who got achieved criteria at the first meeting moved higher to 66,67% (4 groups). Next, for content, grammar and mechanic also improved compared to previous cycle. From the description, it could be concluded that the group work result in cycle 2 significantly went higher.

b. Test

The researcher also gave the students writing test on descriptive text at the end of the second cycle. The researcher asked the students to write description about "My most favourite Tourism Place". The test was in the form of picture cued writing test. The students were asked to describe the picture they liked,

then, they could give more description if it was necessary for them. The result showed that the average score improved to 84.19. The student's score of writing test in cycle two could be seen in the following table:

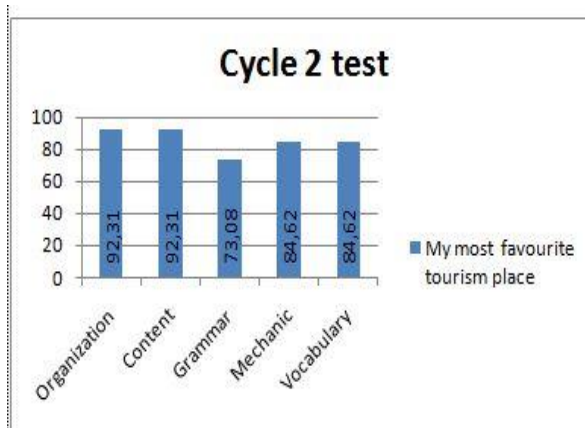


Figure 3. The students' achievement on each indicator in cycle 2 test

Moreover, based on the result of writing test looked from each indicator, the target of 85% for students to get score within and above KKM for each indicator had been achieved and even higher. There was a significant improvement on the student's writing skill looked from each indicator. The following was the development of students' achievement in cycle 1 and 2.

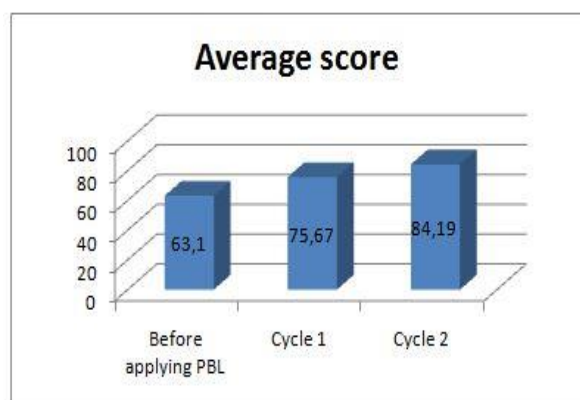


Figure 4. The comparison of students' average score of writing descriptive text

Based on the table and the graph, it could be seen that the average score of the student's writing skill on descriptive text after implementing PBL in cycle one and two were better than before using the technique. There was significant improvement from cycle one up to cycle two. The average score of student's writing skill on descriptive text before applying PBL was 63,1, then it increased to 75,67 in the cycle 1, and it also increased 8,52 points in the cycle 2 became 84,19. It meant that PBL could improve the student's writing skill on descriptive text.

The factors that influence the improvement on students' descriptive writing skill using PBL

The second research question was about the main factors influencing the changes of students' writing skill on descriptive text. Based on the observation, field notes and interview results, the improvement of students' score was influenced by the following factors; the first is Material. Based on the results of observation checklists and

interview it could be seen that in the teaching and learning process of writing descriptive text using PBL, the teacher gave the materials or the topics of the writing descriptive text related to the student's real life. The materials were selected based on the student's experience and it was contextualized. The themes chosen were in line with their interest. It was appropriate to the curriculum demand and it was authentic. It met the student's interest and they could understand the problem given.

The next factor was Media. During the learning and teaching process, the researcher used media picture, photo, projector, and Know Need and Do chart (creative students' worksheet) and also video as the guidance and instrument for the students in searching the data. Variation in using media of learning could give more interesting and challenging atmosphere in the learning activities. The process was done in various settings that made the students got involved happily.

Then classroom activity also determined the change made by the students. This factor was the dominant because in the learning and teaching process, the implementation of PBL was really laid on the activities done by not only the teacher but also the students. The activities on PBL promote the students with the ability of working with team. PBL activities facilitate the students to strongly engage in the interactive process. They communicated and exchanged ideas, felt a responsibility for their own learning and also for their group.

DISCUSSION

The research result showed that the improvement of students' writing skill on descriptive text happened because the implementation of PBL could help the students increase their knowledge on how to write creatively. The procedures in PBL helped the students to find out ideas based on their need. By giving them a real-life problem that should be solved together in group encouraged them to work more on their task. As stated by Othman and Ahmad (2013) that

a real-life problem facilitates the students to cooperate with the member of the group in order to find the solution based on their knowledge.

The students' problem that made them got difficulties in doing the writing task before applying PBL was they did not have ideas to write. By giving problem to them as a stimulus, it meant that the teacher had guided them to find something to be discussed and then wrote them as the result. This helped them as a trigger for them to create ideas of their writing. This condition is supported by (Walker, Leary, & Hmelo-Silver (2015) who say that problem in PBL activities was becoming a learning stimulus. In other words, the students could develop their thinking skill in order to create something as the solution of the problem and then it became their resources to produce their writing.

Moreover, the qualitative data analysis result showed that in conducting the learning and teaching process during the research, the improvement of the students' writing skill happened was also influenced by some factors. The main factor was the classroom activities. Since this research was done in order to see whether or not the technique used could increase the students' writing skill, therefore, the classroom activities took a very important role. In this factor, the implementation of procedures of PBL determined the successful of learning and teaching objective that was to help the students' problem in doing the writing task.

In addition, from the results of students' writing, it could be seen that they could write more than what was expected by the teacher. They could add more information in the chart, and they could give more ideas to their writing result. They became independent students. They did not ask many things to their teacher anymore. They appreciated and believed to themselves more in doing the task. It could be seen that PBL motivated them to be creative and independent in doing the task. This is supported by Caesar et al. (2016) who state that PBL make students believe with

their writing performance and actively engaged in the process because they were challenging of doing the activities in group. They also learned how to manage the group by giving appropriate role to each of them.

Moreover, the students' improvement on their creativity in writing could be seen from the number of vocabularies and ideas that they shared in their writing. This condition was also supported by Amalia & Rusfandy (2020) who says that PBL creates the process of learning that develops students' critical thinking. They could write longer and elaborate the ideas in writing. In other words, we can say that through PBL assignment, the students were engaged in problem solving learning. They analyze the problems, find solutions, and organize the activities to do the interview to get any related information, made them feel that they had responsibility to accomplish the task given.

CONCLUSION

The use of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model can significantly enhance students' writing skills in descriptive texts. PBL promotes collaborative group discussions, which not only improves students' writing outcomes but also stimulates their enthusiasm for teamwork. Moreover, PBL provides interesting and attractive writing activities that keep students engaged.

PBL can help students overcome the challenge of having a lack of ideas for their writing by presenting them with a problem that needs to be solved. This initial stage of the PBL process encourages students to generate writing topics while expanding their vocabulary through the process of searching for information related to the problem. Working independently to find information also helps students become more self-confident in completing their writing tasks.

Several factors influence the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing students' writing skills. The first factor is the material used in the process. It should be attractive, authentic, and interesting to stimulate student

engagement. The choice of media used in PBL implementation should be practical and appropriate to the student's interests and instructional process. Finally, innovative classroom activities, such as those promoted by PBL, can create an interesting atmosphere that enhances the success of teaching writing processes.

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