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## Project Based Learning Implementation On Teaching Writing Descriptive Text About Athletes To 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Students At SMKS-1 Tamansiswa

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### Abstract

*This research explores the integration of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) as a pedagogical approach for enhancing descriptive writing skills about athletes among Grade X students at SMKS-1 Tamansiswa. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative methodology through a case research framework, data were gathered via classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of students' written compositions. The results demonstrate that PjBL was executed in a well-organized manner, following clearly defined project stages that fostered a student-centered learning environment. Students demonstrated active engagement in research and writing processes, which contributed significantly to their development in essential writing components such as content, vocabulary, grammar, and organization. The choice of authentic, interest-based topics served to boost motivation and participation, while effective teacher facilitation and peer feedback further supported students' writing progress. Despite encountering some challenges related to information accessibility, the overall outcomes indicate a positive impact on students' descriptive writing abilities. This research concludes that PjBL serves as a highly effective teaching strategy for cultivating descriptive writing skills within EFL vocational education settings.*

**Keywords:** Descriptive writing, Project-Based Learning, writing skill, vocational high school

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## INTRODUCTION

In teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the significance of writing cannot be overstated, as it serves as a vital skill that empowers learners to articulate ideas, structure their thoughts, and demonstrate their proficiency and command of language skills. Writing also acts as a mirror of students' capacity for higher-order thinking, encompassing analysis, synthesis, and reflection on their understanding of the world around them. Through writing, learners are encouraged to utilize language as a tool for introspection and meaning-making, thereby fostering the growth of their communicative competence. This underscores that writing is not merely a linguistic activity but a complex cognitive and creative process (Kormos et al., 2024).

Among the diverse genres incorporated into EFL classrooms, descriptive writing holds a particularly esteemed position. This form of writing demands observation and the employment of sensory-rich details to vividly portray objects, individuals, or settings. Its fundamental aim is to craft a vivid mental image within the reader's mind by utilizing precise vocabulary, evocative adjectives, and figurative language (Marpaung & Hambandima, 2019). Engaging with descriptive writing not only cultivates students' imagination and linguistic sensitivity but also empowers them to articulate ideas with greater clarity. As Hasni et al. (2025) emphasize, descriptive writing is indispensable both in academic contexts and real-world communication, as it heightens students' awareness of how deliberate language choices shape meaning and perception.

In the Indonesian EFL curriculum, especially at the vocational high school level, the inclusion of descriptive text is an essential component. It provides a vital foundation for various forms of writing and equips students with the skills to articulate professional environments and

personal experiences pertinent to their future careers. This emphasis aligns seamlessly with the curriculum's primary goals of nurturing students' communicative, linguistic, and cultural competencies. Consequently, instruction in descriptive writing is not merely a curricular requirement but a pivotal element in enhancing students' confidence and mastery in effective communication.

Although the significance of teaching descriptive writing is widely recognized, it is frequently regarded as a complex skill to master. Students often encounter obstacles in choosing suitable vocabulary, forming grammatically accurate sentences, identifying pertinent content, and organizing their ideas with clarity. Furthermore, conventional teacher-centered or instructor-led methods may fall short in inspiring the level of engagement necessary to nurture creativity and contextual understanding, both of which are vital components in descriptive writing.

One compelling instructional strategy to effectively address these challenges is Project-Based Learning (PjBL). As Sedubun and Nurhayati (2024) state, "PjBL in English language teaching fosters student engagement with real-world tasks and meaningful collaboration, thereby supporting active language use, fostering learner autonomy, and enhancing communicative competence. This approach not only places students at the center of the learning process but also enables them to develop profound language skills through planning, teamwork, and the creation of authentic products". By engaging students in purposeful projects that integrate diverse skills, PjBL promotes authentic language application within real-life contexts (Fragoulis & Tsiplakides, 2009). When implemented effectively, this method has been demonstrated to boost motivation and creativity, while also significantly improving writing components such as content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar (Arif & Sukarno, 2024). Moreover, PjBL encourages higher-order thinking and nurtures learner independence by involving students in problem analysis, decision-making, and the production of genuine outputs, leading to deeper cognitive engagement and more meaningful interactions with writing tasks (Oroh & Wilar, 2022).

For vocational or skill-based institutions (SMKS), which prioritize hands-on competencies and real-world applicability, the incorporation of active learning strategies like PjBL can offer significant advantages. Recent research highlight that PjBL effectively cultivates essential 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills—including collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity—that are vital for equipping students to meet future educational and professional challenges (Busnawir et al., 2025). Within EFL vocational education, PjBL not only enhances language acquisition but also mirrors authentic tasks students are likely to encounter in their future careers (Guo et al., 2020). Consequently, embedding PjBL into writing instruction at vocational school supports the dual objectives of fostering linguistic proficiency and developing employability skills, thereby making learning more relevant, engaging, and purpose-driven.

Several research conducted in Indonesia have explored the efficacy and implementation of PjBL in teaching descriptive writing. Rahmawati et al. (2025) demonstrated that students instructed through PjBL markedly outperformed their peers taught via traditional methods in descriptive writing tasks, thereby underscoring the superior effectiveness of PjBL in enhancing students' writing skills. Similarly, Shanti et al. (2018) observed significant improvements in students' descriptive writing scores over two cycles of PjBL application, highlighting this approach as a powerful means of fostering skill development. Furthermore, Mukhlisin et al. (2023) found that PjBL not only elevated students' descriptive writing abilities but also increased engagement and contributed to the refinement of essential writing components such as vocabulary, content, grammar, and organization across various educational levels.

Despite these encouraging findings, notable gaps persist within the current body of research. The majority of prior research have predominantly concentrated on general senior high schools or junior high schools, with comparatively limited focus on vocational high schools—institutions that often serve learners with distinct characteristics and instructional requirements. Moreover, while descriptive writing has garnered considerable scholarly attention, there remains a scarcity of research exploring specific themes, such as writing descriptive texts about athletes,

which pose challenges related to physical features, performance nuances, and background context. Additionally, there is a paucity of in-depth investigation into how Project-Based Learning is employed within vocational school settings, particularly when addressing these specialized writing topics.

Building upon identified gaps in existing research, this research explores the integration of Project-Based Learning as an innovative approach for teaching descriptive texts about athletes to Grade 10 students at SMKS-1 Tamansiswa. Furthermore, it aims to assess the impact of this method on students' descriptive writing skills.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research utilized a descriptive qualitative research framework to comprehensively explore and analyze the implementation of PjBL in teaching descriptive writing focused on athletes to Grade 10 students at SMKS-1 Tamansiswa. The choice of a qualitative approach was deliberate, as it allows for an in-depth examination of classroom dynamics within their natural environment, prioritizing instructional processes over quantifiable metrics. By employing techniques such as interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis—methods widely recognized as the cornerstone of qualitative educational inquiry—the research aims to generate nuanced insights and richly detailed understandings of participants' experiences and perceptions (Bambang et al., 2023).

Furthermore, this research employed a case study method, centering on a single classroom to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the implementation of PjBL, student engagement in writing tasks, and the intricacies of the teaching and learning process within educational environment. The case study approach is well-established in educational research for its ability to provide nuanced insights into instructional practices and classroom dynamics within specific, real-world settings (Farhansyah et al., 2025).

The participants in this research comprised tenth-grade students from SMKS-1 Tamansiswa during the 2025/2026 academic year. This cohort consisted of approximately sixteen students, including two males and fourteen females. The selection of this particular class was made through purposive sampling, a technique in qualitative research that enables the purposeful identification of individuals who are most pertinent to the research objectives and capable of providing rich, insightful data (Syafwa et al., 2025). To achieve a comprehensive understanding of how PjBL functions within this instructional setting, the students' learning processes, classroom engagement, and written work were carefully observed and analyzed, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of this pedagogical approach.

Data were gathered through a variety of instruments, including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, to construct a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of PjBL. The classroom observations captured the intricacies of the teaching and learning process, emphasizing how educators executed each phase of PjBL and the extent of student participation in project activities. To ensure thorough documentation, observation checklists and field notes recorded instructional strategies, classroom dynamics, and levels of student engagement. This approach aligns with contemporary qualitative research on PjBL in classroom settings, which underscores the significance of real-time observation and detailed event recording to gain nuanced insights (Fatmawati et al., 2023).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teacher and several students to delve into their experiences, perceptions, and reactions regarding the implementation of PjBL in teaching descriptive writing. This methodological approach is widely favored in qualitative research, as it offers a balance between guidance and flexibility, enabling participants to express their genuine perspectives and lived experiences in depth (Syafwa et al., 2025). Additionally, students' descriptive writing about athletes were collected as documentary evidence of their development and understanding. These texts were systematically analyzed using a rubric adapted

from Jacobs et al. (1981), which evaluates critical dimensions of writing such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, providing comprehensive assessment of their progress.

The data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis were rigorously examined using an interactive qualitative data analysis framework that encompassed data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. During the data condensation stage, raw information from observations, interview transcripts, and documents was systematically organized, coded, and distilled to uncover meaningful patterns and themes. These condensed data were then presented through narrative descriptions and illustrative excerpts from interviews, facilitating insightful interpretation and the identification of interrelationships among themes. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn by thoughtfully interpreting the displayed data in order to address the research objectives, with continuous comparison across various data sources to ensure depth and consistency. To bolster the credibility and validity of the results, a triangulation approach was employed, cross-verifying information obtained from observations, interviews, and students' written work. This comprehensive method ensured a nuanced and trustworthy understanding of the implementation process of Project-Based Learning (PjBL).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This section delineates the findings of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in instructing Grade 10 students at SMKS-1 Tamansiswa in descriptive writing about athletes. The insights are derived from qualitative data, including detailed classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with both the English teacher and students, and analysis of students' descriptive writing. The exploration centers on three pivotal dimensions: the execution of the PjBL approach, students' levels of engagement and their experiential learning journeys, and the progression of their descriptive writing skills.

### Implementation of Project-Based Learning

Classroom observations demonstrated that PjBL was executed with a remarkable level of structure and consistency throughout the instructional process. At the outset, the teacher effectively articulated the learning objectives and provided a comprehensive overview of the project task, which involved students writing a descriptive text about their favorite athlete. This clear and purposeful introduction not only clarified the activity's intent but also set clear expectations for the desired learning outcomes, thereby fostering student engagement and understanding from the very beginning.

The teacher led students in an exploration of the key features of descriptive texts, focusing on their typical structural elements—namely, identification and description—as well as linguistic features such as adjectives, precise nouns, and the use of the simple present tense. Observation notes reveal that the teacher employed guiding questions and illustrative examples rather than straightforward explanations, thereby fostering active student participation in discerning the text features. This pedagogical approach exemplifies a learner-centered philosophy, aligning with the principles highlighted in qualitative EFL research on PjBL (Bambang et al., 2023).

In the course of the project planning stage, students chose athletes they admired and diligently collected information from diverse sources. Observational evidence indicates that students actively engaged in reading, note-taking, and informal peer discussions to organize pertinent descriptive details. Throughout this process, the teacher closely monitored their progress, offering guidance and support whenever challenges arose, particularly in discerning suitable content and selecting precise vocabulary.

During the project development phase, students engaged in independent efforts to craft their descriptive texts. The teacher's role was that of a facilitator, providing insightful feedback

on aspects such as sentence construction, vocabulary selection, and paragraph organization. Rather than directly correcting mistakes, the teacher fostered a culture of self-revision, guiding students to refine their work through their own critical judgment. This supportive approach empowered students to take greater ownership of their learning journey and their writing achievements, cultivating both independence and confidence in their skills.

During the implementation, peer review activities were actively conducted, wherein students shared drafts with their classmates and engaged in constructive discussions regarding the clarity of content and language proficiency. This collaborative exchange fostered meaningful reflection and emphasized the process-oriented essence of PjBL, enriching the overall educational experience.

### **Students' Engagement and Learning Experiences**

Analysis of interview data and field observations reveals that students responded enthusiastically to the implementation of PjBL. The majority expressed that engaging in writing tasks through projects was significantly more captivating than conventional writing exercises. Additionally, they noted that selecting their own athletes enhanced their interest and investment in the activity, as it fostered a personal connection and imbued the task with greater relevance and significance.

Students also expressed heightened awareness of the structural organization of descriptive texts. Many conveyed that their understanding of crafting identification and description paragraphs had significantly improved, particularly in their ability to employ adjectives with greater efficacy. Additionally, several students highlighted boost in their confidence when utilizing the simple present tense to articulate factual information.

While encouraging feedback was received, certain challenges also emerged. Some students faced difficulties in locating comprehensive details about their selected athletes, especially concerning their accomplishments. This constraint occasionally impacted the thoroughness of their written work. Nonetheless, students acknowledged that this obstacle prompted them to exercise greater discernment and critical judgment in their information selection, thereby fostering more meaningful engagement with the writing process.

### **Development of Students' Descriptive Writing Ability**

An examination of students' writing samples reveals a notable qualitative progression in their descriptive writing skills throughout the duration of the project. Initially, their drafts often exhibited limited vocabulary, frequent grammatical inaccuracies, and a lack of clear organizational structure distinguishing identification from description. Many compositions relied on simple sentences and repetitive phrasing, reflecting an early stage of development.

However, following constructive feedback from both teachers and peers, students' final versions showcased marked improvements: their organization became more coherent, their vocabulary expanded with a richer variety of adjectives and descriptive terms—particularly when portraying athletes' physical features and personal attributes—and grammatical precision was significantly enhanced. Furthermore, the structure of their descriptive texts grew more consistent, with distinct and well-separated paragraphs dedicated to identification and description.

These advancements were identified through a qualitative comparison of drafts and final texts, evaluated using an adapted writing rubric, rather than through quantitative metrics. The results underscore the efficacy of an iterative process, encompassing planning, drafting, feedback, and revision, in fostering meaningful development in students' descriptive writing skills.

## Discussion

The results of this research compellingly illustrate that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can be seamlessly integrated to enhance the teaching of descriptive writing within an EFL vocational high school setting. The ensuing discussion is structured around three pivotal themes: firstly, how PjBL aligns with the intrinsic characteristics of descriptive writing; secondly, its impact on fostering student engagement and enriching the learning experience; and thirdly, its significant role in advancing students' overall writing proficiency.

The implementation of PjBL in this research aligns seamlessly with the theoretical perspective on writing outlined in the introduction, which views writing as a complex, cognitive, and creative endeavor rather than merely a mechanical language activity. As Kormos et al. (2024) highlight, writing encompasses higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, and reflecting on meaning. By engaging students in the task of composing descriptive texts about athletes, they were required to seek out information, identify relevant details, organize their ideas effectively, and transform their insights into coherent written work. This process demonstrates that PjBL fosters an approach to writing that emphasizes meaning-making, moving beyond a sole focus on grammatical correctness.

Furthermore, the results indicate that PjBL significantly enhanced students' engagement and motivation in learning descriptive writing. This corroborates prior research suggesting that PjBL cultivates learner autonomy and active involvement by placing students at the heart of the learning experience (Sedubun & Nurhayati, 2024). In this research, empowering students to select their own athletes increased personal relevance and interest, which in turn sustained their motivation throughout the writing process. Such outcomes are particularly meaningful within vocational school settings, where students tend to respond more positively to tasks that link academic concepts with real-world interests and practical applications.

The level of engagement demonstrated in this research underscores the appropriateness of PjBL for teaching descriptive writing as literary genre. Descriptive texts demand keen observation, vivid imagination, and attention to detail—qualities that are inherently fostered through project-oriented tasks. By investigating athletes' backgrounds, physical attributes, and personal traits, students actively engaged in constructing descriptive meaning grounded in authentic information. This process not only enriches their descriptive writing skills but also enhances their linguistic sensitivity and awareness of how language choices influence meaning and perception (Hariati, 2025; Hasni et al., 2025).

Moreover, the notable enhancement in students' descriptive writing skills observed in this research aligns with prior research indicating that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) significantly bolsters essential writing components such as content development, organization, vocabulary richness, and grammatical precision (Hidayati & Widiati, 2019; Arif & Sukarno, 2024; Mukhlisin et al., 2023). The inherently iterative process of PjBL—comprising planning, drafting, receiving constructive feedback, and revising—afforded students multiple opportunities to continually refine and elevate their writing. Rather than focusing solely on the creation of a final product, students immersed themselves in a dynamic, process-oriented approach that resonates with contemporary pedagogical perspectives on effective teaching writing within EFL contexts.

The pivotal role of the teacher as a facilitator was identified as a key element in the successful implementation of PjBL. In this research, the educator offered ongoing guidance and constructive feedback while avoiding overbearing control of the learning process. This method fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among students for their writing, while simultaneously ensuring they received essential support. Such facilitative teaching exemplifies learner-centered pedagogy and underscores the notion that effective PjBL outcomes are driven not only by well-crafted project designs but also by the teacher's strategic scaffolding and vigilant oversight (Fatmawati et al., 2023).

An additional significant insight emerging from this research pertains to the enhancement of students' confidence in their writing skills. Interview findings reveal that, following the completion of the project, students felt markedly more assured in articulating their ideas and crafting descriptive sentences. This growth in confidence can be largely attributed to a combination of factors: engaging in peer interactions, receiving constructive feedback, and participating in an authentic, meaningful task. Through sharing and discussing their work with classmates, students began to perceive writing as a collaborative and social endeavor rather than a solitary challenge. This shift not only alleviated anxiety but also fostered a more positive and empowered approach to their writing development.

From a wider educational standpoint, the findings of this research underscore the significance of PjBL within vocational high school environments. Vocational education aims not only to develop academic proficiency but also to cultivate essential transferable skills, including collaboration, communication, and autonomous learning. Through engaging in project-based activities, students honed their abilities to manage tasks, organize information, and produce comprehensive written outputs—competencies directly relevant to professional settings (Guo et al., 2020; Sapan et al., 2020). Consequently, PjBL not only advances linguistic development but also plays a vital role in nurturing skills that enhance employability and prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce. Despite encountering certain challenges, most notably in accessing comprehensive information about athletes, these obstacles did not diminish the effectiveness of PjBL. On the contrary, they served as catalysts for fostering problem-solving abilities and critical thinking, which lie at the heart of PjBL's core objectives. This outcome aligns with the broader pedagogical understanding that meaningful learning often arises through the process of confronting and overcoming difficulties, rather than circumventing them (Busnawir et al., 2025). In the context of vocational education, such experiences hold particular value, as they authentically reflect real-world scenarios where learners must operate with limited resources and incomplete data.

Overall, this research compellingly affirms the efficacy of PjBL as a strategy for teaching descriptive writing within EFL vocational education, with a particular focus on Grade 10 students at SMKS-1 Tamansiswa. By incorporating authentic topics, fostering student autonomy, encouraging collaborative engagement, and emphasizing reflective feedback, PjBL cultivates a rich educational environment that advances both linguistic proficiency and cognitive development. Furthermore, the results enrich the existing body of literature by offering detailed qualitative insights into the practical implementation of PjBL, specifically in guiding tenth-grade students to craft descriptive texts about athletes. This approach not only enhances students' content mastery but also strengthens their vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and organizational skills in descriptive writing.

## CONCLUSION

This research explores the integration of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in teaching descriptive writing about athletes to Grade 10 students at SMKS-1 Tamansiswa, employing a descriptive qualitative method. The results reveal that PjBL was systematically and effectively applied, cultivating a learner-centered environment that promoted active participation, collaboration, and meaningful engagement with writing tasks. Through authentic project activities, students demonstrated notable improvements in essential aspects of descriptive writing, including content development, vocabulary richness, grammatical accuracy, and organizational coherence. Empowering students to choose athletes based on their personal interests heightened motivation and facilitated more profound exploration of ideas. Continuous guidance from teachers and constructive peer feedback further enhanced the clarity of text structure and precision of language use. While some students faced challenges in gathering comprehensive information about their chosen athletes, these obstacles did not substantially

impede their overall learning progress. In conclusion, this research affirms that PjBL serves as a highly effective instructional strategy for teaching descriptive writing within EFL vocational school settings, particularly at SMKS-1 Tamansiswa, by fostering both linguistic growth and cognitive engagement through authentic, student-centered projects.

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