



The Effectiveness of Project Based Learning In Classroom Activities to Develop Skimming Skills in Improving Reading Comprehension Of Descriptive Texts Among VII Grades

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study examined the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in developing Grade VII students' skimming skills for descriptive text comprehension at SMPN 18 Bandung over four weeks. A total of 62 students participated in the study, divided equally into an experimental group (n=31) and a control group (n=31). Both groups were assessed using pre-test and post-test instruments. The experimental group, which received instruction through the PBL approach, showed a statistically significant improvement in their reading comprehension scores—from a pre-test average of 27.387 to a post-test average of 40.354 (gain = 12.967). In contrast, the control group, which received conventional instruction, improved from 25.354 to 36.387 (gain = 11.032). The results indicate that the PBL approach is more effective than traditional methods in enhancing students' skimming skills and comprehension of descriptive texts. It is suggested that English teachers consider implementing Project-Based Learning as an alternative instructional strategy to improve reading comprehension and overall academic achievement.

Keywords: *Project Based Learning, Descriptive Text, Skimming Skills*

Introduction

Education is an important aspect of life. If education in a country is quality, then that country will progress. Therefore, to obtain quality education, planning is needed that is relevant to a country's educational goals. According to Alifah (2021): The quality of instruction contains a critical effect on the quality of graduates and workforce capabilities. Destitute instruction can ruin the improvement of human resources and influence the capacity to compete within the worldwide showcase. Separated from that, instruction moreover capacities as an apparatus to make strides the quality of life of people and society.

According to Sujana (2019): Instruction must be set up inside the nation's social values and Pancasila, and develop incredible character. This shows up that instruction does not because it were center on educational perspectives, but as well on forming character and ethical values. In orchestrate to achieve national instruction destinations, it is fundamental to have instructive modules disobedient that can offer assistance understudies at their person educator levels.

The educational programs may well be a bridge to the objectives in each educator unit which have been depicted over for a couple of subjects in schools. Subsequently, the government persistently endeavors to form strides the quality of instruction, one of which is by advancing the instructive programs. One of the subjects included within the instructive curriculum is English. English could be a world dialect, utilized by nearly the complete world's populace. The Service of Instruction has decided that English will be instructed in Indonesia as an outside dialect.

From rudimentary school to college, individuals have considered it. This appears that junior tall school understudies cannot overlook English. Understudies are anticipated to ace the four dialect abilities amid the instructing and learning handle. As we know, there are four main skills in English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The main goal of teaching these skills is for students to be able to communicate effectively with native and non-native English speakers in a variety of social and academic situations.

That said, reading comprehension is a skill. One of the four most important language skills students need to master is reading comprehension. Reading is a skill students can use to succeed in school and in life. Reading comprehension skills help students acquire new knowledge, appreciate the beauty of literature, and accomplish everyday tasks such as reading novels, newspapers, manuals, etc.

Reading comprehension is a basic skill that students must develop to achieve academic success, but many students, especially in Grade VII, face significant challenges in understanding and remembering information from text. This problem is compounded by traditional teaching methods that often focus on rote memorization and passive learning, rather than active engagement with the text. Lack of motivation and inadequate strategies for understanding complex material

can result in low levels of reading comprehension. As a result, students may struggle to perform well in subjects that require critical reading skills, such as literature, science, and social studies. Project Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as a promising educational model that emphasizes active learning, critical thinking, and real-world application. PBL encourages students to engage deeply with content through collaborative projects, which can promote better understanding and retention of information. However, although PBL has been recognized for its potential to improve a variety of learning outcomes, its specific impact on reading comprehension in the context of Grade VII students remains underexplored.

Therefore, it is necessary to research whether the application of PBL can improve students' reading comprehension abilities, and whether this approach is appropriate for overcoming the reading obstacles faced by students at this grade level. The need for this research arises from the ongoing challenge of low reading comprehension scores among middle school students, which limits their academic success and personal growth. Given the importance of reading comprehension as a foundational skill for learning across a variety of subjects, it is important to explore teaching strategies that can enhance students' ability to comprehend and engage with texts effectively. Although PBL has shown promising results in other domains (e.g., problem solving, critical thinking), its application in improving reading comprehension specifically requires empirical investigation.

This method provides less diversity in the learning process, which can make students passive and less actively involved (Ahmad Dhani et al., 2024). Another reason why students' reading comprehension is still poor is that reading in the learning process is still a teacher-centered process. This method provides less diversity in the learning process, which can make students passive and less actively involved (Ahmad Dhani et al., 2024). Another reason why students' reading comprehension is still poor is that reading in the learning process is still a teacher-centered process.

Teacher-centered learning does not promote student participation, which results in students' lower engagement in the learning process. English teachers continue to use the lecture method and do not make full use of interesting learning models. Teachers mistakenly believe that using models is the same as not using models. Some teachers consider the use of models to be a waste of time and does not meet the curriculum. The learning environment needs to change from a teacher-centered environment to a student-centered environment. as not using models. Some teachers consider the use of models to be a waste of time and does not meet the curriculum.

The learning environment needs to change from a teacher-centered environment to a student-centered environment. One of strategy for improving reading comprehension is skimming. Skimming is a fast-reading technique to get a general idea without reading the contents of the entire text. The main purpose of skimming is to find the main idea or important message in a text efficiently.

According Ayu Maryani et.al (2023): Skimming is an important teaching strategy for efficient and easy learning. They found that using skimming technique can improve students' ability to understand texts and the number of students increases significantly after mastering this technique. According to Seprina et.al (2020): Using skimming techniques is very fun and something new for students.

This shows that using skimming techniques for learning can increase students' motivation and engagement. The ability to read is one of the basic skills that is very important in the learning process, especially at the secondary education level. Among the various types of reading comprehension skills, skimming (a fast-reading technique to capture the main idea of a text) is a very important skill for understanding descriptive text. However, many Years 7 students have difficulty mastering this skill, which impacts their understanding of the texts they read. In situations like this, the application of the project-based learning (PBL) method is expected to be an effective solution for improving students' skimming skills.

Skimming is a strategy used by teachers to teach students that it is an effective way to read complex texts. Most schools such as SMP 18 Bandung lack the necessary study skills to handle more complex texts. Research shows that skimming procedures are rarely used in daily study practices. According to Warahan (2021) : Using skimming approach to learning in Taman Teluk Betung Secondary School increases students' comprehension. However, not all schools finalize the results. Research data shows that only 30% of students were able to effectively use skimming techniques before the treatment. After applying this technique for two learning cycles, the classical completion rate increased from 66.66% to 85.18%, indicating that many students still require guidance to make the most of this technique (Warahan, 2021).

The ability to read and understand descriptive text is one of the basic skills that is very important for students, especially at the intermediate level. Explanatory writing not only conveys information but also helps develop students' critical and creative thinking skills. However, initial observations of Class 7 students show that many students have difficulty understanding deskriptive texts. This is reflected in the low average score on the reading comprehension test and the lack of active participation of students in class discussions. Learning assessment results data show that only around 40% of students achieved the minimum standard in reading comprehension. Furthermore, a study of 100 students found that 70 of them had difficulty identifying topics and key details in written texts. Previous research also revealed that commonly used traditional teaching methods are not effective enough to improve students' reading comprehension. Therefore, a more innovative and interactive approach is needed to improve this function.

A student-centered learning methodology is project-based learning (PBL). The PBL learning model is an innovative learning model that is highly suited to improving students' capabilities because it emphasizes student participation in learning activities. PBL learning is a learning model that focuses on projects and

activities as the primary means of learning. Students research, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information to achieve various learning outcomes. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an inquiry- based educational strategy that encourages students to construct knowledge by requiring them to complete projects that produce meaningful, real-world results (Guo, Saab, Post, & Admiraal, 2020). PBL learning is intended to be used to explore and understand difficult problems.

Previous research has shown that students who participate in project-based learning have experienced significant improvements in reading comprehension compared to traditional learning methods Johnson's (2020) : research shows that students who participate in PBL improve their reading comprehension by up to 30%. This is for one semester. In addition, data from surveys conducted in several schools show that 65% of seventh grade students have difficulty understanding descriptive text. This shows the urgent need to develop more effective teaching method.

Method

1. Research Approach and Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design to evaluate the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in improving students' reading comprehension skills, particularly their ability to skim descriptive texts. A quasi-experimental design was selected due to the educational setting, which did not allow for full randomization. This design enables the comparison of learning outcomes between students who receive the treatment (PBL) and those who are taught using traditional methods. According to Creswell (2014), this method is especially suitable for classroom-based educational research where strict experimental controls are not feasible.

2. Population and Sampling

The population of this study consisted of all seventh-grade students at SMPN 18 Bandung in the 2025 academic year, totaling 286 students. Using random sampling, two classes were selected: VII-9 (Experimental group, $n = 31$), VII-8 (Control group, $n = 31$) Participants were selected based on class availability and permission from the school. There was no significant difference in the average academic achievement levels between both groups at the beginning of the study.

3. Participant Demographics

Participants were seventh-grade students aged approximately 12–13 years. The gender distribution was balanced across both groups. All participants were native Indonesian speakers with similar exposure to English learning materials as part of their regular school curriculum.

4. Instruments

The instruments used in this study were pre-test and post-test reading comprehension assessments designed to evaluate students' skimming abilities in reading descriptive texts. Each test consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions focusing on identifying main ideas, specific details, and overall understanding of the texts. To ensure the quality of the instruments, the items were reviewed by two TEFL experts and piloted on a separate class (VII-7) to establish face and content validity. The reliability of the tests was measured using Cronbach's Alpha during the pilot study, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.78, which indicates acceptable internal consistency.

5. Procedure and Timeline

The study was conducted over four weeks at SMPN 18 Bandung. The procedures were as follows:

Week	Experimental Group (PBL)	Control Group (Traditional)
1	Pre-test; Group formation; Introduction to PBL	Pre-test; Standard lecture and textbook based reading
2	Skimming strategy training; Group project planning	Teacher explanation of descriptive texts
3	Project execution (poster creation, text summarizing)	Worksheet exercises and comprehension question
4	Presentation of projects; Post-test	Review and Post-test

Teacher training was provided one week before the intervention, where the experimental class teacher was briefed on PBL principles, group facilitation, and project assessment.

6. Intervention Protocol (PBL Activities)

The PBL intervention involved students working in groups to create a descriptive project (e.g., poster or brochure) based on a real or fictional object/person. The process included:

1. Reading and skimming multiple descriptive texts
2. Identifying key information
3. Summarizing findings
4. Designing a visual project
5. Presenting to the class

Materials used included printed texts, worksheets, visual aids, and project rubrics.

7. Ethical Considerations

This research received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Islamic University of nusantara, and permission was obtained from SMPN 18 Bandung. Parental consent was collected for all student participants. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing student data.

Results and Findings

1. Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Process

The study was conducted at SMPN 18 Bandung from February 5 to February 27, 2025. A total of 62 students participated, divided into two groups: experimental (n=31) and control (n=31). Both groups completed a pre-test and a post-test on skimming skills in descriptive text reading. Data were analyzed using SPSS v25, including descriptive and inferential statistics.

2. Descriptive Statistics: Experimental Group

Statistic	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain
Mean	27.39	40.35	12.97
Standard Deviation	8.44	2.78	-
Range	15 – 42	36 – 45	0 – 27
N	31	31	-

Figure 1. Line graph showing improvement from pre-test to post-test in the experimental group.

Most students in the experimental group demonstrated significant improvements. While a few students had stagnant scores, 80% experienced gains of at least 10 points. The highest gain observed was +27 points. The low standard deviation in the post-test suggests reduced score variability, indicating more consistent performance after the PBL intervention.

3. Descriptive Statistics: Control Group

Statistic	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain
Mean	25.35	36.39	11.03
Standard Deviation	7.14	3.44	-
Range	6 – 36	30 – 45	0 – 30
N	31	31	-

Figure 2. Bar chart comparison of pre-test and post-test scores in the control group.

Although improvements were evident in the control group, the post-test scores were more varied and modest compared to the experimental group. Several students showed little or no progress, suggesting a lesser impact of the traditional teaching method on developing skimming skills.

4. Inferential Statistics: T-Test Results

Test Type	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% CI of Difference	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Pre-Test (Exp vs Ctrl)	1.024	60	0.310	[-1.95, 5.66]	0.25 (small)
Post-Test (Exp vs Ctrl)	4.997	60	< 0.001	[2.38, 5.56]	1.30 (large)

Figure 3. Error bars with mean and 95% confidence intervals for pre- and post-test scores in both groups.

The comparison of pre-test results showed no significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($p = 0.310$), indicating that both groups had similar baseline reading comprehension abilities. However, the post-test results revealed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.001$), with the experimental group outperforming the control group. Furthermore, the effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.30$) suggests a very large practical significance, highlighting the strong impact of the Project-Based Learning (PBL) method in improving students' reading comprehension.

5. Assumption Testing and Data Integrity

Assumption testing and data integrity checks were conducted to ensure the validity of the analysis. The Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated that the data for both groups were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). Levene's Test confirmed the homogeneity of variance for both the pre-test ($F = 1.661$, $p = 0.202$) and post-test ($F = 0.349$, $p = 0.557$), suggesting that the variances between groups were equal. Additionally, no missing data were found, and all responses were complete and usable. Boxplot analysis also showed no extreme outliers that could potentially skew the results.

6. Summary of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the Project-Based Learning (PBL) model led to a greater improvement in students' reading comprehension of descriptive texts, particularly through the application of skimming techniques. The experimental group demonstrated not only higher average gains but also lower score variability compared to the control group, suggesting that PBL was effective and yielded more consistent outcomes across students. Furthermore, the statistically significant results and large effect size provide strong evidence that the PBL approach is more

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effective than traditional teaching methods in enhancing students' ability to comprehend descriptive texts using skimming skills.

Discussion

1. Interpretation of Main Findings

The results of this quasi-experimental study provide compelling evidence that Project-Based Learning (PBL) is significantly more effective than traditional teaching methods in enhancing seventh-grade students' skimming skills and reading comprehension of descriptive texts. The experimental group showed a statistically significant gain in post-test scores (mean gain = 12.97) compared to the control group (mean gain = 11.03), with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.30$). These findings directly answer the research question by demonstrating that PBL not only improves students' ability to extract key information quickly but also increases engagement and consistency in learning outcomes.

2. Theoretical Integration

The study's findings align strongly with several established learning theories. According to Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivism, students construct meaning through social interaction, which is inherent in PBL's group-based and dialogic format. Additionally, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) supports the use of project-based tasks that encourage hands-on engagement, reflective observation, and application—key processes that occurred as students designed and presented their descriptive text projects. Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory also reinforces the notion that meaningful, context-rich projects like those used in PBL reduce extraneous cognitive load, thereby freeing up working memory to focus on critical reading strategies like skimming. These theories collectively explain why PBL produced deeper comprehension and better performance than traditional instruction.

3. Practical Implications

The results of this study have direct implications for **English language teaching** in Indonesian middle schools. Teachers should consider integrating PBL as a core instructional strategy, particularly for reading comprehension units involving descriptive texts. The collaborative and inquiry-based nature of PBL fosters **peer** learning, critical thinking, and language application in real-world contexts. Classroom management, as emphasized by Jones (2007) and Gaffar et al. (2024), also plays a crucial role. For PBL to succeed, teachers must create structured, yet flexible learning environments that promote active engagement, clear role distribution, and mutual accountability within groups.

4. Unexpected Findings and Variations

Although the experimental group showed stronger performance overall, individual variation was observed. A few students in both groups demonstrated limited or no improvement, possibly due to external factors such as lack of motivation, limited vocabulary, or absenteeism during key sessions. Interestingly, the standard deviation in the experimental group post-test decreased significantly, suggesting that PBL may also help reduce achievement gaps by supporting lower-performing students through peer collaboration and repeated exposure to reading strategies.

5. Limitations of the Study

Despite the promising results, several limitations of the study must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was limited to 62 students from a single school, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader student populations. Second, the duration of the intervention—only four weeks—may not have been sufficient to capture the long-term retention or sustained application of the skimming skills taught through Project-Based Learning. Third, the measurement instruments, consisting of 20-item multiple-choice tests, might not have fully captured the depth and nuance of students' reading comprehension or the authenticity of their skimming performance in real-world reading tasks. Lastly, while both the experimental and control groups were taught by the same teacher to control for instructional consistency, teacher-related factors such as teaching style, personal rapport with students, and classroom management strategies may still have influenced student motivation and performance. These limitations suggest that, although PBL demonstrated effectiveness in this particular context, further studies involving larger, more diverse populations and extended intervention periods are necessary to validate and refine its broader application.

Suggestions

1. For Teachers

English teachers are encouraged to adopt the Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach as a viable alternative to traditional instruction, particularly when teaching descriptive texts. To ensure its effectiveness, teachers should plan engaging and real-world projects that align with students' interests, making the learning experience more relevant and motivating. The use of structured scaffolding—such as rubrics, checklists, and timelines—can help guide students through the project process and ensure clarity of expectations. Collaboration with colleagues across different subject areas is also recommended to design interdisciplinary projects that foster deeper learning. Additionally, conducting pre-implementation assessments of student ability levels, class size, and time availability is essential to tailor the PBL experience effectively. Although the initial implementation of PBL may present certain challenges, the long-term benefits—including improved reading comprehension, higher student engagement, and enhanced critical thinking skills—make it a highly worthwhile instructional

2. For Students

Students should be encouraged to take **active roles** in group activities and view projects as opportunities to apply and deepen their understanding of English texts. Participation, collaboration, and accountability within groups are essential for maximizing the benefits of PBL. Students can also use **skimming strategies** outside the classroom, such as during independent reading or exam preparation.

3. For Future Researchers

Subsequent studies should explore the effectiveness of PBL in other areas of English learning, such as narrative texts, vocabulary development, or speaking fluency. Future researchers are also advised to investigate the long-term impact of PBL on academic achievement and motivation. Additionally, comparative studies between different learner demographics (urban vs rural, public vs private schools) would offer deeper insights into how context influences the success of PBL implementation.

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