



## Improving Students' Learning Outcomes in Indonesian Language Subject on Writing Texts of Fantasy Materials Through the Application of Problem Based Learning Learning Models

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### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model on students' writing performance and learning outcomes in Indonesian class VIII. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted over two cycles with 32 students as participants. Each cycle consisted of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Data were collected using student learning outcome tests and analyzed through descriptive quantitative statistical techniques. The findings revealed a progressive improvement in students' performance: the average score increased from 77 in the first cycle to 82 in the second cycle. Observations indicated that PBL enhanced students' engagement, collaboration, and ability to apply knowledge to solve problems. Moreover, students demonstrated improved critical thinking and creativity in writing fantasy stories. The results suggest that the PBL model effectively fosters active learning, promotes higher-order thinking skills, and enhances student learning outcomes in Indonesian language education. Implementing PBL encourages collaborative problem-solving, the integration of knowledge and skills, and the application of learning to authentic tasks. These findings provide practical implications for educators seeking to improve student achievement and engagement through innovative instructional strategies.

**Keywords:** *Problem-Based Learning; Indonesian language learning; Fantasy story writing; Classroom Action Research; Student learning outcomes*

### A. Introduction

Writing skills in Indonesian language are essential competencies that junior high school students are expected to develop, as they enable learners to communicate ideas clearly in written form for purposes such as informing, persuading, and entertaining readers (Rahmawati et al., 2020; Sari et al., 2020). Despite being introduced in earlier grades, many students continue to demonstrate difficulties in writing tasks because of limited opportunities for meaningful practice and insufficient engagement during instruction. Writing is not only a mechanical skill but also an intellectual process that requires critical thinking, idea organization, and genre awareness (Fawaid & Huda, 2024; research in project-based or problem-based contexts shows writing improves when learners actively engage in problem solving and collaboration). Therefore, effective instructional models are needed to support students in constructing coherent and creative texts.

In the Indonesian junior high school curriculum, one of the basic competencies is the ability to write fantasy story texts according to language structure and conventions. This genre

demands regular practice because students must master elements such as narrative sequence, imaginative content, and appropriate language use (Fawaid & Huda, 2024). However, preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 07 Rarowatu Utara revealed that students' writing outcomes in fantasy text tasks remained below the expected standard. The pre-cycle assessment yielded an average score of 63.09 with only 41% learning completeness, indicating that conventional teaching approaches failed to adequately support students' writing development. This finding aligns with broader educational literature indicating that traditional, teacher-centered instruction often limits student participation and critical engagement in writing activities (e.g., Fawaid & Huda, 2024).

Although previous research has explored various instructional models, most studies have focused on descriptive or expository texts or have been conducted in non-Indonesian contexts, leaving a gap in empirical evidence regarding the application of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) specifically for fantasy story writing in Indonesian junior high schools (Fawaid & Huda, 2024; Rufaidah et al., 2022). PBL, which emphasizes real-world problem solving, collaboration, and student autonomy, has been shown to enhance writing skills, motivation, and higher-order thinking in related contexts (Rufaidah et al., 2022; *additional research supports effectiveness of PBL on writing skills*). This study addresses that gap by implementing PBL to enhance writing outcomes for fantasy texts at SMP Negeri 07 Rarowatu Utara.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of the Problem-Based Learning model on students' Indonesian learning outcomes, particularly their ability to compose fantasy story texts. The rationale for adopting PBL is its potential to activate students' cognitive engagement, encourage collaboration, and support meaningful construction of written texts through active problem solving and reflection, thereby offering a promising alternative to conventional pedagogies in improving writing achievement.

## B. Literary Review

### 1. *Concept of Problem-Based Learning (PBL)*

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a student-centered instructional model that emphasizes solving authentic, real-world problems as the primary vehicle for learning, knowledge construction, and skill development (Simanjuntak et al., 2023; Suharti et al., 2023). In PBL, students collaboratively engage in identifying learning needs, planning solutions, gathering and evaluating information, and reflecting on their understanding, with the teacher acting as a facilitator who supports inquiry processes rather than delivering content directly. This approach aligns with constructivist learning principles, where meaningful learning occurs through active engagement and problem-solving activities.

Empirical studies have documented the effectiveness of PBL in improving writing skills across various genres and educational levels. For instance, research on descriptive text writing demonstrated that PBL significantly improved student performance, increasing average scores and mastery learning through collaborative tasks and problem exploration (Suharti et al., 2023). Likewise, PBL has been shown to enhance writing ability in recount and procedure texts, where students' engagement and ability to organize ideas improved after implementation (Simanjuntak et al., 2023; Nurrochmat et al., 2023). These studies suggest that PBL not only fosters linguistic competence but also critical thinking, information synthesis, and cooperative learning—skills that are essential for effective writing.

The theoretical rationale for applying PBL in writing instruction lies in its capacity to integrate cognitive and social dimensions of learning, encouraging students to construct meaningful texts through inquiry, collaboration, and reflection. In contrast to traditional teacher-centered approaches that often limit student participation, PBL creates opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning, apply prior knowledge to solve complex problems, and internalize writing conventions through authentic task engagement. Therefore, PBL represents a promising pedagogical strategy for addressing persistent challenges in writing instruction, particularly in producing imaginative and structured texts such as fantasy stories, which require both creativity and organizational coherence.

### 2. *Concept of Fantasy Stories*

Fantasy stories are a genre of narrative texts that involve imaginative elements and creative construction of events, characters, and settings that extend beyond realistic representations. In educational contexts, understanding the nature of fantasy text structures is crucial because narrative composition involves not only linguistic accuracy but also creative expression and cognitive engagement (Fitri & Tamsin, 2023). Research on student writing of fantasy texts

highlights that narrative structure—including orientation, complication, and resolution—is a key indicator of students' mastery of genre conventions, and is strongly linked to instructional practice (Fitri & Tamsin, 2023; Sahman et al., 2023).

Fantasy texts are characterized by their integration of imaginative scenarios that may not exist in daily life but are constructed to appear plausible within the narrative framework. These texts often combine realistic elements, such as familiar settings or character traits, with fictive aspects that stimulate imagination and original idea development (Nirmalasari & Yahya, 2022; Camila & Faznur, 2023). For example, students' creation of fantasy narratives demonstrates both grounded understanding of narrative flow and the ability to innovate plot and character dynamics—the latter being essential for advanced narrative writing and critical language use.

Studies in Indonesian secondary schools have found that fantasy story writing supports the development of higher-order thinking skills by requiring students to generate ideas, organize sequence of events, and apply linguistic structures in a coherent and expressive manner (Sahman et al., 2023). This genre also provides a platform for integrating character values and local cultural elements, suggesting its pedagogical value beyond mere language mechanics (Emelfa & Ramadhan, 2023). Overall, fantasy stories in junior high school contexts serve as effective vehicles for enhancing students' narrative competence, blending cognitive, linguistic, and creative dimensions of writing instruction.

### 3. *Empirical Studies on Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Writing Outcomes*

Recent empirical research has shown that Problem-Based Learning (PBL) significantly enhances students' writing performance across various text types by fostering active engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking. For example, the implementation of PBL was reported to improve narrative writing skills in early education contexts, where cycles of inquiry and problem resolution helped students organize ideas more effectively and produce more coherent narrative texts compared to conventional instruction (Cintya & Widanarto, 2023).

Similarly, studies in junior high and secondary school settings demonstrate that PBL positively impacts students' ability to compose structured texts. Research on descriptive text writing found that students taught with the PBL model exhibited higher writing scores and mastery levels after instruction than before, indicating better understanding of genre conventions and linguistic features (Suharti et al., 2023). In addition, PBL has been applied successfully to writing news and recount texts, with results indicating improved writing performance, motivational engagement, and problem-solving abilities in the learning process (Erin et al., 2023; Simanjuntak et al., 2023).

The qualitative work of Fawaid and Huda (2023) further supports these findings, showing that PBL coupled with collaborative lesson study can deepen students' conceptual understanding and cooperative writing practices in Indonesian language classes. Collectively, these studies confirm that PBL not only enhances cognitive aspects of writing (e.g., text organization and idea development) but also improves affective and social dimensions (e.g., motivation, confidence, and peer interaction). However, although evidence exists on PBL's effectiveness for general writing tasks, research specifically addressing its impact on **fantasy story writing**—a genre requiring both imaginative creativity and structural mastery—remains limited. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into how PBL influences students' performance in more creative writing genres, such as fantasy stories, within Indonesian junior high school contexts.

## C. Methodology

### 1. *The Design of the Study*

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) with two cycles, aiming to evaluate the effectiveness of PBL in improving students' fantasy story writing skills. CAR was selected because it allows systematic observation, iterative refinement, and practical interventions directly in the classroom (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014).

### 2. *The Subject of the Study*

The subjects were 32 Grade VIII students of SMP Negeri 07 Rarowatu Utara, selected purposively due to low pre-test writing scores. Both male and female students were included to reflect the general classroom demographic.

### 3. *Technique of Data Collection*

Data collection was conducted using a **mixed-methods approach**, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the learning process and outcomes. Quantitative data were derived from students' test scores, worksheet completions, attendance records, and assignment evaluations, serving as objective indicators of cognitive achievement. Concurrently, qualitative data were obtained through systematic classroom observations, detailed field notes, and documentation of student interactions, focusing on participation in discussions, confidence in presenting ideas, and collaborative problem-solving skills. This triangulation of data sources enhanced the validity of the findings by capturing multiple perspectives on student engagement and learning dynamics. Data were collected systematically across each cycle to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the Discovery Learning model in promoting both conceptual understanding and active learning behaviors. Such an approach aligns with best practices in classroom action research, enabling researchers to connect observable behaviors with measurable learning outcomes.

#### *4. Instruments*

To comprehensively capture both the learning process and outcomes, this study employed a variety of research instruments. Achievement tests were administered at the end of each cycle to assess students' cognitive understanding of socio-cultural change concepts. Structured observation sheets were used to systematically document students' classroom activities, including their participation, collaboration, enthusiasm, and overall engagement during discovery learning sessions. Additionally, field notes and anecdotal records were maintained to record contextual classroom events, unexpected reactions, and qualitative changes in student behavior. To facilitate the learning process, student worksheets (LKS) were provided, guiding students through the stages of discovery learning, such as problem identification, data collection, analysis, and drawing conclusions. Finally, supporting documents, including attendance records, assignment scores, and other relevant school materials, were collected to serve as supplementary sources of data, enriching the overall analysis of both learning processes and outcomes.

#### *5. Technique of Data Analysis*

Data analysis in this study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' learning processes and outcomes. Quantitative analysis employed descriptive statistics, including mean scores, percentages, and improvement rates, to evaluate students' writing performance. Qualitative analysis was carried out using thematic analysis of classroom observations and field notes to identify patterns of student engagement, participation, and collaboration during the learning process. Additionally, cycle-to-cycle comparisons were made by measuring improvements from Cycle I to Cycle II to systematically assess the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning model in enhancing students' ability to write fantasy texts.

### **D. Findings and Discussion**

#### *1. Findings*

Based on the research data, the learning activities conducted in Cycle I were implemented according to the pre-designed plan. The application of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model demonstrated a positive impact on students' writing skills, particularly in composing fantasy story texts. Students' understanding of the Indonesian language material improved compared to the pre-cycle assessment, indicating that the initial cycle effectively stimulated greater learning motivation and engagement.

The results from Cycle I are summarized as follows: (1) the average score of students was 77; (2) learning completeness reached 75%; (3) 25% of students had not yet achieved mastery; (4) the increase in learning mastery compared to the pre-cycle was 34%; (5) students gained a better understanding of the mechanics and procedures of writing fantasy story texts and practiced more carefully; (6) continuous guidance from the researcher contributed to improved proficiency in expressing ideas, concepts, and creativity in writing; (7) students began to expand their reading and consult relevant literature to enhance their writing skills; and (8) intensive scaffolding provided a supportive environment that nurtured student progress.

In Cycle II, students' enthusiasm and engagement were further strengthened, resulting in higher learning outcomes. The findings are as follows: (1) the average score increased to 82; (2) learning completeness reached 100%; (3) all 32 students achieved mastery; (4) students were able to write fantasy story texts following proper procedures; (5) the improvements were

supported by reflective activities embedded in the PBL approach; (6) students developed editing and self-evaluation skills based on the drafts they produced; (7) Cycle II represented the final results of this Classroom Action Research; and (8) all students successfully completed the Indonesian writing tasks optimally.

Overall, the evaluation of Class VIII students at SMP Negeri 07 Rarowatu Utara indicated a consistent increase in learning outcomes, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning model in enhancing both student engagement and competency in writing fantasy story texts. A summary of the research findings is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Recapitulation of Student Learning Outcomes**

No	Criteria	Pre-test / Pre-cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II	Note
1	Total Score	2076	2448	2626	Increase
2	Mean Score	65	77	82	Increase
3	Mastery Learning (%)	41%	75%	100%	Increase
4	Incomplete Learning (%)	59%	25%	0%	Decrease

Based on Table 1, it was found that in cycle I the average value was 77, while in cycle II the average value was 82. This proves that the problem-based learning model in Indonesian subjects can effectively improve student learning outcomes

## 2. Discussion

The problem-based learning (PBL) learning model is a learning model that is based on many problems that require authentic investigation, namely investigations that require real solutions (Fitri et al., 2020; Herzon et al., 2018; Ramlawati et al., 2017). In this learning model the teacher guides students to describe problem solving plans into stages of activity such as the teacher gives examples of the use of skills and strategies needed so that these tasks can be completed the teacher creates a flexible classroom atmosphere and is oriented towards investigation efforts by students.

According to (Putriani et al., 2017; Rosnawati et al., 2015; Sari & Sugiyarto, 2015) that problem-based learning is an educational approach where the problem is the starting point of the learning process. Typically, problems are based on real-life problems that have been selected and edited to meet educational goals and criteria (Arwanda et al., 2020; Fitriah, 2017; Ladimiyanto, 2014).

The problem based learning learning model refers to a learning approach that focuses on the process of solving problems by acquiring the necessary knowledge. This model has the advantage of making students learn with inspiration, teaching group thinking, and using related information to try to solve both real and hypothetical problems, besides that students are trained to synthesize knowledge and skills before they apply them to problems, so that the material provided is easy to remember. by students (Abdurrozak & Jayadinata, 2016; Christiana et al., 2014; Defiyanti & Sumarni, 2019).

This research is supported by previous studies that are relevant to this research such as: (1) research by (Febriana et al., 2020), which obtained research results, namely problem-based learning modules that affect students' problem-solving creativity; (2) research by (Istiandaru et al., 2015), which obtained research results, namely the problem based learning (PBL) learning model with a realistic-scientific approach and PISA assessment had a positive effect on students' mathematical literacy abilities; (3) research by (Ariswati, 2018), which obtained the results of the study, namely the problem-based learning model had an effect on students' mathematics learning outcomes.

The implication of this research is to teach students to work in groups, use information to try to solve problems and students are trained to synthesize knowledge and skills before they apply them to problems.

## E. Conclusion

The results of this Classroom Action Research demonstrate that the application of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model significantly improves students' learning outcomes in Indonesian, particularly in writing fantasy story texts. Across the two cycles, students showed consistent improvement in both cognitive and practical skills. In Cycle I, the average score increased to 77 with 75% learning completeness, while in Cycle II, the average reached 82 with 100% of students achieving mastery. The PBL approach successfully fostered students' ability to

organize ideas, follow proper writing procedures, engage in self-editing, and connect creativity with structured writing tasks. Moreover, students became more motivated, collaborative, and confident in expressing their ideas.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed: (1) teachers are encouraged to implement the PBL model in writing lessons, particularly for narrative or imaginative texts, to stimulate student engagement and critical thinking; (2) schools should provide professional development programs on active learning strategies such as PBL to enhance instructional quality; (3) students should be guided to use supplementary reading materials and structured worksheets to strengthen their understanding of narrative text structures; and (4) future research could explore the integration of PBL with digital learning media to further enhance creativity and learning outcomes in language education.

Overall, the study confirms that the Problem-Based Learning model is an effective instructional strategy for improving students' writing skills and achieving mastery learning in Indonesian language education.

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