



Project-Based Learning as an Alternative Approach to Enhancing EFL Students' Grammar-Based Writing

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Abstract

Writing is one of the most challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners because it requires grammatical accuracy, adequate vocabulary, and the ability to organize ideas coherently. Preliminary observations in a public junior secondary school in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, revealed that many ninth-grade students experienced difficulties in constructing sentences using the present and past continuous tenses, resulting in frequent grammatical errors and low writing achievement. This study aimed to improve students' writing skills through the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), with the Jigsaw technique integrated in the second cycle to strengthen collaborative learning. The study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model and involved 25 ninth-grade students. Data were collected through writing tests, classroom observations, field notes, and documentation and analyzed using descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings showed that the implementation of PjBL, supported by Jigsaw in Cycle II, improved students' grammatical accuracy, sentence construction, classroom participation, and learning engagement. The average student score increased from 63.20 in the pre-cycle to 73.67 in Cycle I and reached 84.00 in Cycle II. In Cycle I, 18 of the 25 students (72%) achieved the minimum mastery criterion, while seven students (28%) did not. Following the instructional revision and integration of Jigsaw in Cycle II, all students (100%) successfully met the minimum mastery criterion. Students also demonstrated fewer grammatical errors, particularly in the use of auxiliary verbs (to be), -ing verb forms, and continuous tense structures. In addition, students became more actively involved in peer discussions, more confident in sharing their understanding, and more engaged in collaborative writing activities. These findings suggest that PjBL, when complemented by the Jigsaw technique, can provide a meaningful and collaborative learning environment for enhancing grammar-based writing skills and promoting active engagement in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: CAR; grammar ; PjBL; writing skill

INTRODUCTION

English has become an indispensable international language that plays a pivotal role in education, science, technology, and global communication. As noted by Richards & Pun (2022), English has evolved into the principal language for international academic and professional interaction, making English proficiency an essential educational objective worldwide. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory foreign language at the junior secondary level with the primary objective of developing students' communicative competence through the integration of four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Usman & Anwar, 2021). Among these skills, writing is widely recognized as the most cognitively demanding



because it requires learners not only to express ideas but also to organize information coherently while applying appropriate grammatical structures, vocabulary, mechanics, and discourse conventions. Hyland (2019) explains that successful writing involves the integration of linguistic knowledge, rhetorical awareness, and the ability to communicate meaning effectively to readers. Likewise, writing requires complex cognitive processes such as planning, drafting, revising, monitoring, and editing, all of which demand considerable linguistic knowledge and metacognitive awareness (Graham, 2019). Consequently, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue to experience substantial difficulties in developing effective writing competence, particularly in mastering English grammatical structures that underpin written communication (Arsyad et al, 2020). Similar challenges have also been reported internationally, where insufficient grammatical competence continues to hinder students' writing development (Graham, 2019).

Grammar constitutes a fundamental component of writing proficiency because grammatical accuracy directly influences the clarity, coherence, and comprehensibility of written texts. According to Nassaji (2021), grammar instruction remains an indispensable element of second language learning because grammatical competence enables learners to produce meaningful and accurate communication. From a complementary perspective, Larsen-Freeman (2021) argues that grammar should not be viewed merely as a collection of prescriptive rules but rather as a dynamic resource that enables learners to make meaningful linguistic choices according to communicative contexts. One essential grammatical competence expected of junior secondary students is the ability to construct simple sentences using continuous tenses, particularly the present continuous and past continuous. These tense forms enable learners to describe actions that are occurring at a particular moment or were in progress at a specific time in the past, making them indispensable for effective written communication. Nevertheless, mastering continuous tense structures remains challenging for many EFL learners because they must simultaneously select appropriate auxiliary verbs, apply *-ing* verb forms accurately, and distinguish the contextual functions of different tense forms. As a consequence, inadequate grammatical mastery often results in inaccurate sentence construction and limits learners' ability to communicate ideas effectively through writing (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

This situation was also observed among Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi. Preliminary classroom observations and an initial assessment revealed that students experienced considerable difficulties in constructing simple sentences using continuous tenses. Approximately 48% of the students (12 out of 25) demonstrated low achievement in this area based on the preliminary assessment conducted before the implementation of the action research. Students commonly omitted auxiliary verbs (*to be*), incorrectly formed *verb-ing* constructions, confused the functions of present and past continuous tenses, and demonstrated limited vocabulary for describing ongoing activities. These recurring grammatical errors not only reduced the linguistic accuracy of their writing but also hindered their ability to produce coherent and meaningful sentences. Comparable findings have been documented in previous EFL studies, which consistently identify grammatical competence as one of the strongest predictors of students' writing performance.

The observed learning problems were closely associated with the instructional practices implemented in the classroom. English writing instruction was predominantly teacher-centered,

emphasizing grammatical explanations and textbook exercises rather than meaningful language production. Such conventional approaches tended to position students as passive recipients of knowledge, providing limited opportunities for authentic communication, collaborative learning, and contextualized grammar practice. Consequently, students often memorized grammatical rules without fully understanding how to apply them in authentic writing situations. This instructional pattern reduced students' learning motivation, classroom engagement, and confidence in expressing ideas through written English. Contemporary language education should adopt learner-centered pedagogies that actively engage students in constructing knowledge through authentic, collaborative, and inquiry-based learning experiences. Therefore, there is a need for an instructional approach that not only develops grammatical competence but also encourages meaningful language use through active participation.

Regarding the previous research, among the instructional approaches advocated in recent educational research, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has gained considerable attention because it aligns with constructivist learning principles and the competencies required in twenty-first-century education. Bell (2010) states that Project-Based Learning enables learners to acquire knowledge and skills through sustained inquiry, collaboration, and the production of authentic artifacts that address real-world problems. Similarly, Guo et al. (2020) found that PjBL promotes deeper conceptual understanding by encouraging students to apply knowledge in meaningful contexts rather than through isolated classroom exercises. Within English language teaching, this approach provides meaningful opportunities for students to apply grammatical knowledge while simultaneously developing creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills. Consistent with these findings, Sari, Zaim, and Radjab (2020) reported that PjBL creates authentic learning environments in which students are motivated to use the target language purposefully to accomplish project objectives. Likewise, Saputri, Ardi, and Fitriani (2023) demonstrated that students participating in project-based writing activities produced more accurate and meaningful written texts because grammar was learned through contextualized language production rather than rote memorization. Evidence synthesized by Guo et al. (2020) further indicates that PjBL consistently improves student engagement, self-regulated learning, academic achievement, and language proficiency across diverse educational contexts.

Although numerous studies conducted during the past five years have demonstrated the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in improving writing skills, most have concentrated on students' ability to produce complete texts, such as descriptive, narrative, or argumentative essays. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to improving students' mastery of specific grammatical structures through project-based writing activities. Moreover, studies examining the use of Project-Based Learning to improve junior high school students' ability to construct sentences using continuous tenses remain limited, particularly in Indonesian EFL contexts. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into instructional strategies that integrate grammar instruction with authentic writing practices.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How can Project-Based Learning improve Grade IX students' ability to construct simple sentences using continuous tenses at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi?. Responding to this research gap, the present classroom action research investigates the implementation of Project-Based Learning to improve the writing ability of Grade IX students at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi in constructing simple sentences using continuous

tenses. Through collaborative project activities requiring students to produce authentic written products related to daily experiences and ongoing actions, the study seeks to enhance students' grammatical accuracy, writing competence, classroom participation, and learning motivation. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on grammar-focused writing instruction in EFL contexts while providing practical pedagogical recommendations for English teachers seeking to implement more engaging, contextualized, and student-centered writing instruction in junior secondary schools.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Nature of Writing Ability

Writing is one of the essential language skills because it enables learners to communicate ideas, information, and experiences in a structured way. In EFL contexts, writing requires students to combine vocabulary, grammar, and organization skills simultaneously. According to Hyland (2019), writing involves linguistic competence and the ability to convey meaning appropriately, while Graham (2019) emphasizes that writing includes cognitive processes such as planning, revising, and editing.

However, writing remains challenging for many EFL learners because they must organize ideas while applying grammatical rules correctly. Arsyad et al. (2020) state that students often face difficulties in combining grammar and vocabulary in written communication. Therefore, grammar mastery plays an important role in developing students' writing ability.

Continuous Tenses in English Writing

Grammar constitutes an important component of writing proficiency because grammatical accuracy influences the clarity and comprehensibility of written communication. According to Nassaji (2021), grammar instruction remains essential in second-language learning because it enables learners to produce meaningful and accurate language. Larsen-Freeman (2021) further argues that grammar should be viewed not merely as a set of rules but as a resource that allows learners to make appropriate linguistic choices in different communicative situations.

At the junior secondary level, students are expected to understand and apply continuous tenses to describe ongoing actions in both present and past contexts.

Although the structures of continuous tenses appear simple, many learners still encounter difficulties in using them correctly. Students are expected not only to memorize grammatical formulas but also to understand how those structures function in authentic communication. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) explain that inadequate grammatical mastery often leads to inaccurate sentence construction and limits students' ability to communicate ideas effectively through writing.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a learner-centered instructional approach that places projects at the core of the learning process. Bell (2010) defines PjBL as an approach through which students acquire knowledge and skills by working together to complete projects and produce meaningful learning outcomes. In line with this view, Guo et al. (2020) found that project-based

instruction helps students understand the material more effectively because students apply knowledge in meaningful contexts rather than merely completing isolated exercises.

In English language teaching, PjBL provides opportunities for students to develop not only linguistic competence but also creativity, communication skills, collaboration, and critical thinking. Through project activities, students become actively involved in constructing knowledge and solving problems related to real-life situations.

Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in improving students' writing ability. Sari, Zaim, and Radjab (2020) reported that PjBL creates meaningful learning experiences that encourage students to use English purposefully in completing projects. Likewise, Saputri, Ardi, and Fitriani (2023) found that project-based activities enhance students' engagement and contribute positively to the quality of their written work.

The implementation of Project-Based Learning generally involves several stages. Ade Wiranto and Sukardi (2021) identify six major steps: determining essential questions, designing project plans, creating schedules, monitoring students' progress, assessing outcomes, and evaluating learning experiences. These stages encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning while teachers guide students during classroom activities.

Integration of PjBL and the Jigsaw Technique

To maximize students' participation in project activities, this study integrates Project-Based Learning with the Jigsaw technique. Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy developed by Aronson (1971) that emphasizes positive interdependence among group members. In this approach, students work in both expert groups and home groups, where each learner is responsible for mastering specific content and sharing it with peers.

According to Arends (2020), the Jigsaw technique promotes active participation, improves communication skills, and encourages students to express their opinions in collaborative settings. By assigning individual responsibilities within group activities, Jigsaw also helps ensure that all students contribute to the learning process. This view is supported by Wang, Alavi, and Izadpanah (2023), who examined the impact of Jigsaw cooperative learning on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Their findings showed that Jigsaw cooperative learning had a positive effect on students' academic motivation, academic hardiness, and self-efficacy. These findings suggest that the cooperative structure of Jigsaw can encourage learners to become more engaged in the learning process and take greater responsibility for their learning.

The use of Project-Based Learning is also relevant to English grammar instruction. Yong and Saad (2023) investigated the use of Project-Based Learning in developing grammar mastery and 21st-century learning skills among ESL undergraduates. Their study involved students in a grammar class and examined their perceptions of PjBL in developing grammar, collaboration, and speaking skills. The findings indicate that PjBL can provide opportunities for students to engage actively in grammar learning while simultaneously developing collaborative and communicative skills. Thus, PjBL can provide a meaningful context in which grammatical knowledge is applied through project activities rather than being learned only through isolated grammar exercises.

The integration of PjBL and the Jigsaw technique combines the strengths of both approaches. While Project-Based Learning provides authentic learning experiences through project

completion, the Jigsaw technique supports effective collaboration and individual accountability. PjBL enables students to apply grammatical knowledge in meaningful project contexts, whereas Jigsaw provides a structured cooperative learning environment in which each student is responsible for mastering and communicating particular aspects of the learning material. The combination of these approaches therefore has the potential to create a more active and student-centered learning environment.

Furthermore, the integration of PjBL and Jigsaw can provide students with opportunities to develop both individual and collaborative learning responsibilities. Through expert-group activities, students can focus on particular grammatical concepts and develop their understanding through interaction with peers who study the same material. They can then return to their home groups and share their knowledge with other members. This process is consistent with the principle of individual accountability in cooperative learning because each student has a specific contribution to make to the success of the group. The positive effects of Jigsaw on EFL learners' motivation and self-efficacy reported by Wang et al. (2023) further indicate the potential of this cooperative structure to support active learner engagement.

The combination of PjBL and Jigsaw is particularly relevant to grammar learning because students are required not only to understand grammatical rules but also to apply them in meaningful contexts. Yong and Saad (2023) demonstrated the relevance of PjBL to grammar mastery and collaborative learning, while Wang et al. (2023) provided evidence of the benefits of Jigsaw cooperative learning for EFL learners. Therefore, integrating the two approaches may provide complementary support: PjBL establishes the authentic project context, while Jigsaw structures peer interaction, individual responsibility, and knowledge sharing within the project.

Through this combination, students are expected to participate more actively, develop stronger grammatical understanding, and improve their ability to construct sentences using continuous tenses. The integration of PjBL and Jigsaw is therefore expected to create a collaborative learning environment in which students can learn grammatical concepts, communicate their understanding, and apply continuous tense structures through meaningful project-based activities.

Based on the theories discussed above, this study assumes that Project-Based Learning can help students improve their ability to use continuous tenses in writing. Through collaborative projects and meaningful learning activities, students are expected to strengthen their grammatical competence and participate more actively in the learning process.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve students' ability to construct continuous tense sentences through the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). During the instructional process, the Jigsaw technique was also employed to support collaborative learning activities. Classroom Action Research allows teachers to identify classroom problems and implement actions to improve the learning process (Burns, 2010). Following the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), the research was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

The study was preceded by a pre-cycle stage to identify students' initial ability in constructing sentences using continuous tenses and to determine the instructional problems encountered in the classroom.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were 25 students of Grade IX at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi in the 2025/2026 academic year, consisting of 11 male students and 14 female students. The participants were selected because preliminary observations and an initial assessment indicated that many students experienced difficulties in constructing sentences using continuous tenses. Many students had difficulties using auxiliary verbs, forming verb-ing structures, and choosing appropriate vocabulary when describing ongoing activities.

These problems affected students' writing performance and indicated that their achievement had not yet reached the school's minimum mastery criterion.

Research Procedure

The research was conducted from October to November 2025 and consisted of a pre-cycle stage followed by Cycle I and Cycle II.

During the pre-cycle stage, the researcher conducted classroom observations and administered an initial writing assessment to identify students' abilities and learning difficulties related to the use of continuous tenses.

In Cycle 1, the researcher and teacher prepared lesson plans, learning materials, observation sheets, and assessment instruments. The instructional activities integrated PjBL with Jigsaw. Students worked in home groups, discussed different parts of the learning material in expert groups, and then returned to their home groups to explain the material to their peers. They subsequently applied their knowledge to complete the project task. During the implementation, students' participation, collaboration, and grammatical performance were observed, and an assessment was administered at the end of the cycle.

The results of Cycle 1 were then analyzed during the reflection stage to identify students' remaining difficulties and weaknesses in the instructional process. Based on these findings, the learning activities were revised for Cycle 2. The second cycle followed the same four stages that consist of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting with greater emphasis on students' grammatical accuracy, active participation, and collaboration through the Jigsaw and project activities. The cycle assessment and observation results were then compared with the pre-cycle and Cycle 1 results to determine students' improvement.

Thus, the research procedure consisted of pre-cycle, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2, with each cycle involving planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The integration of Jigsaw within PjBL was intended to encourage peer learning, active participation, and collaborative construction of continuous tense sentences.

Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected using observation, writing tests, and documentation. Classroom observations were conducted to examine students' participation, engagement, and responses during the learning process. Writing tests were administered at the end of each cycle to measure

students' ability to construct sentences using continuous tenses. Documentation in the form of photographs, lesson plans, and students' written work was collected to support the findings.

Students' writing was assessed using an analytical rubric focusing on grammatical accuracy, sentence construction, and the correct use of continuous tense forms.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data obtained from classroom observations and documentation were analyzed descriptively to identify changes in students' learning behavior and classroom participation. Quantitative data obtained from students' writing tests were analyzed by calculating the mean scores and the percentage of students who achieved the minimum mastery criterion.

The quantitative data were analyzed by calculating students' mean scores and the percentage of students who achieved the minimum mastery criterion. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed descriptively to identify changes in students' participation and learning behavior during the implementation of Project-Based Learning.

The writing performance of students in the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) was evaluated using a structured assessment rubric specifically developed for Continuous Tense materials, as detailed. The rubric comprises three primary assessment aspects, each designed to evaluate a distinct dimension of the students' writing outcomes: the Use of Continuous Tense, Storyline and Connectivity, and Creativity and Originality. To ensure an objective and granular evaluation, each aspect is rated on a four-tier scaled scoring system, spanning from Score 1 (1–25 points) for poor performance to Score 4 (76–100 points) for excellent performance.

The first aspect, Use of Continuous Tense, focuses on the grammatical accuracy and fluency of students in utilizing relevant *to be* + *V-ing* structures. At the lowest level (Score 1), the tense is either severely underutilized or ridden with fatal grammatical errors, whereas the highest tier (Score 4) denotes a natural, accurate, and varied application of both present and past continuous tenses without significant errors. The second aspect, Storyline and Connectivity, evaluates narrative coherence, thematic relevance, and the logical flow of the plot. Under this criterion, a fragmented and disjointed script with weak transitions between scenes receives a lower score, while a highly cohesive, logical, and tightly knit script that forms a powerful narrative is awarded the maximum score. Lastly, the Creativity and Originality aspect measures the novelty of the ideas, innovative delivery, and the inclusion of engaging dramatic elements. Scripts that rely on generic, derivative ideas receive low scores, while highly original, captivating, and highly creative script developments are recognized with the top score tier. This comprehensive rubric ensures that both linguistic accuracy and literary competence are systematically accounted for in the assessment process.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Pre-Cycle Findings

The preliminary observation and diagnostic test conducted in Class IX of SMP Negeri 1 Parigi revealed that students experienced considerable difficulties in constructing simple sentences using continuous tenses. Most students struggled to identify the correct sentence patterns,

particularly in combining subjects, auxiliary verbs, and verb forms ending in *-ing*. In addition, classroom participation remained relatively low because the learning process was still dominated by conventional teaching methods. The results showed that only 13 out of 25 students successfully achieved the minimum passing criterion, while 12 students failed to meet the expected standard. Overall, the findings indicated that students' writing ability in applying continuous tense structures was still unsatisfactory and required an alternative instructional approach to improve their understanding.

Table 1. Students' Learning Mastery Across Research Cycles

Description	Pre-Cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II
Students Achieving Mastery (≥ 75)	13	18	25
Students Not Achieving Mastery (< 75)	12	7	0
Classical Mastery Percentage	52%	72%	100%

Table 1 illustrates a consistent improvement in students' learning outcomes throughout the implementation of the classroom action research. The percentage of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion increased from 52% in the pre-cycle stage to 72% in Cycle I and eventually reached 100% in Cycle II.

The initial findings also demonstrated that many students tended to confuse the grammatical functions of auxiliary verbs and had difficulty applying continuous tenses in meaningful contexts. Based on these conditions, the teacher considered that a different learning model was needed to encourage students to participate more actively in the learning process and to provide them with more opportunities to practice English structures. Therefore, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) was implemented as an alternative strategy to help students improve their writing skills.

Cycle I Findings

The implementation of the first cycle focused on introducing continuous tenses through collaborative drama projects. Students were encouraged to work in groups and construct simple dialogues representing daily activities using the present continuous tense. The learning activities integrated project-based tasks with classroom discussions, allowing students to apply grammatical concepts in a more practical and meaningful way.

The evaluation results demonstrated a noticeable improvement compared to the pre-cycle stage. The average students' writing score increased from 63.20 in the pre-cycle to 73.67 in Cycle I, indicating an average improvement of 10.47 points. In addition, the number of students who achieved the minimum passing criterion increased from 13 students to 18 students, representing 72% of the class. Meanwhile, the proportion of students who had not yet achieved mastery decreased from 48% to 28%. These results indicate that the implementation of Project-Based Learning had started to improve not only students' writing ability, as reflected in the increase in the average score, but also their participation during the learning activities.

Despite these encouraging outcomes, several obstacles remained. Some students still encountered difficulties in selecting appropriate auxiliary verbs and forming correct *verb-ing* constructions. Classroom observations also indicated that participation within group discussions was not evenly distributed, as only a few students actively contributed during presentations. Furthermore, students demonstrated stronger understanding of the present

continuous tense than the past continuous tense, which was perceived as more abstract and cognitively demanding. These findings became important considerations for designing improvements in the following cycle.

Cycle II Findings

Based on the reflection from Cycle I, several instructional improvements were implemented in Cycle II. The learning process combined Project-Based Learning with the Jigsaw technique to encourage more active participation and provide students with greater opportunities to learn from their peers. Students were organized into home groups and expert groups, allowing them to discuss different aspects of present continuous and past continuous tenses before sharing their understanding with their home-group members. This peer-teaching process encouraged students to explain grammatical concepts, exchange ideas, and take greater responsibility for their assigned learning materials. The students then applied their shared understanding to collaboratively create drama scripts and were given equal responsibilities during classroom presentations.

The results obtained in Cycle II showed a substantial improvement in students' writing achievement compared with the previous cycle. The average students' writing score increased from 73.67 in Cycle I to 84.00 in Cycle II, representing an average improvement of 10.33 points. All 25 students successfully met the minimum passing criterion, resulting in a 100% mastery rate. The distribution of students' scores also reflected considerable improvement, with students achieving scores within the satisfactory and excellent categories. These findings suggest that the integration of project-based activities with the Jigsaw technique provided students with meaningful opportunities to practice and apply continuous tense structures through both collaborative learning and written production.

The qualitative observations further indicated positive changes in students' attitudes and participation during Cycle II. Students became more actively involved in group discussions, more confident in explaining their understanding to peers, and more willing to contribute to the completion of the project. The Jigsaw activities appeared to facilitate peer interaction by requiring students to share information and explain grammatical concepts to their group members. This process also helped distribute learning responsibilities among students rather than relying primarily on teacher explanations. Furthermore, students demonstrated greater confidence in presenting their drama scripts and applying grammatical concepts in authentic communicative contexts.

Overall, the findings of Cycle II indicate that the integration of Jigsaw into the project-based learning activities provided additional collaborative support for students' learning. While PjBL provided a meaningful context for students to apply continuous tense structures through the development of drama scripts, Jigsaw strengthened the collaborative dimension of the learning process by promoting peer teaching, information sharing, and individual accountability. The improvement in both students' achievement and classroom participation suggests that this combination was beneficial in supporting students' ability to construct and use continuous tense sentences.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Project-Based Learning was able to improve students' writing ability in constructing sentences using continuous tenses. The improvement can be seen from the increase in students' learning outcomes from the pre-cycle stage to Cycle II. These findings answer the objective of the study, which was to investigate how Project-Based Learning could improve students' ability to write sentences using present continuous and past continuous tenses.

Before the implementation of Project-Based Learning, many students still experienced difficulties in arranging correct sentence patterns. Most of them were confused in determining the appropriate auxiliary verbs and in changing verbs into the -ing form. In addition, the learning process was still dominated by teacher explanations, so students had limited opportunities to practice their writing skills directly. This condition indicates that writing is not only related to vocabulary mastery but also requires students to understand grammatical structures and apply them in meaningful contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, Hyland (2019) explains that writing involves the integration of linguistic knowledge, rhetorical awareness, and the ability to communicate meaning effectively. Likewise, Graham (2019) emphasizes that writing requires complex cognitive processes, including planning, revising, and monitoring. In line with these views, Arsyad et al. (2020) state that writing is one of the most demanding language skills because students must simultaneously master grammar, vocabulary, and organization. Therefore, students' difficulties in mastering continuous tenses, as found in this study, are understandable because grammatical competence plays an important role in developing writing proficiency.

After the implementation of Project-Based Learning in Cycle I, students began to show better performance in writing activities. Through drama projects and group discussions, students were encouraged to use continuous tenses in more practical situations. Instead of merely memorizing formulas, they learned how grammatical patterns could be used in everyday communication. The increase in students' achievement in Cycle I shows that the implementation of Project-Based Learning had started to improve not only students' writing ability but also their participation during classroom activities.

This finding supports Bell (2010), who argues that Project-Based Learning enables students to acquire knowledge through authentic activities that encourage inquiry, collaboration, and problem-solving. Similarly, Guo et al. (2020) emphasize that project-based instruction helps students develop deeper conceptual understanding because students apply knowledge in meaningful contexts rather than relying solely on textbook exercises. Previous studies conducted by Sari, Zaim, and Radjab (2020) also found that Project-Based Learning creates learning environments that encourage students to use language purposefully in completing project tasks.

The results of Cycle I also show that some challenges still remained. Several students had not fully understood the use of past continuous tense, and classroom observations revealed that participation among group members was not evenly distributed. Students tended to be more familiar with present continuous tense because it is closely related to activities they encounter

in daily life. Meanwhile, past continuous tense requires students to understand events that happened in the past, making it relatively more difficult to master.

According to Nassaji (2021), grammar instruction remains essential in second-language learning because grammatical competence enables learners to produce accurate and meaningful communication. Furthermore, Larsen-Freeman (2021) argues that grammar should be understood not merely as a set of rules to memorize, but as a resource that helps learners make appropriate linguistic choices in different communicative contexts. These theoretical perspectives explain why some students still encountered difficulties in applying past continuous tense structures despite the improvement achieved in the first cycle.

Based on these challenges, several improvements were made in Cycle II by combining Project-Based Learning with the Jigsaw technique. In this stage, students were given greater responsibility in discussing and explaining learning materials to their peers. The use of the Jigsaw technique encouraged every student to participate actively because each group member had an important role in completing the project.

This collaborative learning process is in line with the constructivist perspective, which views knowledge as something that is actively constructed through social interaction and shared experiences. Bell (2010) explains that collaborative projects encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning while simultaneously improving communication and teamwork skills. Related to Namaziandost et al (2020) jigsaw is a type of cooperative learning task that makes students to communicate with each other to fill in missing information and to integrate it with other information.

As a result, classroom interaction became more balanced, and students were more confident in expressing their ideas and presenting their work.

The achievement of complete learning mastery in Cycle II indicates that the combination of Project-Based Learning and cooperative learning strategies effectively improved students' writing ability. In addition to improving grammatical accuracy, this learning model also helped students develop communication skills, teamwork, and self-confidence. During the learning process, students became more enthusiastic when they worked together to prepare drama performances and discuss sentence structures with their classmates. This condition shows that students tend to learn better when they are directly involved in classroom activities rather than only listening to the teacher's explanation.

Furthermore, the findings of this study strengthen previous research that emphasizes the close relationship between grammar mastery and writing ability. Saputri, Ardi, and Fitriani (2023) found that students who participate in project-based writing activities tend to produce more accurate and meaningful written texts because grammar is learned through contextualized language use. Likewise, Guo et al. (2020) concluded that Project-Based Learning contributes positively to student engagement, self-regulated learning, academic achievement, and language proficiency across different educational contexts.

Therefore, the findings of this study show that Project-Based Learning, especially when combined with the Jigsaw technique, can provide students with more opportunities to practice English and apply grammatical concepts in classroom activities. Related to Wang et al (2023)

JCL is an educational strategy that emphasizes collaboration, interdependence, and group cooperation. Through this approach, students not only improved their ability to construct sentences using continuous tenses but also developed more positive attitudes toward learning English in the classroom.

Despite the encouraging findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted with a relatively small number of students within a single classroom context, which may constrain the transferability and generalizability of the findings to broader EFL contexts. Second, the intervention was implemented within two action research cycles; consequently, the study was not designed to examine the sustained or long-term effects of integrating Project-Based Learning (PjBL) with the Jigsaw technique. Third, the investigation primarily focused on students' ability to construct continuous tense sentences. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within this specific linguistic domain and may not necessarily extend to other aspects of English language proficiency.

Future research could address these limitations by involving larger and more diverse samples across different educational settings and learner populations. Longitudinal investigations may also provide valuable insights into the sustained effects of integrating PjBL and Jigsaw on students' language development. In addition, future studies could examine the applicability of this instructional approach to other dimensions of EFL learning, including speaking, writing, reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and grammatical competence. Comparative or quasi-experimental studies involving control or comparison groups are also encouraged to provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the respective and combined contributions of PjBL and Jigsaw to EFL learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) improved the ability of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi to construct sentences using continuous tenses. Through project-based activities, students were provided with meaningful opportunities to practice and apply grammatical structures, particularly the present and past continuous tenses. The findings also indicate that the additional integration of the Jigsaw technique in Cycle 2 strengthened students' collaborative engagement by encouraging peer interaction, knowledge sharing, and active participation in the learning process.

The improvement observed in Cycle 2 suggests that incorporating Jigsaw into the project-based learning activities provided additional support for students in understanding and applying the target grammatical structures. The Jigsaw technique enabled students to learn from and explain the material to their peers, while the project activities provided opportunities to apply their understanding in meaningful written tasks. Thus, the integration of Jigsaw within PjBL can be considered a potentially useful approach for promoting collaborative learning and supporting students' grammatical and writing development.

Therefore, English teachers may consider incorporating Jigsaw into PjBL activities when teaching grammar and writing, particularly in contexts where students experience difficulties in applying grammatical structures in written tasks. Nevertheless, further research with larger samples,

longer interventions, and different EFL contexts is needed to examine the effectiveness and sustainability of this integrated approach.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Endang Lestari

Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Supervision, Validation.

Rini Zahrani

Writing - original draft, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

Adam Al Arfan

Software, Writing - review & editing.

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