

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Practical communication skills are crucial for successful human interaction in various contexts. Functional communication skills are essential for academic, personal, and professional success. In the educational setting, effective communication positively influences the learning process (Alshumaimeri & Alhumud, 2021). Communication in English consists of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Each of the four language skills has an essential role in communication.

Nevertheless, within the domain of English as a Foreign Language (ESL), developing proficiency in written communication proves to be the most challenging and intricate skill for many learners, particularly those with low English proficiency (Chicho, 2022; Merris & Sari, 2019; Trong Tuan, 2010). Writing skills are language skills used to express thoughts or concepts through written symbols, ensuring readers are able to comprehend the intended significance of the author.

In improving writing skills, appropriate methods are needed during the educational instruction and acquisition process within the classroom setting. Conventional methods often prioritize rote learning and memorization, neglecting meaningful and engaging opportunities for students to develop communication skills. Traditional writing exercises employed in these approaches may hinder creativity and fail to foster students' authentic voice and writing proficiency. To address this problem, educators must adopt a mindset of creativity and innovation,

exploring diverse methods and techniques that can enhance students' communication skills.

Constructivism theory is a learner-centered approach that emphasizes students as the builders and creators of knowledge (Nugroho et al., 2020). The theory is linked to Piaget's work on genetic epistemology theory, which identifies four levels of human development. Lev Vygotsky also contributed to the theory by emphasizing the role of social, language, and cultural aspects in the learning process (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). The constructivist view opposes traditional teacher-centered approaches, and many teachers are now applying the constructivist framework to allow students to question and build on their knowledge (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021).

Project-based learning (PjBL) is an innovative approach based on constructivist philosophy that shows potential for improving communication skills. PjBL, or Project-Based Learning, is an instructional approach in which students actively participate in authentic, complex, and investigative projects to cultivate their abilities in critical thinking, problem-solving, and cooperation (Andriyani, 2022; Blumenfeld, 1991). PjBL has been recognized as a strategy to enhance higher education student learning (Guo et al., 2020). In addition, Husein suggests that project-based learning should focus on engaging students in solving real problems that can be implemented and utilized in practical situations (Hussein, 2021). Besides, Wang asserts that effective project-based learning involves using language to facilitate the discovery of language itself, subject matter, and skills in real-world scenarios, resulting in a deeper level of Learning (Wang, 2022)

Project-based learning is crucial in the EFL classroom as it provides a context for language acquisition and development while promoting subject-area knowledge and critical thinking skills. Research by Phuong (2022) investigating the use of PjBL in bilingual schools demonstrated that students improved their ability to learn independently, including skills such as creating project plans, overcoming learning obstacles, generating ideas, and evaluating their learning capabilities (Thi Bich Phuong et al., 2022) Through PjBL, students can use language in authentic contexts, collaborate with peers, and acquire advanced cognitive abilities such as creative thinking, problem-solving, and critical analysis.

Extensive discussions and research have been conducted on the positive impact of project-based learning in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). Academics have utilized this methodology for instructing and acquiring the English language, with studies demonstrating improved writing skills among Saudi EFL secondary students through the PjBL model (Alotaibi, 2020a). PjBL fostered learner autonomy by facilitating autonomous learning, personalized education, self-access, and self-direction (Yuliani & Lengkanawati, 2017). Similarly, Rohmahwati (2016) conducted a study in a higher education institution, revealing a significant improvement in students' speaking skills through Project-Based Learning.

Shape Poem emerges as a viable approach in project-based learning, considering young students' practical observations and characteristics. Shape poetry, concrete poetry, calligraphy, or visual poetry involves depicting an object through its form or shape (Schoone, 2021). Instructing students to compose poems that incorporate captivating shapes or images in shape poems fosters their creative expression and engagement. Emphasizing concise and evocative language to depict

shapes and incorporating shape poems into one potential strategy for helping students become better communicators is project-based learning, particularly in educational settings where English is used as a medium of instruction, such as bilingual contexts where both Indonesian and English are employed. Additionally, incorporating the shape poem technique will stimulate students' creativity and imagination.

The significance of incorporating the shape poem technique within the framework of project-based learning represents an innovative research endeavor. As a pedagogical approach, project-based learning achieves learning objectives through project-oriented activities, fostering essential 21st-century skills (Bell, 2010). Integrating the shape poem technique and language learning within the PjBL construct presents a novel and unexplored research area. By leveraging real-world activities and integrating students' knowledge, attitudes, and abilities, PjBL creates a dynamic and engaging classroom environment. Simultaneously, the Shape Poem technique facilitates vocabulary acquisition, enhances communication skills, and nurtures students' imaginative faculties, promoting creative development. Therefore, applying this technique in the early grades holds valuable potential for improving students' language abilities and stimulating their innovative capacities.

While numerous studies have separately examined Project-Based Learning and the Shape Poem technique, there is a research gap in exploring the combination of these two topics. Hence, the current research aims to investigate the results of implementing the Shape Poem technique through Project-Based Learning on the writing skills of grade 7 students at SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja. Specifically, the PjBL framework developed by Padmadewi et al. (2022) was

utilized as a project-based platform to implement the Shape Poem technique in teaching English to junior high school students.

1.2 Research Problem Identification

Students often experience challenges learning English, particularly in enhancing their writing skills. Some factors can contribute to the difficulties, including the pedagogical methods and techniques employed by the instructor. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate authentic learning strategies among young learners. Thus, teachers must use appropriate learning methods and techniques to facilitate learning. Project-based learning is a highly efficient approach for young learners, as it provides opportunities for creativity and collaboration through projects initiated by teachers.

Furthermore, project-based learning can foster students' creativity, productivity, and critical thinking, following the goals of 21st-century education. Therefore, project-based learning is highly suitable for implementing the shape poem technique into English language instruction. The shape poem technique is a pleasurable learning medium that lets learners express their creativity and imagination through writing.

Based on the preliminary observation at SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja, a private junior high school, teachers have never implemented the shape poem technique with PjBL in English lessons. Given the students' characteristics, which include a preference for fun and productive learning, using the shape poem technique in project-based learning can potentially improve writing skills among students in Grade 7 at SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja. Therefore, The researcher aims to carry out the investigation "Application of Shape Poem

Technique through Project-Based Learning on Students' Writing Skills at SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja."

1.3 Research Limitation

There are several limitations of this study. First, this research is conducted on English language subjects. Second, this research is undertaken only in class 71. Third, this research is conducted at SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja. Fourth, the study focuses on the effect of the application of the shape poem technique on the students' writing skills and the teachers' perceptions regarding the application of the shape poem technique through Project-Based Learning on Students' writing Skills.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the gap observed, the present study intends to investigate the following research questions:

- 1) Is there any significant effect of the shape poem technique implementation through project-based learning on the students' writing skills of Grade 7 of SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja?
- 2) What are the teachers' perceptions related to the application of the shape poem technique through project-based Learning at SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja?

1.5 Research objectives

Aligned with the research questions, the objectives of this research, namely:

- 1) To investigate the effect of the shape poem technique implementation through project-based learning on students' writing skills of Grade 7 of SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja.
- 2) To analyze the teachers' perception related to the application of the shape poem technique through project-based Learning at SMP Laboratorium Undiksha Singaraja.

1.6 Significances of the Research

The findings of this study carry significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the existing literature on English language learning, particularly in Project-based Learning as a teaching strategy for language acquisition using innovative techniques such as the Shape Poem Technique. Therefore, the results of this study also enrich the theoretical analysis of teaching methods and techniques for Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL).

Practically, the results of this research are beneficial for several things:

- 1) For students
These innovative techniques make learning English engaging and interactive, providing students with activities that align with their developmental stages. By enabling learning through play, this technique ensures that English learning becomes less tedious and more enjoyable for students in an authentic environment.
- 2) For teachers
The results of this research enhance teachers' knowledge regarding innovative teaching techniques in TEYL, focusing on teaching English to children.

Consequently, this research will contribute to building teachers' competency in employing effective strategies for improving writing skills and literacy through the shape poem technique.

3) For school

The research results also benefit the schools where the research takes place. The results can guide the designing of effective language learning programs and the selection of innovative techniques, such as the Shape Poem Technique, to enhance students' language proficiency. They can be used as material for outreach to new teachers teaching English at the school.

4) For Ganesha University of Education

This study contributes to the literature on English language learning for children, which can be shared with various stakeholders as part of community service activities. As an institution that prepares future teachers, Undiksha has a responsibility to address contemporary issues in education. The present study enriches the research database of Undiksha, which can be disseminated to the public and utilized by the academic community.

