



## **Integrating Character Education into Project-based Learning in Paragraph Writing Class: A Study on Students' Perceptions**

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### **Abstract**

Project-based learning (PjBL) was used as a teaching strategy in the classroom in order to incorporate character education. This research was descriptive research which used questionnaire as the instrument. The questionnaire contained 20 items of close ended statements. There were 125 students involved in this study which were the students of English Literature study program enrolled in Paragraph Writing Course in Academic Year 2022/2023. Students work in groups to complete a project called a wall magazine. The goal of this study is to see the students' perceptions toward the integration of character education in project-based learning in the Paragraph Writing class in terms of their writing performance. The finding of this research shows that the implementation of Integrating Character Education into PjBL in Paragraph Writing class received a very positive perception. The result of perceptions in this study indicated that the character education integration into PjBL in Paragraph Writing class succeed to ease students in developing their writing performance.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Character is a quality that can be possessed by an individual or a group and is formed by values, skills, moral principles, and the capacity to overcome challenges (Nasution, 2018). (Albert, 2007) character is an individual's standard behavior of act as well as a quality, attribute, or personality that they have acquired as a result of their surroundings over time. There was a term related to character named character education. Recent years have seen a rise in the discipline of character education, which aims to improve students' ethical behavior (Singh, 2019). Based on Indonesian ideology, Pancasila, character education is crucial to fostering a positive attitude toward pupils in a variety of contexts, including religion, culture, and as Indonesian

citizens. Then, in line with Permendikbud No. 20 of 2018 about Strengthening Character Education (*PPK/Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter*), which was strengthened by, among other things, implementing Pancasila-based character education by instilling values like morality, respect for others, tolerance, self-control, diligence, creativity, independence, democracy, national pride, love of the land and water, appreciation for accomplishment, communication, a desire for peace, a love of learning. These many points of view are all the product of the development of five (five) core principles: nationalism, independence, cooperation, and integrity (*Kementerian Pendidikan Republik Indonesia & Kemendikbud, 2018*).

However, the implementation of character education at the higher education level is not thoroughly implemented because of the lack of student interaction with each other unlike at school. In line with the statement by (Syukri, 2009), the college's mission is to educate, investigate, and apply science. The statement implied that the development of character is not the responsibility of higher education. In other word, students were experiencing individualism. Some students might choose to work independently, and their participation in a group discussion may rely on how well they communicate in a certain circumstance (Oztok, 2013). This statement implied that students may have introverted behavior where they really will talk once they found the right opportunity to talk with others.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four English skills that students must master. Writing, on the other hand, is one of the most difficult skills for students to learn. Even though it has been taught since they were in high school (Zemach & Rumisek, 2005). English writing has grown difficult for college students, especially when their English competence is poor (Sari, 2019)

Students' first journey of learning writing comprehensively started as they enrolled in a course of learning writing named Paragraph Writing. The course is mainly overviewing the writing skill of students, where students may learn about how to conduct a paragraph, and subsequently lead them to write essays. Paragraph Writing is also a compulsory subject that must be taken by first-semester students of the English Literature Study Program. This suggests the significance of paragraphs in academic writing (Muhtia, Suparno, & Sumardi, 2018).

As an attempt to overcome the issue of lack discussion among students especially in writing class, the ability to work with students in groups to complete a task or project must be channeled. One way is to integrate character education into the learning progress (Safitri, Rosita, & Arni, 2023). One of the teaching methods that can be employed in a class is the use of project-based learning. The term PjBL is often used to refer to project-based learning. It seeks to relate technology to problems students face in their daily lives or with academic tasks (Titu, 2015). (Waluyo & Nuraini, 2021) defined PjBL, or project-based learning, as a learning approach that gives teachers the chance to direct learning in the classroom by including project work.

The integration of character education towards PjBL in Paragraph Writing class was held in the class because students need to improve their writing ability. Mrs. Dian Safitri, S.Pd., M.Pd., an English Department lecturer at Universitas Negeri Padang, used this way of learning, and the results of her observations were used in this study. Nonetheless, students' perspectives were gathered to gain an understanding of the impact toward character education integration into PjBL in terms of their writing

performance. Student perception is a critical indicator that is linked to the learning process (Khrismaninda & Refnaldi, 2021) Perception, according to (Qiong, 2017), is the process of perceiving or comprehending sensory information. According to Sarwono (1983:89), perception is an individual's ability to plan an observation.

Therefore, based on the explanation above, the problem formulation was formulated as; how is the students' perception towards the integration of character education into PjBL in learning descriptive text in Paragraph Writing class on their writing performance?

### **Character Education in Writing Class and in PjBL**

According to (Omeri, 2015), the word "character education" refers to a set of values that names knowledge, understanding, and will and execution of that wills these values to God Who God, oneself, others, and the environment in addition to nationality.

In the classroom, character-building activities were incorporated into the teaching and learning process, notably the opening, middle, and closing activities (Marini, 2018). In a study similar to this one, character development was taken into account in line with scientific knowledge (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). A different study found that character traits were ingrained in school culture through routine classroom activities Marini, (2018). Milson & Mehlig (2002) claim that teachers were unsuccessful at training students about character, which prohibited them from fully fulfilling their job as character educators.

Writing is one of the communication abilities that must be developed in order to learn a language (Ngadda, 2014). Writing skills enable a writer to convey concepts to the reader through the use of comprehensive, well-organized phrases. Students that can write are self-assured in their capacity to learn and will try to restrain their emotions when writing (Hammann, 2005) When teaching students about character, writing skills are essential (Hudhana & Sulaeman, 2019). Modules that involve character education may have an impact on how students develop their personalities.

Some scholars have looked into the implementation of character education in writing class. The development instruction of writing fable text module with project-based learning (PjBL) containing characters is a study on character education done by Indriani (2017). The results of this study confirm the legitimacy, applicability, and effectiveness of using PjBL characters in fable text modules for classroom instruction. The researcher discovered that PjBL is useful for teaching fable text modules with characters.

Different with research by Winarni, et.al. (2021), conducting study about Development of Indonesian Language Text Books with Multiculturalism and Character Education to Improve Traditional Poetry Writing Skills, resulting that students' traditional poetry writing skills after learning using textbooks are better than before learning using textbooks.

Another study by Thesia (2015), titled Integrating Local Culture to Promote Character Education in Teaching Writing, the findings of this study reveal that students are really interested and motivated to write a paper about their local culture. The material also provides moral value and character development for the students. It has

an impact on the pupils' character in their daily lives. Students become more polite, honest, hardworking, and religious.

Aghayani & Hajmohammadi (2019) have undertaken research on the use of project-based learning in promoting EFL's writing skill. It was also similar with research by Sa'diyah, et al (2019) who implemented PjBL to see the impact of students' writing ability by using blog. Another research related to PjBL from Ramadhan, et. al (2020) where they were implementing PjBL in teaching narrative text by a learning module with the use mobile devices, the research found that the learning method was valid and able to be tested.

In conclusion, the integration of character education is able to be implemented in every form of learning method including PjBL. Project-based learning (PjBL) is a flexible teaching approach that can be applied across a wide range of academic disciplines, such as science, mathematics, social studies, and language arts (Thomas & D, 2000).

## **Aspects of Writing**

Jacobs (1981) identified five important components of writing. They are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

### **1. Content**

To make sure the material is understandable and clear, content is created through a process of planning, writing, and editing. For the reader to comprehend the author's message, the writing's content must be clear. To produce a quality written work, the content must also be appropriately united and finished. This is the result of effective writing, and it is sometimes referred to as unity and completion. A strong paragraph should be cohesive, with each paragraph emphasizing just one key idea. Start a new paragraph if the author is going to introduce a new concept. Even though it does not contain all the information in the paragraph, a strong topic sentence gives readers some background information. The core notion should then be explicitly mentioned in the supporting detail sentence. It is improper to use stuff that does not logically support the topic sentence.

### **2. Organization**

An order is another name for organization. The text should be arranged chronologically to prevent misunderstandings. An excellent text starts with a main idea, is supported by evidence, and concludes with a thesis statement. The text's ideas should all be connected from start to finish. The text can therefore be said to be coherent.

### **3. Vocabulary**

One aspect of language that is important for the development of writing skills is vocabulary. The preferred method for incorporating the words into sentences in a creative and suitable way is taken into consideration by the writer as they write, up until the sentences are put into paragraphs. The text can produce writing that is understandable as a result. Thus, developing a more varied, engaging writing style can be facilitated by becoming adept at using a variety of word choices.

#### **4. Language use**

The right application of language or grammatical rules is implied by the use of language in writing. It put a lot of emphasis on verbs, nouns, and unity. The reader can better visualize the description with the use of more precise nouns and potent verbs. By using adjective, adverb, and participle form modifiers, this noun can be identified. Misunderstandings are quite common and provide a lot of room for error. Errors can be reduced with the option to go back and review what the author has written.

#### **5. Mechanics**

(Heaton, 1988) defined mechanics as a writer's capacity to correctly spell text using punctuation and spelling. The writing system entails using capital letters, punctuation, and spelling correctly, according to (Afifuddin, 2016). Punctuation refers to markers that are often used to separate or link words, phrases, and sentences in order to organize and clarify information. (Oshima, A., & Hogue, 2007) assert that punctuation is significant because it conveys meaning. The spelling of words affects how they appear. Words that the author misspells will result in confusion.

Several studies were conducted to see the five components of writing, including content. A study conducted by Ramadhan, et.al (2020) who revealed that writing narrative texts and other types of texts in language learning are both ideal candidates for project-based learning (PjBL)-based learning modules. Among all of the statements given in the questionnaire related to content, it can be concluded that students were able and fairly developing their own ideas or topics given.

Another study by Azimi (2022). In this study, the students' proficiency in writing paragraphs was examined and evaluated based on its structure, content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. This research used documentation to be qualitative. The essay served as the last exam for second-semester English Language Education students at FKIP UIR in the 2020–2021 academic year. The outcome demonstrated that the pupils had good paragraph-writing skills. Additionally, it was shown that students' weaknesses in writing paragraphs were in the mechanics, as opposed to their strengths, which were in the substance.

a study regarding An Analysis of Students' Writing Skill in Paragraph Writing conducted by Rohim (2019). In this study, descriptive qualitative research is used. All fourth semester English study program students at Muhammadiyah University in Tangerang make up the study's population. His quantitative and 32 qualitative analyses of the data revealed that, on the whole, their paragraph writing was rated as good.

In conclusion, the theory of Jacobs was used to identified the completeness of writing based on the five components mentioned. (Jacobs, 1981) evaluated different writing compositions based on five components of the analytical scale: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

The research design of this research was a descriptive study. (Offredy & Vickers, 2010) stated that the purpose of descriptive research was to characterize the facts and traits of the phenomenon being studied. Descriptive research is a technique for the

researcher to describe what has occurred and is happening right now. This study aimed to see the students' perceptions toward the integration of character education into PjBL in Paragraph Writing in terms of their writing performances. The samples of this research were students of English Literature Academic Year 2022/2023 that enrolled in Paragraph Writing Course. The number of the samples were 125 (one hundred twenty-five) students, all of the samples were involved in this study. Questionnaire was used as the instrument adapted by the theory of Jacobs (1981). Each indicator has five statements.

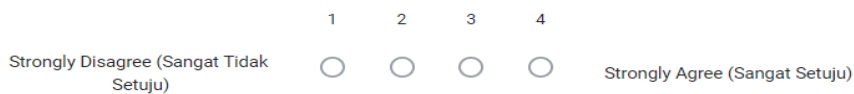


Figure 1. Likert Scale in the questionnaire

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Research Findings

There were 20 items in questionnaire, the options of the items include strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA). All of items were arranged in positive statements with score 1, 2, 3 and 4. Then, the scores were converted into Likert scale. The scales were very negative for score 1 - 1.75, negative for score 1.76 - 2.50, positive for score 2.51 - 3.25, and very positive for 3.26 - 4. There were five indicators in the questionnaire that elaborated as follow:

**Table 1. The data analysis of students' perceptions towards the integration of character education into Project-based Learning in learning Paragraph Writing in content indicator learning Paragraph Writing in content indicator**

No	Item/Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
1	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I can develop my ideas.	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	77 (61.6%)	43 (34.5%)	<b>3.30</b>
2	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I can develop content from existing topics clearly and in detail.	1 (0.8%)	7 (5.6%)	81 (64.8%)	35 (28.8%)	<b>3.21</b>
3	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I can convey ideas in writing.	0 (0%)	7 (5.6%)	81 (64.8%)	37 (29.6%)	<b>3.34</b>
4	Project-based learning makes it easier for me to get topics or ideas that I will write.	1 (0.8%)	6 (4.8%)	83 (66.4%)	35 (28%)	<b>3.21</b>
5	Project-based learning makes it easier for me to understand the topics given because I can learn to write while working on projects.	1 (0.8%)	5 (4%)	74 (59.2%)	45 (36%)	<b>3.30</b>

The first indicator was content. The mean category of all statements was (3.25). The perception of the content was categorized as positive (good). The students were able to develop topics and ideas to be written on their writings but not developed perfectly.

**Table 2. The data analysis of students' perceptions towards the integration of character education into Project-based Learning in learning Paragraph Writing in organization indicator**

<b>6</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I am able to create coherent paragraphs.	0 (0%)	13 (10.4%)	86 (68.8%)	26 (20.8%)	<b>3.10</b>
<b>7</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I can make sentences that are precise and coherent.	0 (0%)	11 (8.8%)	91 (72.8%)	23 (18.4%)	<b>3.10</b>
<b>8</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I learned to write paragraphs regularly, starting with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and closing sentences.	0 (0%)	3 (2.4%)	76 (60.8%)	46 (36.8%)	<b>3.34</b>
<b>9</b>	Project-based learning makes me proficient in making a good main sentence.	0 (0%)	9 (7.2%)	83 (66.4%)	33 (26.4%)	<b>3.19</b>
<b>10</b>	Project-based learning makes me proficient in making a good supporting sentence.	0 (0%)	10 (8%)	89 (71.2%)	26 (20.8%)	<b>3.13</b>

The second indicator was organization. The mean category of all statements was (3.17). The perception of the organization categorized as positive (good). The students were understood and able to practice conducting coherent sentences.

**Table 3. The data analysis of students' perceptions towards the integration of character education into Project-based Learning in learning Paragraph Writing in mechanic indicator**

<b>11</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I can distinguish between good and inaccurate spelling.	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	79 (63.2%)	41 (32.8%)	<b>3.28</b>
<b>12</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I can use capital letters correctly.	0 (0%)	6 (4.8%)	56 (44.8%)	63 (50.4%)	<b>3.46</b>
<b>13</b>	Project-based learning allows me to use proper punctuation.	0 (0%)	6 (4.8%)	55 (44%)	64 (51.2%)	<b>3.46</b>
<b>14</b>	In project-based learning my lecturer helps check spelling and punctuation on my writing.	0 (0%)	7 (5.6%)	58 (46.4%)	60 (48%)	<b>3.42</b>
<b>15</b>	Project-based learning makes me able to place capital letters in every name, place, date, and day of writing properly.	0 (0%)	6 (4.8%)	56 (44.8%)	63 (50.4%)	<b>3.45</b>

The next indicator, mechanic showed the highest mean among all indicators. The mean value was (3.41). The perception of the mechanic was categorized as very positive (very good). The students are mastered to use the correct, punctuation, capital letters, etc.

**Table 4. The data analysis of students' perceptions towards the integration of character education into Project-based Learning in learning Paragraph Writing in vocabulary indicator**

<b>16</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I get a lot of vocabulary that I never knew before.	0 (0%)	7 (5.6%)	67 (53.6%)	51 (40.8%)	<b>3.35</b>
<b>17</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I learn to use the right words based on the context of the sentences.	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	84 (67.2%)	36 (28.8%)	<b>3.24</b>
<b>18</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I am able to develop my ideas because my vocabulary has increased.	0 (0%)	15 (12%)	74 (59.2%)	36 (28.8%)	<b>3.17</b>
<b>19</b>	Project-based learning enables me not to repeat the same word over and over again in a paragraph.	0 (0%)	15 (12%)	77 (61.6%)	70 (56%)	<b>3.14</b>
<b>20</b>	Project-based learning makes my vocabulary selection more increased and varied.	0 (0%)	16 (12.8%)	70 (56%)	39 (31.2%)	<b>3.18</b>

The indicator of vocabulary showed the mean category of all statements of (3.21). The perception of the vocabulary was categorized as positive (good). The students earned new vocabularies yet it does not perfectly broaden.

**Table 5. The data analysis of students' perceptions towards the integration of character education into Project-based Learning in learning Paragraph Writing in language use indicator**

<b>21</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, the lecturer plays a role in checking my grammar so that I can improve it to produce better writing.	0 (0%)	8 (6.4%)	63 (50.4%)	54 (43.2%)	<b>3.37</b>
<b>22</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I am able to conduct good and correct sentences.	0 (0%)	7 (5.6%)	88 (70.4%)	30 (24%)	<b>3.18</b>
<b>23</b>	As project-based learning is applied in the classroom, I can use conjunctions in my writing.	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	75 (60%)	45 (36%)	<b>3.32</b>
<b>24</b>	Project-based learning has made me good at using pronouns and nouns.	1 (0.8%)	9 (7.2%)	81 (64.8%)	34 (27.2%)	<b>3.18</b>
<b>25</b>	Project-based learning has made me adept at placing the right use of articles.	0 (0%)	10 (8%)	83 (66.4%)	32 (25.6%)	<b>3.18</b>

The main value of the last indicator, language use showed was (3.24). The perception of the language use was categorized as positive (good). The students were able to adept with the use of prepositions, articles, and word order/function can all obscure meaning with the range of adequate.

### 3.3. Discussion

Based on the data analysis, the students' perceptions toward their writing performance, including the ability to mastered content, organization, mechanic,



vocabulary, language use on their writings after the integration of character education into project-based learning is applied in Paragraph Writing class was scored very positive. The finding of this study corroborated with the findings of Aghayani and Hajmohammadi (2019) that found writing abilities were greatly enhanced by project-based learning. It was also in line with Sa'diyah, et. al (2019) that found students using PjBL through blogging performed better on writing assignments than those using the traditional approach. The difference of PjBL implementation was Sa'diyah, et.al; (2019) use blogging as the media, meanwhile this research use wall magazine as the media.

In aspect of writing, students' perceptions toward their performance in writing descriptive text using magazine wall as the media was categorized positive (good) in content, organization, vocabulary, and language use. This was in line with a study conducted by Ramadhan, et.al (2020) revealed that writing narrative texts and other types of texts in language learning are both ideal candidates for project-based learning (PjBL)-based learning modules. Among the questions given in the questionnaire related to these four of indicators, it can be concluded that students are able and fairly developing their own ideas or topics given, students are able to write a complete and coherent sentence, students earned new vocabularies they never knew before, and students were able to place the correct language use like nouns and pronouns.

Although the findings indicated students' performance in all aspects of writing while learning with the implementation of project-based learning categorized positive and able to enhance the writing ability of the students, there were slight differences in their perceptions. Finding showed that the highest mean value of perception based on the writing's indicators was seen in content (3.25), followed by language use (3.24), then followed by vocabulary (3.21), and the last one organization (3.17). This was different with Rohim (2019) who his findings showed that the highest score of organization was the highest, the different between Rohim (2019) and this research was the aim of the research, Rohim (2019) intended to see the score of students' writing, while this research intended to see the students' perceptions. Nevertheless, the findings showed a similarity over Azimi's research (2022). It is shown that both of Azimi (2022) and this research findings over content indicator have the highest score among other indicators. However, it is a same case with Rohim (2019), that both Azimi (2022) and Rohim (2019) were analyzing the students' writing performances.

In this research, the highest score among five writing's indicators was mechanic. It was shown on the findings that the mean value of mechanic was 3.41 (the mean value of very positive perception). This result indicated that according to students' perception, the mechanical aspect in students' writing is very good. According to the students, they are able to deal with punctuation, capital letters, spelling, etc.

After all, this research found that the relation between the implementation of project-based learning in writing class, along with the integration of character education can be categorized as very positive. The overall of perceptions towards every indicator after the calculation was 3.26. It reached the mean category of very positive perception which was 3.26. This can be concluded that the integration of character education into project-based learning in writing class earned a very positive perception from the students that learned Paragraph Writing Course and helped

students to improve their writing performance. This also corroborated with a study by Indriani (2017), where she implied the implementation of PjBL containing characters was effective to be applied in the classroom. Another study by Zandrato, Suharno, & Agung (2020) also implied that the development of Christian Character Education and PjBL had significantly improved students' characters. As the study of Zandrato et al. (2020) was implemented in a Junior High School, it still has a linkage into this study.

All the previous studies mentioned in this research agreed that Project-based Learning was effective to be implemented in the classroom. The reason why PjBL is able to improve students' writing especially in content was because PjBL is able to stimulate students' ability to think critically and lead students to learn independently. As mentioned by (Yudha, 2019) who stated that students are guided to develop, solve problems, make judgments, engage in investigative activities, and work independently as they complete complicated project work that is loaded with difficult questions and difficulties. It was also in line with research conducted by Wahyuni & Lestari (2017) which their findings of the observations lead to the conclusion that lecturing on writing paragraphs while providing students with instructional resources based on project-based learning is sufficient to assist students in writing paragraphs.

## CONCLUSION

This study indicated that English Literature students' perceptions of integrating character education into project-based learning in the Paragraph Writing Course to increase students' writing performance were very positive (3.26). Students were able to practice conducting coherent sentences, mastering the use of accurate punctuation and capital letters, acquiring new vocabularies, and becoming proficient in the use of prepositions, articles, and word order/function. Although not every indicator earned a very positive perception, the overall perception of all indicators was very positive. This demonstrated that integrating character education into PjBL in learning writing was effective in assisting students in enhancing their writing ability. Considering the very positive result of this research, the researcher suggests that the integration of character education into PjBL to be applied in every course in a structured way, so the integration of character education into PjBL is sustainable. Therefore, for future research, the same dimension can be studied by employing other indicators to be explored.

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