

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

English has also been made a mandatory subject in most countries that do not speak English, as it is a gateway to global opportunities. For Indonesian students, English skills are required not only for academic achievement but also for future working life, particularly in professional environments such as vocational education. However, learning English specifically in writing is very difficult because students must construct sentences, organize ideas, and follow grammatical patterns that are very different from their native language. Therefore, teaching methods that promote critical thinking and active involvement by the students are required in order to effectively enhance students' writing skills.

Writing skills are essential for enabling students to express ideas clearly and confidently in both academic and everyday contexts. Through writing, learners explore, reflect, and deepen their understanding of course material. These skills involve effectively communicating ideas, facts, and thoughts in written form, encompassing syntax, vocabulary, coherence, cohesion, and structure. In the Indonesian context, Prihatin & Sari (2021), emphasize that students frequently face barriers in writing, including unengaging teaching materials, limited access to technology, fear of making mistakes, and a tendency to copy and paste content during online learning. These issues often result in low confidence and minimal progress in writing

proficiency. They propose the use of more stimulating instructional content, better technological infrastructure, and portfolio-based assessments to improve student engagement and originality in writing. Complementing this, Idris et al., (2025), highlight that vocational high school students in Indonesia also struggle with grammatical accuracy and motivation when writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Their study demonstrates that targeted instructional models—such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)—can positively influence students’ writing skills and learning attitudes, even if gains in proficiency are modest. Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of combining supportive learning environments with pedagogical strategies tailored to students’ linguistic and technological needs. Integrating both sets of insights suggests that improving writing instruction requires addressing both structural barriers and cognitive-affective challenges, especially in vocational and EFL settings.

Many EFL students enter the classroom eager to communicate in English, but writing often becomes a major hurdle. Writing demands careful planning, precision, and mastery of multiple elements simultaneously. In EFL contexts, students commonly face limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and difficulty organizing ideas coherently—hindering their ability to express thoughts clearly Sanu et al.,(2019), Asnas & Hidayanti, (2024). these problems often get worse because traditional teaching methods do not meet students' individual needs, making it harder for them to write clearly and organize their ideas (Hidayat, 2025). Additionally, the lack of timely feedback and active

engagement further slows progress, resulting in persistent errors and diminished confidence in writing. Addressing these challenges requires targeted instructional strategies and supportive feedback mechanisms to help students improve their writing competence.

EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students often face significant challenges in writing, which hinder their ability to express ideas clearly and effectively. Another major challenge is grammatical inaccuracies. Indonesian EFL learners frequently commit errors in tenses, subject–verb agreement, and idiomatic expressions errors that disrupt coherence and clarity Putri (2021). Furthermore, students struggle with logical organization and cohesion, making it difficult for readers to follow the flow of their writing. Kurniasih et al. (2023), found that Indonesian university students frequently experience high levels of anxiety during writing tasks, which negatively affects their motivation and performance. These persistent difficulties underscore the importance of implementing innovative instructional models such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which engages students in active problem solving while promoting collaboration, critical thinking, and better understanding of language structures. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) offers a powerful approach to teaching writing in foreign-language contexts by addressing students' specific challenges. Research by Wulandari and Hastini (2024), shows that engaging Grade VII students in real-world problem-solving through PBL significantly improves their procedural writing skills, with statistical evidence indicating a notable enhancement in performance

after the intervention. Similarly, Nisa (2017), in her doctoral research, explored the integration of PBL with the writing process approach and found that this combination increased student engagement, facilitated idea development, and encouraged deeper reflection during drafting. Her findings highlight that PBL can help students overcome writer's block and strengthen writing through structured peer feedback and real-world context. This interactive framework—built upon authentic tasks, multiple drafts, collaboration, and genre exposure—cultivates critical thinking and adaptability in students Wulandari & Hastini, (2024) and Nisa (2017). By embedding writing within meaningful problem-solving, educators can reduce anxiety, build confidence, and encourage creative risk-taking, ultimately preparing students for the demands of academic and professional communication.

This thesis specifically explore the application of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to improve writing skills in vocational education, presenting a more focused scope than earlier studies. Previous by research Dastveer (2014), has demonstrated that PBL promotes critical thinking and collaborative problem- solving in learners, but this thesis targets the particular writing challenges vocational students encounter—such as restricted vocabulary, grammatical mistakes, and anxiety about writing. Furthermore, this study underscores the necessity of aligning writing instruction with the real-world communication demands of vocational contexts. Siregar et al., (2022), found that vocational students in Indonesia often struggle with

organizing ideas, vocabulary, and grammar, which negatively affects their motivation and ability to write effectively.

Unlike much of the earlier research—focused on PBL in general or academic settings—this thesis follows Dastveer' and Afzal (2014), suggestion by adapting PBL methods specifically to vocational students' needs. By doing so, it provides actionable insights into bridging the gap between theoretical learning and professional application, offering valuable strategies for educators and practitioners who aim to enhance writing instruction in vocational environments.

The primary aim of the present research is to study how Problem-Based Learning can be applied to address eleventh-grade vocational students' specific writing issues and encourage a more active, competence-based learning culture. Through a focus upon real-world applications and problem-solving, the present research aims to provide an effective contribution to teaching and learning writing skills to vocational settings. The outcomes are expected to provide teachers with practical recommendations to design stimulating and effective lessons that are relevant to vocational students' professional interests. The present research hopefully aims to fill the gap between theory and practice by empowering students to be competent and confident communicators in academic and professional life.

Recent studies emphasize the need for innovative instructional strategies tailored to vocational learners. Juliani (2023), underscores that contextual teaching methods significantly increase student motivation and

writing fluency. Manalu (2024), supports the integration of digital media tools and real-life themes to create a more engaging writing experience. These findings reinforce the argument that traditional methods alone are insufficient and that creative, student-centered models such as PBL are crucial for developing writing skills in diverse contexts.

B. Delimitations of The Research

The goal of the research is to investigate how PBL can be employed as a teaching method to foster eleventh-grader writing skills among SMK Cendekia students. Conducted within a specific setting of a vocational school, the research gives top priority to practical communication skills needed to be employed when these learners move into their future workplace. The setting of the study is explicitly narrowed down to eleventh-graders and not to non-eleventh-grader students or vocational or non-vocational students. The research is interested only in utilizing PBL to teach writing and investigating complications that have been encountered and how such complications could be best overcome. The research further narrows itself down to writing skills and not to language skills such as speaking, listening, or comprehension. The research is not, in any way, interested in examination of utilization of different methods of teaching aside from PBL. Narrowing scope to such an extent, the research allows deep study of how well PBL works in solving some writing issues, thereby applying findings to specific questions and objectives of the research.

C. Research Question :

1. How is the use of Problem Based Learning to teach writing skills in SMK Cendekia ?
2. What obstacles are found in the use of Problem Based Learning to teach writing skills in SMK Cendekia ?
3. What solutions are found in the use of problem Based learning to teach writing skills in SMK Cendekia?

D. Purposes of the study :

Based on research problem above, the purpose of this research are:

1. To explain the success of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in improving the writing skills of eleventh-grade students at SMK Cendekia.
2. To describe main problems in writing, such as limited vocabulary, grammatical difficulties, idea organization, and writing-related anxiety, through the implementation of PBL.
3. To explain the development of new, skill-based teaching methods that match the practical and job-related needs of vocational education.

E. Significance of Study :

1. For Teachers

The findings of this study have implications in terms of pedagogical teachings on how Problem-Based Learning (PBL) can be used as an instructional approach to enhance students' writing capacity in the vocational education environment. The research, under the descriptive qualitative approach, shows that PBL can provide a more vibrant and

engaging learning environment, where teachers are in a better position to address the linguistic challenges of students in acquiring vocabulary and grammatical use. Furthermore, the study identifies guided inquiry and group activities as central to enabling students' acquisition of structuring of ideas in line with vocational writing requirements. These findings provide a foundation for educators in consideration of adopting student-centered approaches in which problem-solving is integrated with writing teaching, subsequently contributing to enhanced classroom practice and students' achievement.

2. For Students

From the learner's point of view, this study highlights the role of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in enabling the development of essential writing skills relevant to vocational situations. The qualitative prove that working on problem-based activities enables the learners to become active participants in the learning process, overcome language obstacles, and gain confidence in written form through a process of gradual progression. PBL offers opportunities for co-learning real issues, thereby improving their critical thinking and communication skills as well as their capacity to organize and present ideas in a meaningful way. This style of learning assists in making them academically developed and prepares them with practical skills that can be applied in the business world.

3. For Future Researcher

This study offers a foundation for upcoming scholarly studies in

integrating Problem-Based Learning (PBL) into writing instruction, particularly within the vocational education context. Through the descriptive qualitative research approach, the study create descriptions on how PBL can help learners overcome linguistic divides, including vocabulary deficit and grammatical problems, and form effective written idea structuring. Future researchers can further extrapolate these findings by looking at the application of PBL in various learning settings, student populations, and fields of curriculum.

Finally, the research also offers ways to examine the long-term impact of PBL on students' academic and work-life communication competence. The influence of teacher facilitation, peer collaboration, and the application of digital tools in optimizing PBL to enhance writing pedagogy is also to be investigated by researchers. Expand the findings of the themes presented in this study, future research can further evolve an increased repertoire of understanding with respect to innovative teaching approaches appropriate for the changing needs of vocational learners.

F. Definition of Key Terms

1. Writing skills

The ability to effectively convey ideas, thoughts, and information through written language.

2. Teaching writing

The process of guiding and facilitating students in developing their ability to express ideas, thoughts, and information effectively through written

language.

3. Problem Based Learning

Student-centered teaching approach in which learners engage in exploring and solving real-world problems as a way to acquire knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and enhance collaboration.