

# A PORTFOLIO- BASED WRITING ASSESSMENT ON STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

(An Experimental Study on Tenth Grade Students at SMA N 17 Tebo)

Arrista Berliana J<sup>1</sup>, Saunir Saun<sup>2</sup>, Yuli Tiarina<sup>3</sup>

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
FBS Universitas Negeri Padang

Email: [arrista\\_berliana@yahoo.com](mailto:arrista_berliana@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to test whether the effect of using the portfolio- based writing assessment as an alternative assessment had better achievement on students' writing ability of descriptive text. The research used posttest only design, which means that students' ability in writing descriptive text was measured after the students were given a treatment. The population and samples of this research were students of X grades in SMA Negeri 17 Tebo. The instrument of this research was writing test to write a descriptive text. The result of this research showed that there was significant effect to the experimental group after getting the treatment. So that, the portfolio- based writing assessment could give better effect to students' writing ability in writing descriptive text.

Kata Kunci : *Portfolio- based writing assessment*, Kemampuan Menulis, *Descriptive text*

## A. Introduction

Writing is one of communication tool among people. People can share their ideas by taking it into written product so that others can read it. Harmer (2004) stated that writing is essential for both speakers of foreign language and people who use it as the first language. Tribble (in Harmer 2001), and Raison (2004) states that writing is a process occurs as a chain since it is a series of interaction with words and ideas that develop and change. In other word, writing requires process and it can be developed and changed while the process is running on. The writer also thinks of what to write, coherence and cohesion of the text, formation and legibility of individual letter, spelling, grammar including punctuation, organization, and selection of appropriate content for and intended audience. Related the process of writing above, there is doubt that writing is not easy task for the second language learners. In short, writing is difficult subject to teach. This opinion is not different from Heaton(1997) in Tassema (2005) who states that writing is a complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only grammatical and rethorical devices but also conceptual and judgemental

---

<sup>1</sup> Student of English Language Teaching program of FBS UNP Graduated on March 2013

<sup>2</sup> Advisor I, Lecturer of FBS State University of Padang

<sup>3</sup> Advisor II, Lecturer of FBS State University of Padang

elements. Heaton also classified more details into five general components in writing: the first, language use that involve the ability to write correct and appropriate sentence. Second, mechanical skill: the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language, e.g. grammar and spelling. Third, treatment of content: the ability to think creatively and develop thought, excluding all irrelevant information. Fourth, stylistic skill: the ability to manipulate sentences and paragraphs, and use language effectively. And last judgment skill: the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with particular audience in mind, together with the ability to select, organize and order relevant information.

In conclusion, writing is process. Since in writing the writer has to do some efforts concerning with decision making, linearity, social context, subjectivity and objectivity, so he or she needs process that takes place over time and through language. In short, writing is a process where the writer makes meaning from experience and it does through some activities such as responding to other piece of language, organizing ideas, reviewing the writing, expressing the ideas in the written form, and making decision. All of these activities. The writers need mental efforts since and has to consider many things in doing writing (Tassema, 2005).

Moreover, the department of Education in Indonesia states in the school based curriculum or Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP 2006) that the focus of learning English is to enable the students to communicate and to be able to create written texts. Teaching writing is not only focus on what teacher gives to the students; however teaching writing also measured what students get along teaching process.

In measuring how far students can get along learning process, it is important to test the students as a part of assessment. Assessment is a central element in curriculum design: it is the critical link between learning outcomes, content and learning and teaching activities. Students cannot avoid assessment activities and their impact if they want to pass a topic or course. It believes that there has been a close interrelationship between teaching and testing (Brijandi, 1994). This interrelationship has been so close because it is impossible to take only one of them into teaching activity.

Traditional assessments mostly do not represent the activity of learner-centered, because in that assessment the students' overall progress only assess by single score, however, single score almost always fail to report students' overall progress accurately. Portfolio assessment is an assessment in which offers the criteria of learner-centered. Portfolio has become one of the most popular alternative assessment. It has been widely used in learning and teaching program. According to Tiernet et al (1991) Portfolio is the connection in making improvements on what students' do during certain time. They add that portfolio involves students in reflection upon during their achievement and improving. It can be said that through portfolio, the students can reflect their achievement.

Since there are several problems faced by the teacher in teaching and testing the students' writing. Portfolio-based writing assessment is a kind of

assessment that shows what students can do in their writing and focuses on the process of learning. According to Brown (2004) portfolio based writing is one of most popular alternative in assessment, especially in language teaching where the assessment could report the students' progress along the teaching and learning process. Genesse and Upshur in Brown (2004) say that " portfolio- based writing is a purposefull collection of students' work that demonstrate their efforts, progress, and achievement in given areas". By applying portfolio- based writing assessment, it can be useful way to solve the problems related to teaching writing skill. Since portfolio- based writing evaluate students' work overtime, it offers valuable input for the teacher in order to provide powerful meaning to estimate students' achievement.

### **B. Research method**

The research was an experimental research, because it was the type of research that could test the hypothesis to establish cause-effect relations, in order to expose and explain the effect of using portfolio- based writing assessment in teaching writing. According to Gay (2009:240) This research determines at least one independent variable, and observes one or more dependent variables. The independent variable, also called the treatment, causal or experimental variable, which means the treatment or characteristic, believed to make a difference. The dependent variable might be a test. The manipulations of an independent variable were the primary characters that differentiate experimental research form other type of research.

In this method, there were two kinds of groups. First, the group that received new treatment called experimental group. The new treatment for this group was using Portfolio- based writing assessment. Second, the group that did not receive any treatment or treated as traditional way is called the control group.

In controlling this new treatment, the researcher applied the Posttest-Only control group design. Gay (2009:257) says that the Posttest-only control group design is the same as the Pretest-posttest control group design except there is no pretest. The researcher considers doing this design because the researcher intends to see the effectiveness of the treatment. The control group will serve the comparison for the other group.

*Table 1. Research Design*

Experimental Group	Group 1	New Treatment (Using Portfolio-based Writing Assessment)	Post-test
--------------------	---------	--	-----------

Control Group	Group 2	Traditional Assessment (Without using Portfolio- based Writing Assessment)	Post- test
---------------	---------	--	------------

The Population of this research was the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 17 Tebo. There were three classes and the total number of students were 64 students.

In this research, the data was collected by asking the students to have writing test in the pre-test and post test. Both control and experimental group got the same material but different treatment in assessing their writing. The control group was assessed by single score, and the experimental group was assessed by using portfolio- based writing assessment. The post-test was exactly the same with pre- test which has been used to know the mean score of experimental group and control group. The mean score was got from students' writing scores. The scoring rubric was used to measure students' ability in writing.

The procedure of this research is divided into three; before experiment, whilst experiment and after experiment.

- a. Before experiment
  1. The students will be selected
  2. The scoring rubric is designed
  3. The topic for pre- test and post- test will be chosen by holding try out
  4. Analyzing the validity of the test
  5. Giving pre- test to both classes; experimental and control group.
- b. Whilst experiment
  1. Treatment
    - A. Pre- Teaching
      1. The teacher greets the students
      2. The teacher checks students' readiness for studying
      3. The teacher reviews previous lesson

#### B. Whilst Teaching

##### a. Pre- writing

Introduce the descriptive text; review and build students' knowledge of relevant vocabulary, relevant grammar points and, most importantly, students' background knowledge.

##### b. While Writing

1. Modeling
2. The students are asked to draft their ideas, and assessed by the teacher.
3. Revising : When students revise, they review their text on the basis of the feedback given in the responding stage. Revising not only merely checking for students' language errors. It is done to improve global

content and the organization of ideas so that the writer's intent is made clearer to the reader.

c. Post Writing

In the post writing, it is also called as editing. At this stage, students are engaged in tidying up their text as they prepare the final draft for evaluation by the teacher, and after evaluate students' writing, the writing pieces will be given back to the students

C. Post Teaching

The teacher closes the class by summarizing the lesson.

D. Posttest

The Posttest was conducted after treatment. There were 2 purposes of doing this test. First, it is used to check students' development after they were given the treatment. Second, this test was arranged to check which procedure that was more effective to be used in teaching descriptive text

E. Post- experiment

After doing posttest, the data were calculated statistically by using t- test, in order to take a conclusion whether the treatment give better effects or not or to test the hypothesis whether  $H_0$  is rejected or accepted.

### C. Discussion

This research was arranged to investigate whether using portfolio assessment as the alternative assessment gave better effect on students' ability on writing descriptive text or not. The formula of hypothesis testing had proven that portfolio- based writing assessment gave better effect on students' ability in writing descriptive text. However, there were several explanations for the result of the hypothesis writing.

First, the students were enthusiastic and motivated. Portfolio- based writing assessment leads the students to have predictions on what they have to get along the learning process. The students would so curious about their prediction, they were enthusiast in assess what teacher noted on their worksheet. It could be assumed that by applying this treatment in certain time could encourage students' enthusiasm and motivation and it could be proven by seeing students' scores.

Based on the researcher's observation during the research for 8 meetings, it was found that at the beginning of introducing portfolio assessment to the students of experimental group, they were difficult to understand the method. However, after explaining how to work with portfolio, the students were more motivated in improving their writing. It can be seen by the result of students' writing in their portfolio folder, which showed their development in writing during certain times. It gave a clear picture of their learning, which affected the whole learning process. Moreover, the students become more active in learning

process because it involved self-assessment. It can be concluded that portfolio – based writing assessment is a promising method of teaching writing which measure ongoing growth of students' accomplishments.

This finding was similar to Wang and Liao (2006) who found that under portfolio assessment, the students experienced greater satisfaction in writing class terms of instructional objective, instructional method, teachers' qualities, class environment, assessment and overall satisfaction.

Second, Portfolio- based writing assessment is one of the most popular assessments in teaching and learning process. The application of portfolio assessment in this research was successful in improving student' writing ability. Many experts of portfolio assessment have applied this method and experienced satisfactory result. Related to those findings, the data showed that portfolio assessment in this research also affect on students' ability in writing compared to the traditional assessment method. In addition, from the scoring rubric used in students' test, there were four categories such as content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanism. From those categories, content and organization were increased most.

Based on the analyzing the data of the test, both categories; content and organization were increasing more because of some factors. Firstly, the content of a descriptive text is organized. Secondly, the organization of a descriptive text is simple which consists of two part; identification and description. Thirdly, the total number of pupils of the group was quite small, so it was easy to control the idea to be describe of each students' work and also the organization. Through portfolio- based writing assessment it was totally helped the researcher to control the content and the organization of students' work along eight meetings.

In summary, using portfolio- based writing assessment as a teaching method in assessing students' writing can improve students' ability and increase their comprehension in understanding the content and organization. Moreover the related findings by experts also supported this assessment.

#### **D. Conclusion And Suggestion**

The data collected were examined by using t- test formula in order to test the hypothesis. The result of the calculation indicates that the rate of t observed is bigger than t table. Referring to this result, the research hypothesis is accepted. It means that using portfolio- based writing assessment as an alternative assessment had better effect on order to improve students' ability in writing a descriptive text. Therefore, the students who are taught by using portfolio- based writing assessment has better effect in writing descriptive text.

In relation to the conclusion, it is suggested that the teacher use portfolio- based writing assessment as an alternative assessment in teaching writing. This assessment proves that portfolio- based writing assessment can improve students' comprehension as well as improve students' ability in writing

descriptive text. Moreover, this research already statistically proves that this method in give had better effect. So that, using portfolio- based writing assessment in teaching writing is recommended.

Moreover, it is suggested that the future research can analyzed the effect of this method in other kind of text types, or other kind of English skills. Since, this method shows a significat effect on writing ability, it is suggested that other researcher do the same assessment to other skills. So, this opinion might still need development by conducting further research. In addition, it is suggested to the future experimental research to able to obtain more evident to prove such this opinion.

Notes: This article was written based on writer's thesis that is supervised by advisors Drs. Saunir Saun, M.Pd., Yuli Tiarina, M.Pd.

### **Bibliography**

- Alwasilah, A.C. (2004). *Perspektif Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia: Dalam Konteks Persaingan Global*. Bandung: CV Andira
- Apple, M. & Shimo, E. (2002). *Learnersto Teachers: Portfolio, please! Perceptions of Portfolio Assessment in EFL Classroom*. Retrieved from <http://www.jalt.org/pansig/2004/HTML/AppleShimo.html>. Badan Standar. ( April, 30th 2012 )
- Arter, Judith A., Vicki Spandel., Ruth Culham (1995). *Portfolios for Assessment and Instruction*. A *Journal* retrieved from <http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed388890.html>. (October, 27th 2011).
- Byrne, Donn. 1988. *Teaching Writing Skill*. New York: Longman.
- Brown, H. Douglas. 2004. *Language Assessment; Principles and Classroom Practice*. USA: Longman.
- Departemen Pendidikan Nasional. 2006. *KTSP: Kurikulum Bahasa Inggris*, Jakarta
- Gay, L R. 2009. *Educationak research: Competencies for analysis and application*. Colombus: Meril
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2001. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Longman: Pearson Educational Limited
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2004. *How to teach writing*. England: Associated Companies.

- Hamp-Lyons, Liz & Condon, William. (1999). *Assessing the Portfolio: Principles for Practice, Theory, and Research*. Cresskill, NJ. Hampton Press
- Nunan, David. 1992. *Research Method in Language Learning*. USA: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Malley, JMicheal (2008). *Performance and Portfolio Assessment for Language Minority Students*. A journal from <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu>. (October, 20<sup>th</sup> 2011).
- Peha, S (2003). *Best Practice Writing Instruction*. from <http://www.ttms.org> (October, 30<sup>th</sup> 2011)
- Raison, Glenda. 2004. *Writing Resource Book*. Victoria: Heirumman.
- Raimes, Ann. 1983. *Teaching in Teaching Writing*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Rudner, Lawrence M. 2002. *What Teachers Need to Know about Assessment*. United States: National Education Association.
- Sativa, Revi A. 2011. *The effect of Portfolio Assessment on Students' Writing Quality at SMA Negeri 7 Padang*. Padang: Universitas Negeri Padang.
- Suarni, Yulita. 2008. *Improving Students Recount Text Writing by Using Their Real Life Experiences at the Tenth Grade of SMA N 1 Painan*. Thesis. Padang: Unpublished.
- Tassema, Kedir Assefa. 2005. *Stimulating Writing Trough Project- Based Task*. English Teaching Forum. Volume 43.)
- Tuchman Glass, Kathy. 2005. *Curriculum Design for Writing Instruction*. United States: Thousand Oaks
- Weigle, Sara Cushing. 2002. *Assessing Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.