

# IMPROVING STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING ENGLISH TEACHING BY USING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT (AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY AT SMKN 1 BLANGPIDIE)

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## Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate whether the improving students' ability in writing English teaching by using portfolio assessment. The method is used in this research is pre-experimental with one-group pre-test and post-test design. The population of this research was all grade X SMKN 1 Blangpidie. However, the sample of this research consisted of 30 students of the grade using purposive sampling technique. The instruments used in this study were test. The data of the research were collected through tests (Pre-Test and Post-Test). The pre-test was given before treatment and post-test was given after treatment. The data collected from pre and post-tests were analyzed by using *t paired sample test* through SPSS 16.00 shown that sig ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). The results found implementation portfolio assessment improve students' writing skill. Therefore, the hypotheses of this study were accepted. There were significant improvement of students' writing skill by using portfolio assessment. It can be concluded that the used of portfolio assessment increase students' writing skill.

**Keywords :** *Writing and Portfolio Assessment.*

## INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most important things in communication and it is used as a tool of communication among the nations all over the world. As an international language, English is very important and has many interrelationships with various aspects of life owned by human being (Lester, 1978). In Indonesia, English is considered as a foreign language and taught formally from junior high school up to the university level. In elementary school, English is taught an additional subject. Based on the curriculum, the teaching of English at senior high school level focuses on the four skills namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Ministry of National Education Indonesia, 2013) All of those skills should be mastered by the students. Based the researcher's observation at the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of

SMKN 1 Blangpidie and interview with the English teachers and students, he found that the students' ability in writing English was low. It was caused by many factors such as the students' results of writing not given attention well, the students' low motivation, no feedback from the teacher and no portfolio assessment used by the teacher as required in the 2013 Curriculum.

Then, the writer gave a pre-test to the students in writing to find out their ability, and he found that they were confused about how to begin their ideas in writing. They had problems in elaborating the ideas, lack of vocabulary, and consistency. Moreover, when they wrote the sentences, most of them were confused about vocabulary. They used the dictionary to find words and then put them in their sentences. Therefore, the grammatical structure was often incorrect. It

was caused by the difficulty in differentiating the kind of grammar and the students did not know how to apply them appropriately. It could be concluded that their aspects of writing such as content, organization, elaboration, consistency, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics were low.

On the other hand, the teacher did not run his/her responsibilities well as a teacher to evaluate the students' writing ability in the classroom; she/he only gave scores on the students' writing and seldom gave feedback. In fact, teachers have responsibility to assess students' achievement in the school. Consequently, the students were unable to realize their mistakes and errors in writing, and therefore the teacher and the students could not see their progress in writing. In many disciplines, portfolios help learning by providing portraits of students, offering multidimensional perspectives, encouraging students to participate, and linking to teaching (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996).

In terms of foreign language learning and teaching, they are an alternative assessment tool used to offer opportunities for both absorbing language authentically and actively and evaluating student's progress. Furthermore, in the 2013 Curriculum, the teacher is expected to measure students' ability by using portfolio assessment, which means that the teacher had to apply authentic assessments to evaluate students' ability in writing. Based on the fact, the teacher is expected to assess students by using authentic assessment (Ministry of National Education of Indonesia, 2013). It can be done by implementing the portfolio assessment, by which the teacher is able to evaluate students comprehensively.

Finally, the writer concluded that the portfolio assessment is a method in gathering information of students' evidence to evaluate their writing abilities in English language teaching continuously. Then, the students can increase their motivation in writing English language after the application of portfolio assessment in the learning process of the English subject at SMKN 1 Blangpidie. Therefore, the writer conducted a study under the title "Improving students' ability in writing English teaching by using portfolio assessment. (ELT) (An Experimental Study at SMKN 1 Blangpidie).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Development of Assessment Process*

Assessment of students' progress in school has been an important part of education which affects students, parents, teachers, administrators and even educational policy makers. Students are *administered* tests and other assessment tools to monitor their progress and provide feedback. At this point, it is important to point out how portfolios have become a tool of assessment in education. In addition, assessment is an essential component of the instructional process. Rather, they are two sides of the same coin (Fleurquin, 1998). Brindly (2001) referred to the term assessment as the different systematic ways of collecting data about a student's performance. It can also be defined as the process of finding out who the students are, what their abilities, talents, skills, and interests are, what they need to know, and how they perceive learning that will influence them.

Hancock (1994) argues that "assessment should be viewed as an

interactive process that engages both teacher and student in monitoring the student's performance".

No doubt, when teachers and learners are involved together in the assessment process, a good relationship is developed between them. Students should be involved and play an active role in the assessment process. They can do it through various practices. They can follow their work improvement over time, create assessment criteria for a product, discuss the strategies they should follow, work with peers to revise work, evaluate peers work, and identify difficulties they encounter during performing of a required task.

### ***The Origin of Portfolio Concept***

The concept of portfolio development is adopted from the field of fine arts where portfolios are used to display illustrative samples of an artist's work. The purpose of the artist's portfolio is to demonstrate the depth and breadth of the work as well as the artist's interests and abilities (Jongsma, 1989). Many educators perceive the intent of educational portfolios to be similar to that of portfolios used in fine arts, to demonstrate the depth and breadth of students' capabilities through biographies of students' work (Wolf, 1989); descriptions of students' reading and writing experiences, literacy folders, collections of pieces of writing (Jongsma, 1989).

Portfolios are not only used in developing fine arts to illustrate students' work but must also be expanded to accommodate informational needs and assessment requirements of the school in assessing the students' ability to achieve the

teaching and learning goal. A portfolio used for educational assessment must offer more than a showcase for students' products; it must be the product of a complete assessment procedure that has been systematically planned, implemented, and evaluated. A portfolio is a collection of a student's work, experiences, exhibitions, and self-ratings. While portfolio assessment is the procedure used to plan, collect, and analyze the multiple sources of data maintained in the portfolio. A portfolio based on a systematic assessment procedure can provide accurate information about students' capability in many domains of learning.

Actually, portfolios have been predominantly used in many areas such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, teaching training, and language learning to document individual students' progress and accomplishments. As for the assessment of language skills, the use of portfolios is a growing trend and has been of significant interest to teachers for the past few decades (Farr and Tone 1998; Douglas, 2000).

### ***Types Of Portfolios***

According to Columba and Dolgos (1995), there are basically three types of portfolios to be considered for classroom use.

#### ***1. Showcase Portfolios***

This type of portfolio focuses on the student's best and most representative work. Therefore, in this portfolio the student selects what he or she thinks is representative work. This folder is most often seen at open houses and parent visitations (Columba and Dolgos, 1995).

## **2. Teacher-Student Portfolio**

This type of portfolio is often called the “working portfolio or working folder”. This is an interactive teacher-student portfolio that helps in communication between teacher and student. The teacher and student were make agreement to add or delete within the content of the show-case portfolio (Columba and Dolgos, 1995).

## **3. Teacher Alternative Assessment Portfolio**

All these items in this type of portfolio are scored, rated, ranked, or evaluated. Teachers could keep individual student’s portfolios that were solely for the teacher’s use as an assessment tool. This is a focused type of portfolio and a model of the holistic approach to assessment (Columba and Dolgos, 1995). Moreover, according to Epstein (2005), portfolios can be divided into two categories:

- *Process- Oriented Portfolio*: it tells the story of a students’ growth over time.
- *Product- Oriented Portfolio*, it is a collection of student’s best work.

In conclusion, both types of portfolios are used in all grade levels. It however proves that a process-oriented portfolio is more common at the elementary level as individual growth is the object of concern rather than determining specific levels of performances. A product-oriented portfolio, on the other hand, is more common at the secondary level as older students generally have higher thinking skills necessary to select their best work wisely as well as engage in self -reflection process deeply (Sweet, 1993; Epstein, 2005).

## **4. Portfolio Assessment**

Popham (1994) explains that a portfolio assessment is a continuous assessment method of information gathering or systematic data on the results of the work of students in a period certain. In a portfolio assessment system, teachers create a file for each individual learner, which contains a systematic collection of the results of their learning achievements during the educational process. Portfolio assessment is currently a very popular alternative assessment method where instruction and assessment are integrated (Hamp-Lyons, 2007). The significant aspect of the portfolio assessment is student self-reflection. It can encourage students to become active, which enables students to understand where they are in their learning, by which means they have reached that position, and where to go from there (McKay, 2006).

Hebert, (1998) states that portfolio assessment gives teachers and students the opportunity to make decisions about what will be assessed and how assessment will occur. When students collaborate with teachers about portfolio criteria and contents, reflect and set learning goal, they are supported to develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning. Portfolios have the ability to build ownership, pride, and students’ confidence in their ability as learners

## **5. Models For Developing And Implementing Portfolio Assessment**

In using portfolios as a tool for assessing students’ learning development, there are several steps that have to be done by the teacher. Birgin and Baki (2007)

propose three steps in developing portfolio assessment. These include determining (1) the purpose of the portfolio, (2) the evidence including in portfolio, and (3) the assessment criteria.

Based on the three steps in developing portfolio assessment above, Brown (2004) proposes more steps in developing portfolio assessment. The steps are such as : deciding the purpose of the portfolio, considering the evidence included in the portfolio, communicating the assessment criteria determining the time for portfolio development, determining regular schedules to review and conferencing, deciding a place to keep the portfolio, and giving positive washback and final assessment

#### **6. Portfolio Conferences**

Conferencing is an important step in the portfolio assessment strategy development and guidance as it is an effective strategy of the portfolio philosophy of shared and active assessment. Conferencing commonly takes the form of a conversation or discussion between teacher and students about their work to collaboratively discuss progress and set goals for the future. Farr and Tone (1998, p.27) state that “the portfolio conference is a regular time for student and teacher to sit down one-to-one and discuss what they believe the collection shows”. Questions are asked about the collection and about the learning process.

Again, Farr and Tone (1998) emphasize the importance of portfolio conferences as teaching and assessment strategies. As the main focus of conferences is process, they communicate not only how students are doing but also what students

have to say about how they are doing and why. Such organized conferences help the teacher to learn more about his/her students.

#### **7. Portfolio Assessment and Writing Instruction**

Writing is the process of documenting thoughts and experiences. It is viewed as a communicative social activity through which one can communicate a variety of messages to a close or distant, known or unknown readers (Olshtain, 2001; Reid, 2002). Rather being merely one of language skills, writing is one of the major skills in language acquisition (Sebranek, Meyer, and Kemper, 1992). Portfolio assessment as an alternative innovative strategy of assessment provides a means of assessing not only the writing products but also the processes of writing that occur to create such products. Unlike traditional tests, portfolios can showcase the processes of producing pieces of writing as “students include not only their final polished pieces but also their planning as well-brainstorming notes, mapping, webs, chats, and drafts showing revisions and rewriting”. (Clemmons,1993, p. 63). Thus, portfolios show the stages of the writing process a text has gone through and the stages of students’ growth (Coombe and Barlow, 2004).

In brief, the most important point concerning portfolio assessment strategy is the assessment. It is not just based on the quality of the writing products; rather the portfolio creation process allows students to experience the different stages of the writing process necessary to create the product and thus portfolio assessment, as

Weiser (1992) ascertained, it supports the notion that writing is a process which involves development, growth, and learning as well as a product.

#### **8. *Previous Studies on Implementation Portfolio in Teaching English Writing***

With regard to the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing skills, there are many researchers conducting studies on portfolios. They found that the portfolios were an effective authentic assessment in language teaching and learning as well as an effective way to improve writing skills. Khodadady and Khodabakhshzade (2012) conducted a study at Tabaran University with 59 TEFL students as the participants. The study investigated the effect of portfolio and self-assessment on the students' writing autonomy as well as their writing ability.

Furthermore, Sabrina (2012) conducted action research with the purpose of improving the students' writing skills by using portfolio assessment. The research was conducted for two months with 31 students of grade VIII of SMP N 14 Yogyakarta as the sample. The result was that the portfolio assessment can improve the five writing aspects of the students such as content, organisation, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

Finally, the researcher concluded that the implementation of portfolio assessment in teaching English writing to the students of SMKN 1 Blangpidie could improve students' abilities in writing recount text; the students' motivation also increased or developed after the implementation of portfolio assessment in

the teaching and learning by giving students' response toward the implementation of portfolio assessment in English language teaching.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was pre experimental design since it aimed to improve the writing skills of grade X 1 accounting students of SMKN 1 Blangpidie through the use of portfolio assessment. The samples of this study were 30 students at SMKN 1 Blangpidie which consists of 7 male and 23 female students.

#### ***Data Analysis***

To analyze the data collected, the researcher employed the quantitative analysis. The data analysis was conducted by organizing the data gained from the pre test and post test. It means that after the researcher collected all the data, he processed it through statistic formula to calculate the mean, variance, standard deviation, normality test, and t-test.

#### ***Students' Writing Products***

After the data was collected, it was analyzed in order to answer two research questions. In assessing the students' writing of recount text, the researcher employed three categories of analytical scoring rubric as suggested in writing assessment and evaluation rubrics grade 6 by Glencoe McGraw-Hill (2000:14). Those are focus/organization, elaboration/support/style, and grammar usage/mechanics. It can be seen in Table 3.4.1. After that all the students' papers were assessed by using SPSS 16.0.

### Students' Ability in Writing Recount Text

To increase the students' ability skill in recount text after the implementation of portfolio assessment was based on the *N-gain*

$$N - gain = \frac{S_{posttest} - S_{pretest}}{S_{maks} - S_{pretest}}$$

In which:

$S_{posttest}$  = Posttest Score

$S_{pretest}$  = Pretest Score

$S_{maks}$  = Maximum Score

score normalization. It meant to avoid a mistake in interpretation of G-gain for each student. The formula used for the *gain* score normalization is as suggested by Hake (1999)

**Criteria N-gain Score**

Limited	Criteria
(N-gain) > 0.7	High
$0.3 \leq (N-gain) \leq 0.7$	Average
(N-gain) < 0.3	Low

### Description of Pre-Test and Post-test Result

To know the students' writing ability by the using of the portfolio assessment, the researcher asked the students to write a recount text with the title "Unforgettable Holiday". The pre-test was given to know students' ability before the giving of treatment in the teaching and learning process. The result of the students' pre-test showed that most of them made mistakes in writing the recount text, which consisted of mistyping, using present participle, capitalization and translating from Indonesian.

Furthermore, during the pre-test activities, the students were active in writing the recount text by questioning the researcher about how to change the word into the past participle, start writing and correlate the ideas with the other sentences. Furthermore, the scores presented here were the results of pre-test and post-test in the experimental class with pre-experimental design through the of portfolio assessment in writing, in this case writing recount text. The first result is the pre-test which was conducted at the beginning of the research before the treatment was given. The second result is the post-test which was given after the treatment.

**Table The Result of Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Students at SMKN 1 Blangpidie 2017**

No	Gender	Result		N-Gain	Interpretation
		Pre T	Post T		
1	F	60	87	0.68	Average
2	M	50	78	0.56	Average
3	F	75	88	0.52	Average
4	F	70	90	0.67	Average
5	F	50	80	0.60	Average
6	F	60	87	0.68	Average
7	F	55	94	0.87	High
8	F	60	80	0.50	Average
9	M	50	88	0.76	High
10	F	60	90	0.75	High
11	F	55	70	0.33	Average
12	F	50	80	0.60	Average
13	M	45	65	0.36	Average

14	F	76	87	0.46	Average
15	M	50	75	0.50	Average
16	F	60	87	0.68	Average
17	F	60	85	0.63	Average
18	F	66	91	0.74	High
19	F	54	86	0.70	Average
20	F	55	78	0.51	Average
21	F	67	87	0.61	Average
22	F	65	90	0.71	High
23	M	35	65	0.46	Average
24	M	56	75	0.43	Average
25	F	58	78	0.48	Average
26	F	56	85	0.66	Average
27	F	65	80	0.43	Average
28	F	55	75	0.44	Average
29	M	55	75	0.44	Average
30	F	70	90	0.67	Average
<b>Average</b>		<b>58.10</b>	<b>82.20</b>	<b>0.58</b>	Average

**Paired Sample T-test**

Paired *t*-test was used to analyze the significance level of both pre-test and post-test; it was also used to describe the improvement in one group with the same variable. The analysis of paired t-test was carried out by using SPSS 16.

Table 4.1 shows the result of paired t-test sample. It compares the average score between the pre-test and the post-test. After the students had a lesson of recount text, the researcher concluded that he analyzed by means of descriptive statistics to both variables as shown in the table below.

**Table Paired Samples Statistics**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pre test	58.100	30	8.82	1.61
Post test	82.200	30	7.64	1.39

From the table above, it can be seen that the mean score of post-test is higher than pre-test score, which means there is an improvement of the students' writing of recount text after

the implementation of portfolio assessment in English language teaching with the scientific approach method.

**Table Paired Samples Correlations**

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Pre test and Post test	30	0.67	0.00

The correlation shows that 0.67 probabilities 0.00 were interpreted in the correlation between the improvements of the students' writing ability with the using of portfolio assessment in writing recount text

increased after the treatment was given in the teaching learning process and the students' skill improved step by step during the teaching and learning process.

**Table Paired Samples T-Test from Pre-test and Post-test**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest – Posttest	-2.410E1	6.71	1.22	-26.61	-21.59	-19.66	29	0.000

Based on the table above we can see that t-score was 19.665 with 29 levels showing the significance 0.000. If the score included to (sig 0.000 < 0.05), it means that Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. Hence, the researcher concluded that the implementation of portfolio assessment in the teaching of writing of recount text increased.

**RESEARCH FINDING**

After the research was conducted by improving students' ability in writing English teaching by using portfolio assessment at SMKN 1 Blangpidie, the effort of providing writing tasks to practice writing in the classroom and assessing them by using portfolio assessment successfully improved the students' writing skills. Portfolio assessment can improve students' ability in writing English in the learning process. It made the students practice writing more in the classroom. They also had opportunities to revise their writing. It challenged the students to correct the errors. Gallagher (2001) said that reflection is a major component of portfolio as it helps students to learn from experience and practice error. He said through the reflection process students are able to identify their error in writing skills. Moreover, they could review their

writing over time so they could see their progress in writing and have better understanding. The using of portfolio assessment gave positive results toward the students' attitudes. It could be proven by the result that the students became more interested and motivated in writing. It also aroused their self-confidence in writing. Moreover, the reflection activities in portfolio assessment could show the students' achievement progress.

The discussion in this study is concerned with the students' ability in writing after the giving of treatment by using portfolio assessment in teaching and learning. Based on the analysis of the students' ability, it was found that after getting the treatment, the students' ability in writing recount text improved, although there were some mistakes that the students made in producing grammar or elaborating their ideas. Furthermore, after the treatment, some findings were found related to the using portfolio assessment in teaching writing of recount text. From the hypothesis, it is known that there is an improvement and significant difference of the students' ability in writing recount text after the treatment (p<0.05, p=0.000). It means that the hypothesis which was proposed was accepted. In other words, the using of

portfolio assessment in teaching writing can be used to increase students' ability in writing, in this case writing recount text. The improvement can be seen from the mean of the pre-test and post-test scores. The mean of the pre-test score is 58.10 and the mean of the post-test score is 82.20. The gain score of pre-test and post-test is 0.58. Thus, the using of portfolio assessment can help the students increase their ability in writing recount text.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research on the improving students' ability in writing English teaching by using portfolio assessment in SMKN 1 Blangpidie, the researcher concluded some points. First, students can improve their ability in ability in writing and they were interested to learn writing recount text by means of portfolio assessment because it could improve their writing step by step. Second, Portfolio assessment could improve the students' motivation in teaching and learning because the teacher corrected their mistake directly so that they were glad. Last, Motivation is very important in achieving the goal; the researcher found that the students were motivated in their study while the portfolio assessments were applied in teaching English writing.

## SUGGESTION

Here are some suggestion that are constructed for English teacher concerning with the improvement of students' English ability in writing, especially in writing recount text. First, when the teacher using portfolio assessment in the teaching and learning process, the teacher pays more attention to students' writing process inside or outside class. Second, when the teacher using portfolio assessment in the teaching and learning process, the teacher pays more attention to students' writing process inside or outside class and motivated them in

learning English, such as immediate correction of students' mistakes and more attention given during the writing process. Last, the teacher not only teaches English but he/she also has to motivate students in the learning process because students' motivation is very important in reaching the goal or target.

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