

**IMPROVING THE WRITING ABILITY OF GRADE VIII STUDENTS
AT SMP N 2 GAMPING THROUGH PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT**

E-JOURNAL



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APPROVAL

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Improving the Writing Ability of Grade VIII Students at SMP N 2 Gamping Through Portfolio Assessment

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Abstract: This research was aimed at improving the writing ability of grade VIII students at SMP N 2 Gamping using Portfolio assessment. This research was action research consisting of two cycles. The steps of the research were reconnaissance, planning, action and observation, and reflection. The subjects of the research were 32 students of class VIII F of SMP N 2 Gamping. The first cycle consisted of three meetings and the second cycle consisted of two meetings. The researcher worked together with the teacher, the students and the collaborator to gain the data. The data were in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. The data were gained from observation, interview and students' scores. The data were in the form of field notes, interview transcript, photographs and students' scores. The data validity was completed by applying democratic, outcome, process, dialogic and catalytic validity. The data reliability was gained from time triangulation and research triangulation. The results of the research show that the use of portfolio assessment improved the students' writing ability. The portfolio assessment was implemented through the writing steps. In each step, the students were asked to write and store their works in the portfolio so that it helped them collect and track their writing progress. Then, their works were given the feedbacks and comments so that they could revise them and write better so that in the end their writing ability was improved. Based on the data, the students made significant improvements in writing. Through portfolio assessment, the students could develop their motivation and self-awareness in writing. The research findings also show that the students' mean score in writing improved from 62.5 to 68.

Key Words: Students' Writing, Portfolio Assessment.

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa kelas VIII SMP N 2 Gamping dengan menggunakan Portfolio assessment. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian tindakan kelas yang terdiri dari dua siklus. Tahapan penelitian ini adalah *reconnaissance, planning, action and observation, and reflection*. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 32 siswa kelas VIII F SMP N 2 Gamping. Siklus pertama terdiri dari tiga pertemuan dan siklus kedua terdiri dari dua pertemuan. Peneliti bekerja sama dengan guru, siswa, dan kolaborator untuk memperoleh data. Data penelitian ini dalam bentuk data kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara dan nilai siswa. Data dalam bentuk

field notes, interview transcript, photographs and students' scores. Validitas data dilakukan dengan menerapkan validitas *democratic, outcome, process, dialogic* dan *catalytic*. Reliabilitas data diperoleh melalui *time triangulation and research triangulation*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan portfolio assessment meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa. Portfolio assessment diterapkan melalui tahapan menulis. Pada setiap tahap, siswa diminta menulis dan mengumpulkan tugas mereka dalam bentuk portopolio sehingga membantu mereka menemukan dan melacak kemajuan menulis mereka. Kemudian, pekerjaan mereka diberi masukan dan komentar sehingga mereka dapat merevisi dan menulisnya dengan lebih sehingga akhirnya kemampuan menulis mereka meningkat. Berdasarkan data, siswa membuat suatu kemajuan yang sangat signifikan dalam menulis mereka. Melalui portfolio assessment, siswa dapat mengembangkan motivasi dan kesadaran mereka dalam menulis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata siswa dalam menulis meningkat dari 62.5 menjadi 68.

Kata kunci: Kemampuan menulis, portfolio assessment.

Introduction

The English skills are reading, listening, speaking and writing. Among the four skills, writing tends to be more difficult to learn since there are many important aspects such as grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and organization to be mastered in order to produce good writing. Moreover, it becomes more difficult since it is not our first language which of course has different language structures.

Moreover, writing becomes an important skill for students to master since it is also a means of communication as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education *No.23 Tahun 2006* that the aim of writing in the curriculum is to enable students to express meanings in transactional and interpersonal language in daily contexts. Moreover, they are also expected to be able to express meanings in short functional texts and monologues of many kinds of texts like recount, descriptive, narrative, exposition, procedures, news items, reports, explanation, and discussion texts. By having sufficient writing skills, students are expected to express their thought in the written form so that they can share information, express feelings and opinions in the written form and give information to others. Another reason why learning writing is important is that there will be a great demand for writing in their near future. Thus, having sufficient writing skills will embrace the communication and make it more viable.

Based on the observation and interview the researcher conducted the students at SMP N 2 Gamping Class VIII also experienced the problems. The first problem came from the students when the teacher asked them to write something, most of the students found themselves to have no idea to write and some of them just wasted their time by talking to each other. The second problem resulted from the teaching-learning materials and techniques. The way teacher taught writing was boring as the students said that she mostly used a worksheet as the main material. By having a worksheet as the main material, the students did not get

enough feedbacks from the teacher due to the similar kinds of activities in the worksheet. In regard to these problems, conducting a research in order to improve the students' writing ability is highly needed. Thus, in this research, the researcher proposes portfolio assessment as a way of improving their performance as it offers advantages for the students.

In general, portfolio assessment is defined as intentionally collecting works of people in that shows their progress, achievements and efforts. Weigle (2002: 198) says that, in terms of assessing writing, it is defined as collecting students' works in order to monitor their works, efforts, progress over a period of time. Moreover, Stiggins (1994) describes portfolio as a collection of student work that demonstrates achievement or improvement. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (1996) also state that portfolio is evidences of someone learning's journey overtime which is collected and gathered to show his/her writing development over stages and the writers' self-reflection progress as a writer. In order to help the students, improve their writing, the portfolio offers some advantages as stated by Weigle (2002). Portfolio provides the teacher with the collection of the students' work which also enables him to assess a range of performances. Another strength and character of portfolio is delayed evaluation. Delaying the evaluation gives the students chances to revise, motivation to revise and to take responsibility of their performance which also makes them feel better with the learning environment. It also enables the administrator to check whether the learner had exhibited certain criteria or not. Moreover, portfolio is usually designed to have some kinds of reflective writing of the portfolio as a whole or a self-assessment that discuss the writing product and plan for upcoming revision. As it is conducted over-time, it supports the stake holder with a tool for measuring learner's development.

This study is also relevant with the previous study conducted by Sharifi and Hassakah (2001) and Widyaningrum (2008). From the results of the two studies, the portfolio assessment is able to help the students improve their writing.

Research Method

This research was action research that followed the design proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (2010). This research consists of planning, action, observation and reflection. This research involved 32 students of VIII F at SMP N 2 Gamping. It was conducted on 7 until 17 September 2015.

The research instruments were in the form of observation checklist, interview guidelines, writing rubric and questionnaire. The data of the research were in the form of field notes, interview transcript and students' writing score. The data were collected through observation, interview and test. The observation was conducted during the implementation of the actions by observing the condition and the teaching learning process. The interview was conducted to collect the collaborator and the students' opinions, comments and ideas for the research. The writing test was to gain the students' writing score before and after the implementation of the portfolio assessment.

The data of this research were qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data consisted of field notes and interview transcript and the quantitative data were in the form of the students' writing score. The qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were analyzed using t-test to compare pre-test and post-test score. The data validity in this research involved the validity suggested by Anderson in Burns (1999:161-162) democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity, dialogic validity and catalytic validity. In order to get the data' trustworthiness, time triangulation and researcher triangulation were applied.

Findings and Discussion

The results of the research show that applying portfolio assessment in teaching writing significantly improved the students' writing ability. The use of portfolio assessment also influenced the students' behavior toward the teaching and learning of English. Before the actions were implemented, the students had difficulties in generating ideas, organizing text, using language feature, vocabulary and mechanics. In order to solve the problems, the researcher and the collaborator made plans and agreed to apply portfolio assessment to improve the students' writing ability through five writing stages proposed by Harmer (2004:4) namely planning, drafting, editing and final version.

In the first cycle, the portfolio assessment was proven to slightly improve the students' writing ability. This conclusion was derived from the interview, the observation conducted during the implementation of the action, and the students' works. From the interview, the students said that the portfolio had helped them in writing so that they made some improvements in their writing although they still made some mistakes in grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and text organization. In addition, based on the observation, the students were more likely to engage to the teaching-learning process as there were more students who paid attention to the teaching-learning and asked question during the teaching learning. From their works in the first meeting to the third meeting, the students made some improvements. As the portfolio enabled them to collect and revise their work with the help of feedback given directly to their work, they were able to make the improvements as what they also said in the interview and the self-reflection. Although the improvement and changes had been made, some students' writing score still did not meet the minimal requirement. Therefore, the researcher and the collaborator decided to conduct Cycle 2.

In the second cycle, the plans and the actions still focused on the students' writing ability through the use of portfolio assessment. The portfolio assessment was also implemented through the stages of writing. After the actions were implemented, the problems raised and the problems during the second cycle were all dismissed. Through the use of portfolio, the students were able to collect their work which gave them access to learn and recall their work. The students also could track their learning progress and current abilities from it and self-reflection. In addition, from the interview, the students felt that the comments and feedbacks given to their work in the portfolio helped them improve their writings.

The chance of revision also increased their motivation in writing. They also became more interested in the teaching-learning process as they became brave to write their sentences and ask question if they need it. From their work, the students made significant improvements in terms of generating ideas, language feature, vocabulary, text organization and punctuation. Their writing improvements also reflected in the following table.

Table: **Student's Mean Value of Writing in Pre-test, Cycle 1, Cycle 2**

Score	Pretest	After Cycle 1	After Cycle 2
Mean Score	62.50	66.00	68.00
SD	4.71	3.95	3.38

The table shows that students' writing improved over time from the pre-test to the post test. The mean value represents the students' writing skill including generating idea, text organization, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and development. The mean value increased from 62.50 in the pre-test to 66.00 in the post-test Cycle 1 and reached the highest on the post-test Cycle 2 which is 68.00. Besides, the highest and the lowest score also increased. In other words, it could be said that the use of portfolio brought significance improvements on the students' writing skill. Finally, it can be said that the use of portfolio assessment improved the students' writing skill.

Conclusions

After implementing portfolio assessment, the students were able to make significant improvements. The portfolio assessment implemented through the writing steps helped the students collect and track their progress, increase their motivation through revision and improve their writing skills through the feedbacks and comments given to their work thus in the end, their writing ability improved. The students also became more engaged in the teaching-learning process. In addition, from the comparison of the students' mean score, the score improved from 62.5 to 68. In conclusion, the use of portfolio assessment successfully improved the students' writing ability as well as the teaching-learning process.

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