

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROJECT-BASED ASSESSMENT IN IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS'

Dhea Maharani Luthfiatul Hidayah¹, Taufiqulloh², Fajar Prihatini³

¹²³*Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Indonesia Mdhea015@gmail.com*

Abstract

This study examines how Project-Based Assessment (PBA) affects students' writing skills, particularly in recount texts. Writing is one of the hardest things for junior high school students to do because it's hard to come up with ideas, organize paragraphs, and use the right grammar and vocabulary. Traditional ways of testing often focus on the final product instead of the writing process, which makes students less interested and creative. Consequently, Project-Based Assessment was introduced as an alternative methodology that fosters active learning, collaboration, and genuine evaluation. This study utilized a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, focusing on two ninth-grade classes at SMP Negeri 3 Brebes. The experimental group was instructed through PBA, whereas the control group underwent traditional assessment. We gave students a pre-test and a post-test to see how well they could write. This study used a normality test, a homogeneity test, a paired-samples t-test, and an independent-samples t-test to analyze the data. The results showed that the experimental group did much better than the control group. The findings demonstrate that Project-Based Assessment enhances students' writing skills regarding content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

Keywords: Project-Based Assessment; Writing Skills; Recount Text; Quasi- Experimental; EFL;

1 INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex skills in acquiring English as a foreign language (EFL). Writing differs from receptive skills like listening and reading because it requires students to generate ideas, organize them logically, and use appropriate grammar and vocabulary to express them. Hyland (2003) states that writing is not just about putting words together; it is also a process of creating meaning that includes planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Because of this complexity, writing is particularly challenging for junior high school students who are still learning to speak and think more clearly. In junior high schools in Indonesia, students often struggle with writing assignments. Some common problems include a lack of vocabulary, incorrect grammar, a lack of organization of ideas, and a lack of coherence between sentences and paragraphs. Oshima and Hogue (2006) state that good writing should be well-organized, with a well-developed introduction, body paragraphs, and a coherent conclusion. However, many students struggle to organize their thoughts

logically, especially when writing longer pieces. These problems often lead to a lack of motivation to write in English and a lack of success.

Recount text is one of the writing types taught in ninth grade. Recount texts tell stories about events that happened in the past in the correct order. Students need to use the past tense and appropriate time connectors. Students need to understand the general structure of a recount text—orientation, sequence of events, and reorientation—to write a well-organized text. They also need to add sufficient detail to their experiences. However, many students write short, poorly thought-out texts because they lack ideas and don't care about writing. This suggests that the problem lies not only in students' linguistic deficiencies but also in the teaching and evaluation methodology of writing. In writing classes, traditional assessment methods typically focus on the final product rather than the writing process. Students are often tested with written tests that focus heavily on grammar and mechanics. While these tests can evaluate specific elements of writing, they often fail to assess students' ability to develop ideas effectively or demonstrate true communication skills. Brown (2004) states that good assessment should align with learning objectives and provide students with opportunities to demonstrate what they can do in real-life situations. Therefore, we need a different approach to assessment that focuses on both process and product.

Project-Based Assessment (PBA) can help address this issue. PBA is a way to test students' knowledge and skills by having them work on meaningful projects that demonstrate what they have learned. PBA differs from traditional assessment methods because it focuses on authentic tasks, collaboration, reflection, and ongoing evaluation. Students can work on lengthy writing projects that involve planning, drafting, revising, and demonstrating their work. This method aligns with constructivist learning theory, particularly the ideas of Lev Vygotsky (1978), who argues that learning occurs through social interaction and the active construction of knowledge. Students can improve their writing skills within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by working on projects with others and getting support from their teachers.

Furthermore, PBA follows the principles of real-life assessment, testing students' skills in situations similar to those they will encounter in real life. Grant Wiggins (1998) stated that authentic assessment requires students to use what they know and can do in meaningful ways, not just memorize facts. In writing instruction, this means encouraging students to write texts that have a clear purpose and audience. This makes them more interested and motivated to write. Project-Based Learning (PBL) offers a more complete and comprehensive assessment of students' writing skills by embedding assessment in meaningful project activities. While numerous studies have examined project-based learning (PBL), few have examined Project-Based Assessment (PBA) as a method for assessing writing, especially in middle and high schools. Much of this prior research has emphasized instructional strategies rather than assessment models. This suggests a lack of research on how assessment design—when project-based—can influence students' writing. Therefore, we need global evidence.

Previous studies have demonstrated positive impacts of project-based assessment on students' writing skills. Research indicates that project-based assessment increases student engagement, motivation, and critical thinking skills. However, many of these studies focus primarily on instructional strategies rather than specifically examining assessment design. There remains a research gap regarding how Project-Based Assessment, as an assessment model, influences students' writing outcomes. Since assessment strongly affects students' learning behaviors, investigating PBA is essential to understand its role in improving writing competence.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study employed quantitative research methodology, specifically a quasi-experimental design featuring a non-equivalent control group. Quantitative research is suitable for investigating relationships between variables and testing hypotheses through numerical data and statistical methods. John W. Creswell (2014) stated that quantitative research allows researchers to objectively measure variables and use statistical methods to analyze data to assess the effectiveness of a treatment. This study aimed to examine the impact of Project-Based Assessment (PBA) on students' writing skills; therefore, a quantitative design was deemed appropriate for generating empirical evidence. The researchers chose a quasi-experimental method because participants were not randomly assigned to groups. Donald T. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley (1963) stated that quasi-experimental designs are often used in schools where random assignment is not possible for moral and administrative reasons. The researchers used two existing subjects at SMP Negeri 3 Brebes for this study. Grade IX-A was the experimental group with 34 students, while Grade IX-B was the control group with 34 students. This resulted in a total of 68 ninth-grade students.

Before the treatment, both groups took a pre-test to assess their writing skills. The purpose of the pre-test was to ensure that both groups had approximately the same level of writing skills before the intervention. In quasi-experimental research, pre-testing is necessary to determine whether the groups are equal at the beginning (Creswell, 2014). Students were asked to write a recount text about something that happened to them. The recount book was chosen because it is part of the ninth-grade curriculum and involves telling stories about events that happened in the past in a sequential manner. The experimental group received instruction through Project-Based Assessment (PBA) during the therapy phase. PBA is based on constructivist learning theory, specifically the concepts of Lev Vygotsky (1978), who states that people learn best when they collaborate and engage with others. Students actively construct knowledge by completing relevant tasks through project-based work. In this study, students collaborated on a structured writing project consisting of several stages: planning, drafting, peer review, rewriting, and final presentation. This method aligns with Grant Wiggins' (1998) notion of authentic assessment, which states that tests should be based on real-world tasks and allow students to demonstrate what they can do in context.

The writing process approach is further supported by project-based assessment. Sara Cushing Weigle (2002) argues that good writing training should include multiple drafts and ongoing feedback, not just a single final product. Project-Based Assessment (PBA) allows students to improve their writing over time by incorporating peer critique and revision stages. The control group, on the other hand, was taught using traditional assessment methods that focused on individual writing assignments without structured project stages or a group revision process. Both groups took a test after the therapy

period. The post-therapy test asked students to write about their own experiences in approximately two paragraphs. The post-therapy test was intended to assess how much students' writing had improved after the intervention. The difference between pre-test and post-test results indicates whether Project-Based Assessment had a significant impact on students' writing performance. This study used an analytical scoring rubric based on Jacobs et al. (1981) to assess students' writing. The rubric considers five aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, language usage, and mechanics. Analytical scoring is considered more accurate and useful than holistic scoring because it provides precise assessments for each section of the work. Weigle (2002) stated that analytical rubrics allow teachers to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in student writing, making them valuable for study.

This study used IBM SPSS software to analyze the collected data. First, we used descriptive statistics to find the mean and standard deviation for both groups. Normality analysis provides an overview of how well students performed overall and how their scores were distributed. Next, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted to ensure that the statistical assumptions for parametric tests were met. The normality test checks whether the data are normally distributed, while the homogeneity test checks whether the variances between groups are equal. Assumptions that there is a statistically significant difference between the groups. The study sought to provide valid and trustworthy information concerning the efficacy of Project-Based Assessment in enhancing students' writing skills, specifically in recount texts at the junior high school level, through systematic methodologies.

3 RESULTS

The findings of this study revealed that students in the experimental group experienced significant improvement after receiving Project-Based Assessment (PBA). Statistical analysis showed that the mean post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores, indicating positive developments in students' writing skills. This improvement suggests that the structured and collaborative nature of PBA significantly contributed to improving students' abilities in writing recount texts.

3.1 Homogeneity Test

Table 3.1. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
NILAI	Based on Mean	0,697	1	66	0,407
	Based on Median	0,680	1	66	0,412
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0,680	1	62,625	0,413
	Based on trimmed mean	0,700	1	66	0,406

The homogeneity test was used to see if the differences in students' pre-test writing scores between the experimental and control groups were the same. This test is important in quasi-experimental research to make sure that both groups had similar skills before the treatment was given. Levene's Test for Equality of Variance was used to do the homogeneity test for variance. The analysis results indicate that the

significance value (Sig.) derived from Levene's Test exceeds 0.05. This result shows that the variance of pre-test scores is not significantly different between the experimental and control groups.

So, we can say that the data are all the same. This indicates that both groups possessed similar writing skills at the study's inception. As a result, the differences in post-test scores can be linked to the treatment and not to differences in initial skill.

3.2 Normality Test

Table 3.2. Test of Normality

Tests of Normality							
class		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
hasil belajar	pretest kontrol(konvensional)	0,105	34	.200*	0,970	34	0,454
	posttest kontrol(konvensional)	0,161	34	0,026	0,946	34	0,091
	pretest eksperimen(PBA)	0,084	34	.200*	0,965	34	0,347
	posttest eksperimen(PBA)	0,086	34	.200*	0,956	34	0,186
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.							
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction							

A normality test was done to find out if the way students' writing scores were spread out was normal. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to check if the data was normal because there were fewer than 50 people in each group. The normality test results show that the pre-test and post-test scores for both the experimental and control groups have significance values that are higher than 0.05. This indicates that the data's distribution is normal. The researcher can move forward with parametric statistical tests, such as the Paired Samples T-Test and the Independent Samples T-Test, to test the research hypothesis because the assumption of normality is met.

3.3 Paired Samples T-Test

Table 3.3. Paired Samples T-Test

Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Interval of the				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	PRETEST - POSTTEST	-15,147	2,091	0,359	-15,877	-14,418	-42,242	33	<,001	<,001

The Paired Samples T-Test was utilized to examine the disparity between pre-test and post-test scores within the identical group. The objective of this test was to determine if students' writing skills had markedly enhanced subsequent to the intervention. The Paired Samples T-Test results for the experimental group indicated a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of less than 0.05. This means that there was a statistically significant difference between the writing scores of students before and after Project- Based Assessment was put into place

The rise in average scores from the pre-test to the post-test shows that students got better at writing after doing project-based activities. Students showed that they were better at coming up with ideas, writing recount texts, and using the right language features. So, we can say that Project-Based Assessment had a big positive effect on the writing skills of the students in the experimental group.

3.4 Independent Samples T-Test

Table 3.4. Independent Samples T-Test

Independent Samples Test									
		t-test for Equality of Means							
		t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Interval of the	
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
NILAI	Equal variances assumed	-6,774	66	<,001	<,001	-9,059	1,337	-11,729	-6,389
	Equal variances not assumed	-6,774	64,408	<,001	<,001	-9,059	1,337	-11,730	-6,388

An Independent Samples T-Test was performed to evaluate the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. The objective of this test was to determine if there were significant differences in the writing abilities of the two groups after the treatment was applied. The Independent Samples T-Test found a significance value (2-tailed Sig.) of less than 0.05, which means that there was a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The experimental group's average score was higher than the control group's.

The results indicate that students instructed and evaluated through Project-Based Assessment exhibited superior writing performance relative to those taught via traditional assessment methods. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) is dismissed, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is affirmed.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study found that Project-Based Assessment (PBA) had a significant positive impact on students' writing skills, particularly in recount narratives. Statistical results showed that students taught through Project-Based Assessment demonstrated superior improvement in their writing performance compared to students taught through traditional assessment methods. The substantial difference between pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group, along with the increase in the mean post-test score relative to the control group, demonstrated that PBA effectively improved students' writing skills.

The progress seen in the experimental group indicates that Project-Based Assessment provided valuable learning experiences for students that helped them improve their writing skills. Students were actively engaged in the learning process through structured project stages such as brainstorming, drafting, receiving peer feedback, and making changes. They were required to write a final version of their work, but they

were also encouraged to reflect on it and revise it throughout. This process-oriented approach helped students improve in key aspects of writing, such as developing content, organizing it, using terminology correctly, and following grammatical rules.

In contrast, traditional assessment methods tend to focus primarily on final results and do not provide students with many opportunities to revise or collaborate to learn. As a result, students may not fully develop their writing skills due to the lack of the iterative process inherent in good writing instruction. The results of this study suggest that incorporating Project-Based Assessment into writing instruction can foster a more participatory and student-centered educational environment that encourages critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.

Based on these results, English teachers should use Project-Based Assessment as a diverse way to help students develop their writing skills, especially in junior high school. Teachers can help students see writing as a dynamic and important activity, not just a classroom assignment, by providing them with real-world and collaborative activities.

However, this study has certain limitations. It only examined recount texts and had a small sample size. Therefore, it is recommended that future research use a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the results. Furthermore, future research could investigate the effectiveness of Project-Based Assessment in teaching other text genres, including narrative, descriptive, or argumentative texts, and assess its lasting impact on students' writing development. In conclusion, Project Based Assessment is a new and useful way to test students that really helps them improve their writing skills.

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