

## WRITING PORTFOLIO ON STUDENTS' WRITING ENGLISH SKILL: THE EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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**Abstract:** This research aimed to know the students' writing a portfolio before and after being taught and to determine whether using a portfolio significantly affected their writing English skills. The research is a pre-experimental study. The population is the students of the ELT department, and the sample is 27 students who took a writing class. The instrument of this study is a writing rubric. The scores were analyzed using a t-test. The finding shows that the t-test score is 4.540, meaning the t-score is  $\geq 1.729$  ( $4.540 < -1.729$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It can be shown that a writing portfolio can help learners increase their writing English skills.

**Keywords:** *portfolio, writing portfolio, writing skill, writing steps, writing strategy*

### INTRODUCTION

Four aspects must be mastered in learning the English language. Those are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Listening and reading are receptive skills. Teachers and students learn receptive skills in the classroom using many sources such as podcasts, books, articles, stories, magazines, audiobooks, videos, and many more. Receptive skills can be learned consciously or unconsciously, depending on our

environment. However, productive skills such as speaking and writing need practice and exercises that are done intentionally.

Speaking and writing skills are productive skills that can be obtained by having the receptive skill beforehand. Therefore, these productive skills require more effort to be mastered since the students' ability in listening and reading can affect their mastery in speaking and writing skills. Speaking skills can be achieved relatively easily when students live in the native speaker countries and actively engage to communicate with native speakers, or in an environment that urges them to speak English, for example in a school or in a dormitory that requires students to speak English all day long. On the other hand, writing skill is a complex and difficult skill to master since it needs students' awareness in constructing the idea into written form. It needs a method that appropriate in teaching the learning process.

Writing skill is one of the important skill that is useful not only in academic situation but also in daily basis. Mastering writing skill requires many aspects since writing process itself requires the writer's former knowledge as well as their ability to construct his/her ideas into an elaborated and well-structured writing pieces. Writing skill relates to the writer's point of view on how he/she sees the world and what information he/she has read and heard that construct the thinking skill. Gautam (2019) states that writing skill plays an important role in academic activities, it must be a combine of knowledge about the general concept of writing, the approaches, methods and techniques of writing. It also helps the teacher to evaluate their students' writing skill.

In writing their ideas into a paper, students need to do multiple things to create an academic writing stuff. They need to do the steps in an organized patterns so that it can minimize the writer-reader gap and the message can be conveyed well. Based on Zemach and Rumisek (2006), writing has six steps. Those steps are a) finding a topic, b) information, data and ideas gathering and compiling to be stated in sub-topics, c) ordering sub-topics elaborately, d) drafting and writing, e) revising after getting the feedback and f) re-revising and finalizing the paper or the essay. These steps must be done orderly to create a writing text that is well-structured and elaborated with the topic and its sub-topics. Therefore, writing strategies cannot be neglected in learning writing skill and writing skill must be done in a conscious way and apply writing strategies to achieve a good piece of writing.

There are some studies that show the benefit of applying writing strategies for the learners. Theoretically and practically, writing strategies help the learners to improve their writing achievement. Chien (2012) compares low and high-achieving students in the process of writing. The result of the study shows that high-achievers tend to focus on having a plan for their writing. They applied the writing strategy starting by having a plan, generating the texts, revising and editing planning, generating text, and revising and editing their writing by fixing the grammar and spelling as well as the meaning of the text. The high-achievers apply writing strategies by doing the writing steps, from planning to revising, from revising to editing. The use of metacognitive strategy in writing skill can also enhance students to write better. Raofi et al. (2017) states that research also reveals similar result by comparing high achievers with intermediate to low achievers in writing skill. The research shows that high-achievers in writing skill used higher level of writing strategy use compared to intermediate and low achiever students during their writing class. In addition, students with higher writing ability applied more complex strategies such as metacognitive, cognitive, and affective and effort regulation strategies than low-achievers. Cer (2019) states that the use of metacognitive strategy can improve the teaching and learning process in writing skill. In other words, it is necessary to apply metacognitive strategy to help students get better writing skill. Raofi et al. (2017) also state that the student with high proficient writing skill writers used more metacognitive strategies to organize their ideas and revise the content than those who are less proficient.

A writing strategy called PLEASE or the mnemonic of Pick, List, Evaluate, Activate, Supply, and End strategy that is also quite popular in some research. This strategy has six steps that the students can easily remember to apply it. Asri (2022) says that this writing strategy can significantly enhance college students' writing skills. In addition, students with low and high pre-test score can achieve better in writing with by applying this strategy. According to Aminatun et al. (2019), PLEASE strategy is more effective to improve students' writing skill compared to Guided Writing strategy. Furthermore, in this study, students who have high linguistic intelligence can get help from applying the PLEASE strategy.

Another study was conducted to students with special needs done by Milford & Harrison (2010). It shows that the students can write better and coherent with the topic. The positive feedback is also shown when the students can show the habit to write

systematically. PLEASE strategy can also enhance junior high school students as stated by Siringoringo (2017). The pre-test score was 35,46 and the post-test score was 77,4. The study concludes that the PLEASE writing strategy is effective to boost students' writing skill. Nasution (2018) also concludes that PLEASE strategy can improve junior high school students' writing skill better than the conventional one. Liza and Refnaldi (2013) conducted classroom action research that showed the strategy can help junior high school students improve their writing skills. Atmojo (2021) also suggests to apply PLEASE strategy since it is proven that the writing strategy has a connection with the students' self-esteem.

Having compiled the studies of writing strategies that can improve students' writing skill and engagement in writing, writing portfolio can facilitate the students to record their writing by using the strategies that they are familiar with. They can apply any writing strategies step by step and have a record in form of portfolio to see and check their progress. In this research, the writers try to see the effect of applying writing strategy in a form of portfolio. The writing steps are modified to meet the students' need, they are: mind-mapping, outlining, drafting, revising, editing and finalizing. These writing steps are compiled into a writing portfolio that can help students to track their writing progress.

According to Merriam-Webster (2023), portfolio is a selection of a student's exercises (such as papers and tests) that can be written over a period of time and also use for assessing a performance or a progress. Furthermore, the use of portfolio can also be done electrically and using the Internet connection through Website or any other platforms and we can call it as e-portfolio. Jenson and Treuer (2014) states that the importance of e-portfolio that can facilitate learners to document and manage their own learning as they generate the rich information at website. E-portfolio can provide the necessary framework for students if they have a clear understanding of the portfolio's use and purpose. For graduates, an e-portfolio is suggested to equip themselves for lifetime self-directed learning, documenting, critically reflecting on, integrating their learning, and collaborating.

The effectiveness of writing portfolio is supported by some previous researches. According to Romova and Andrew (2011), portfolio can be an effective assessment tool to give the college students feedback and help them understand their writing process. However, Fathi and Rahimi (2022) compared the effectiveness of paper-based portfolio

and e-portfolio. The use of portfolio can enhance the EFL students' writing skill. Furthermore, students who did the task using e-portfolio perform better than the conventional one. Another study was also conducted at vocational high school.

Moreover, students can practice writing by having an assessment. It can be a summative and formative assessment. One of the formative assessments is a portfolio. Do (2023) states that a writing portfolio that is used for formative assessment can make students recognize their grammatical errors, pay more attention to organizing ideas logically, and develop writing habits during the writing process. This research used qualitative research that was conducted by observation and interview of intermediate students. Another researcher used an experimental study. Fathi and Rahimi (2022) focuses on two scopes; those are writing performance and writing anxiety. He concludes that the students in the experimental group who received the treatment to use a writing portfolio showed improvement over the students who did not receive the treatment. Furthermore, the experimental group students got aid to reduce their anxiety during the writing process in L2 using portfolio-based instruction. Based on Fahim and Jalili (2013), portfolio assessment helped the students to point out their strength and weakness. The teacher also got the benefit to adjust the feedback needed by the students. In the writing portfolio applied in this study, the students can get help from the facilitators' and their peers' feedback. The feedbacks that are written in the portfolio can also help them to regulate their writing error.

This study was conducted in a university whose students live in an Islamic boarding house that uses traditional method during the teaching and learning process. The regulations in this institution does not allow the students to use gadgets and the Internet. The limitation aims to protect the students from false information and to protect them from illegal communities that are harmful to society. The regulations in the dormitory affect on how they learn and what information they can get. The teaching and learning process becomes challenging with limited access and facilities, though in some cases this limitation may help the students to avoid dangerous contents. Most students in conventional schools can read books or articles on-line and use some gadgets and their tools to help them writing. Meanwhile, students in this institution can only rely on textbooks or any other written forms and teachers as their knowledge sources. In learning English, one of some strategies that can be used in learning writing using the traditional

method is a portfolio that compiles student’s work of writing. Portfolio can be done using electronic-based media or conventional way. Since computer and the Internet cannot be accessed in this institution, the students can have conventional portfolio using notebooks that are available there.

This research compares students’ skills before and after treatment in one group and uses a writing portfolio as the treatment of the experiment. The portfolio is used as the teaching-learning strategy instead of an assessment, for the assessment used for the essay is a writing rubric. This uses a pre-experimental study to analyze the effect of portfolio writing before and after it has been applied in a class that took writing course for two semesters. In addition, the writing portfolio mentioned in this research is a paper-based portfolio that is hand-written and has limited sources from the Internet. Therefore, in the process of writing, feedback from the peer and the facilitator are necessary to improve their writing quality. Later on, the drafts and the feedback are compiled into one writing portfolio.

## METHOD

The aim of this research was to investigate the effect of portfolio in improving college students’ writing skill. Therefore, quantitative research using a pre-experimental method was applied to answer the research problem “Is portfolio writing effective in enhancing students’ writing skills?”. The one-group pretest-posttest design was applied to the class of ELT students at Universitas Ibrahimy. According to Borg and Gall (2003), the one-group pretest-posttest design can be done in three ways: pre-test, treatment and post-test, as illustrated in Figure 1. Later on, the gap between the pre-test and post-test scores was analyzed to see the effect of portfolios on students’ writing skills.



**Figure 1. Research Design of One-Group Pretest-Posttest**

The population is female college students majoring in English Language Teaching at Universitas Ibrahimy Situbondo. The sample is 27 students in the Writing class.

Therefore, this research has three variables: students’ writing score before treatment, portfolio writing treatment, and students’ writing score after treatment.

Based on Schreiber and Asner-Self (2011), variables in the pre-experimental research can be illustrated in Table 1 based on these research variables.

**Table 1. The Variable of Pre-Experimental Research**

| O1                                       | X                    | O2                                      |
|--|----------------------|---|
| Before portfolio treatment               | Treatment            | After portfolio treatment               |
| Control variable                         | Independent variable | Dependent variable                      |
| Students’ writing score before treatment | Portfolio            | Students’ writing score after treatment |

The O1 represents the students’ writing skill before they apply portfolio to help them write. The scores before applying the treatment are gathered from the previous semester when the students write an essay using conventional method. The X represents the treatment in form of portfolio in the following semester, thus the treatment was implemented in one semester. The latter, O2, represents the effect of the portfolio on the students’ writing skills, followed by the post-test scores.

The data from this study is gathered from students’ writing score. The pre-test scores of this study were gathered using students’ final writing essay from the previous semester and were analyzed using writing rubric. The post-test scores were gathered from the students’ final writing scores after the treatment in the following semester. To make the data valid and reliable, pre-test and post-test scores were consistently gathered using the same writing rubric and person to assess the essay. The writing rubric used is from Mesa Community College that was adapted to meet the students’ need. The students score from low to high can be represented well when the writing rubric can elicit the real competency of each student. Table 2 is the attachment of the rubric.

Since this research is a pre-experimental that belongs to quantitative research, the researchers has to state the hypothesis. There are five steps to construct research hypothesis. The five steps can be illustrated in Figure 2.

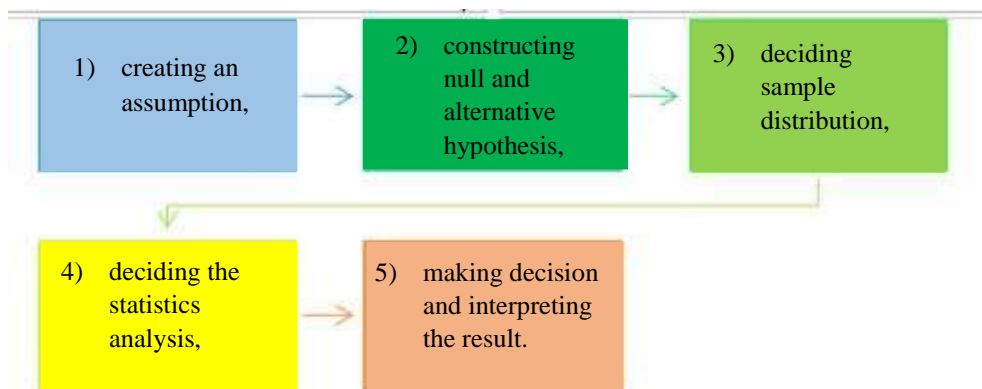
First, this research assumes that portfolio writing has a significant effect on students’ writing skill. Thus, the researcher tries to find out whether portfolio writing gives positive or negative effect on students’ writing skill.

Second, the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis must be stated earlier at this research. Later on, the hypothesis can be accepted or rejected based on the analysis using SPSS. The hypothesis are stated in Table 3.

**Table 2. Writing Rubric Adapted from Mesa Community College ([www.mesacc.edu](http://www.mesacc.edu))**

| Writing Rubric                       |   |  |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Point value                          | 4   | 3  | 2   | 1   |
| <b>Topic paragraph</b>               | Interesting, original topic paragraph. Has a specific controlling idea. Clear purpose.  | Clearly stated topic paragraph presents one main idea.   | The topic paragraph's purpose is unclear. It needs a more specific controlling idea.  | Missing, invalid, or inappropriate topic paragraph; main idea is missing. There is no controlling idea.           |
| <b>Supporting paragraphs</b>         | Paragraph has enough supporting sentences and detail sentences (examples) that relate to the topic sentence.                            | Paragraph doesn't have enough supporting sentences and detail sentences (examples) that relate to the topic sentence.  | There are supporting sentences and detail sentences (examples) that relate to the topic sentence, but a few are vague/missing/unrelated | Insufficient, vague, or undeveloped examples.   |
| <b>Concluding paragraph</b>          | Complete and interesting conclusion builds onto the topic sentence/ restates the idea. It gives a suggestion, some advice/ opinion etc. | A good conclusion but not creative, repeats same pattern of topic sentence. Needs to be more interesting and better paraphrased.   | The concluding sentence is too vague.   | There is no logical concluding sentence.  |
| <b>Clarity, Coherence and Style</b>  | Clear meaning. Correct grammar. Transitions make a good "flow". Precise word choice. Logical progression of supporting examples         | Some good vocabulary, but there are a few repetition in vocabulary or sentence structure. Some grammar problems. You need more transitions. Details are arranged in a logical progression. | Lots of repetition in vocabulary or sentence structure. Some grammar problems. Weak/no transitions. Acceptable arrangement of examples. | Unrelated details; no transitions. Unclear or incomplete sentences. Poor word choice. No pattern of organization. |
| <b>Mechanics and Form</b>            | Consistent standard English usage. Used standard paragraph form. There are no errors in: Spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation   | A few errors, but none major in usage, spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation. (1-2)   | Some errors in usage, spelling, capitalization , and/or punctuation (3-4)   | Distracting errors in usage, spelling, and/or punctuation   |
| <b>Score</b>                         |   |  |   |   |
| <b>Total score</b>                   |   |  |   |   |
| <b>Final score (Total score x 4)</b> |   |  |   |   |





**Figure 2. The Steps of Pre-Experimental Research**

The alternative hypothesis is made based on the theory of writing steps and previous studies that believe portfolio writing can enhance students’ writing skill. Furthermore, this can lead the hypothesis of this study to be analyzed using one-tailed analysis.

Third, this pre-experimental research uses one class or one group as experimental and control. Thus, sampling distribution analysis is not necessary to see the sample homogeneity and normality. Fourth, this educational research uses 5% significance level. The t-test analysis is used in this research based on the sample size that is below 30 samples with t-score 1.729. To state whether the hypothesis is accepted or rejected, the statements can be written as follow:  $H_0$  is accepted if  $-1.729 \leq t\text{-score} \leq 1.729$ ;  $H_0$  is rejected if  $t\text{-score} \geq 1.729$  or  $t\text{-score} < -1.729$ .

**Table 3. The Hypothesis of the Research**

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Null Hypothesis (H0)        | Portfolio writing has no effect on students’ writing skill.       |
| Alternative Hypothesis (H1) | Portfolio writing has positive effect on students’ writing skill. |
| Alternative Hypothesis (H2) | Portfolio writing has negative effect on students’ writing skill. |

The analysis is done using SPSS by inputting students’ scores before the treatment and students’ score after the treatment at writing class. The last step, the fifth, is to decide the result of this research that will be explained in detail in finding and discussion section.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

The findings of this experimental study try to answer the question, “Is a writing portfolio effective in enhancing students’ writing skills?” by comparing students’ pre-test and post-test scores in a writing class. A t-test was done using SPSS software, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. Students’ Pre-test and Post-test on Writing Skill**

| Group Statistics |           |    |       |                |                 |
|------------------|-----------|----|-------|----------------|-----------------|
|                  | Test      | N  | Mean  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Result           | Pre-test  | 27 | 89.67 | 3.711          | .714            |
|                  | Post-test | 27 | 93.41 | 2.135          | .411            |

From the result above, the average score of students’ pre-test writing skills is 89.67, and the post-test writing skill is 93.41, with the 27 students as the sample. From the average score, we can conclude that the student’s writing skills are improving after applying portfolio writing. However, to see a writing portfolio’s effectiveness, we can look at Table 5.

**Table 5. The Effectiveness of Writing Portfolio**

| Independent Samples Test |                             |   |      |                              |        |                 |                 |                       |   |        |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--------|
|                          |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |                 |                 |                       |   |        |
|                          | Result                      | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df     | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |        |
|                          |                             |   |      |                              |        |                 |                 |                       | Lower                                     | Upper  |
|                          | Equal variances assumed     | 12.356                                  | .001 | 4.540                        | 52     | .000            | 3.741           | .824                  | -5.394                                    | -2.087 |
|                          | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | 4.540                        | 41.515 | .000            | 3.741           | .824                  | -5.404                                    | -2.077 |

To decide whether the t-test score can reject the null hypothesis, we need to set the limit from these two statements:  $H_0$  is accepted if  $-1.729 \leq t\text{-score} \leq 1.729$ ;  $H_0$  is rejected if  $t\text{-score} \geq 1.729$  or  $t\text{-score} < -1.729$ .

The t-test score is 4.540 and it means that the  $t\text{-score} \geq 1.729$  ( $4.540 \geq 1.729$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis is accepted, and for the result, the null hypothesis is rejected. The t-score is 4.540 and the value is positive, thus, the accepted hypothesis is the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ). In other words, it can be inferred that portfolio writing has significant and positive effect on students’ writing skill.

## Discussion

In this study, the result shows that writing using portfolio can significantly boost students’ achievement in writing skill, specifically in undergraduate students who stay in Islamic dormitory that have limited access to the internet and any electronic devices that might be helpful to enhance their studying performance. The average score increase from

the pre-test to post-test, from 89.67 to 93.41. The t-score is 4.540 and the value is positive, therefore there is a significant improvement in students' writing skill. The students' also showed enthusiasm during the treatment. They did not easily give up to revise and get feedback from their peers and the facilitator. Among 27 students who participated in this study, none of them think that writing portfolio is not helpful.

Jenson and Treuer (2014) state that e-portfolios, as well as conventional portfolios, can facilitate learners to store the writing files as well as the feedback and to keep the writing materials as they generate the rich information on websites, and any other sources such as books, articles or interviews. A portfolio can help the students see their progress and look at what they have written in the draft or outlines. It can also be a guide so that they can write the sub-topics that relate to and are connected to the main topic.

A similar study was conducted by Efendi (2017). His study was a pre-experimental study, and the population was vocational school students who were taught English writing skills. The result shows that the portfolio can help students improve their writing skills. Listiana et al. (2021) also conclude that portfolio assessment can improve students' writing skills, though the students observed have different writing proficiency levels. Moreover, Handayani et al. (2022) say that portfolio assessment can significantly improve students' writing skills and responses. Barrot (2016) also concludes that e-portfolios using Facebook, a social media platform, positively affect ESL learners' writing process. From the previous studies above, one can conclude that a portfolio can significantly assist learners to improve and engage in writing practices using conventional and e-portfolios.

In line with previous research, the students get much help from the writing process. Each student can improve their writing quality, though they have different levels of English proficiency. The file that is recorded and managed well in a portfolio helps them to plot their idea and to focus on the topic and sub-topics of the essay. The writing steps stored in the portfolio help them to write elaborately since they can re-check their writing drafts anytime. The ability to check their mind-mapping, outline, and drafts directly just by re-checking their portfolio can help them save time to complete the writing steps as guided by the facilitator. The students and the facilitator can also give peer feedback by checking the writing process as recorded in the portfolio.

## CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing the data above and reviewing the results of previous research, this study concludes that a writing portfolio can help students' writing process and improve their writing skills. It can help the students to record their progress and to write systematically. The records can also remind them to focus on the topic and its limitations by checking their outlines or drafts based on the writing steps that they have stated. Writing a portfolio can be done electrically or conventionally. In this study, a conventional writing portfolio can be applied to students who live in an Islamic boarding house that limits access to the Internet and any other electrical device. Students can have their writing portfolio by compiling the papers or having the writing steps in a notebook. They can also record the sources in the written form in their writing portfolio that might not be able to be saved on a disk.

Overall, the writing process is needed, as well as recording and managing the files well. Therefore, recording and managing the writing process, from deciding the topic until finishing the essay, is essential and can be done using a writing portfolio. Writing a portfolio can also be done in many ways, either using a conventional way or an electronic-based portfolio.

To meet students from various backgrounds, teachers or facilitators can help their students write using portfolios. The portfolio can be developed more by adjusting students' needs. Hopefully, the following researchers can develop a conventional or electronic-based portfolio that includes formats and guidelines that can be adjusted to students' needs. Another future research can also include students' motivation or perception toward writing portfolios to see how practical and helpful writing portfolios can be.

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