

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In the rapidly evolving context of junior high school education, particularly for eighth-grade students, the development of English writing skills is paramount for academic success and effective communication. The “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” outlines that at the end of Phase D, students are expected to use oral, written, and visual English texts to interact and communicate in increasingly diverse formal and informal contexts. These students engage with a variety of text types, including narratives, descriptions, procedures, special texts such as short messages and advertisements, and authentic materials that enhance their learning experience. Furthermore, they are expected to communicate ideas and feelings, with writing skills specifically encompassing the ability to present ideas clearly and coherently through simple and structured paragraphs, employing a growing range of vocabulary and sentence structures. This comprehensive skill set is essential not only for mastering the English language but also for fostering cognitive abilities such as critical thinking and inferencing, which underpin academic achievement in broader domains ¹.

Writing difficulties often stem from students' limited ability to generate ideas, organize those ideas effectively, and maintain rhetorical flow or logical patterns of

¹ Kemdikbud, “CP & ATP Fase D,” *Bahasa Inggris - Fase D*, last modified 2025, accessed June 19, 2025, <https://guru.kemdikbud.go.id/kurikulum/referensi-penerapan/capaian-pembelajaran/sd-sma/bahasa-inggris/fase-d/>.

thought, which subsequently affects cohesion and coherence within their texts². To address these challenges, it is crucial to foster a writing classroom environment that is both inspiring and supportive, enabling students to explore and enhance their writing capabilities. Within this educational context, assessment methods should extend beyond static evaluations to embrace dynamic, individualized tracking of student progress. Progress reporting on individual student performance offers a systematic and teacher-guided mechanism that surpasses traditional self-assessment by providing continuous formative feedback. This approach allows detailed monitoring of each learner's development trajectory, identifying strengths as well as areas needing specific intervention. Consequently, such ongoing, personalized assessment strategies play a vital role in facilitating gradual mastery of complex writing tasks like recounting personal experiences, by aligning instructional support with the unique pace and style of each student³.

The incorporation of portfolios as an assessment tool addresses these pedagogical needs effectively by providing a longitudinal repository of student work that captures growth, effort, and achievement across multiple drafts and assignments. Empirical studies underscore the efficacy of portfolios in improving writing performance and learner engagement. For example, Manh Do (2023) demonstrated through a semi-longitudinal study that portfolio assessments

² Dwi Astuti Wahyu Nurhayati, "Using Local Drama in Writing and Speaking: EFL Learners' Creative Expression," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics* 1, no. 1 (2016): 51–77.

³ Matthew L. Bernacki, Meghan J. Greene, and Nikki G. Lobczowski, *A Systematic Review of Research on Personalized Learning: Personalized by Whom, to What, How, and for What Purpose(S)?*, *Educational Psychology Review*, vol. 33 (Educational Psychology Review, 2021); Noorfatin Zakaria et al., "The Implementation of Personalised Learning to Teach English in Malaysian Low-Enrolment Schools," *SHS Web of Conferences* 182, no. 01011 (2024): 1–24.

significantly enhanced student motivation, writing quality, and metacognitive regulation in middle school English language learners⁴. Portfolios enable educators to analyze multiple samples of student work, making it possible to identify progress patterns that single-point assessments often miss. This method encourages students not merely to produce a final product but to engage introspectively with their writing progress, fostering a deeper cognitive and emotional connection to learning⁵.

Despite the recognized benefits of portfolio assessment and progress reporting, there remains a noticeable gap in research regarding the specific role of teacher guidance during the portfolio writing process, particularly in junior high school contexts in Indonesia such as SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung. While previous studies have emphasized student motivation and writing quality improvements, few have systematically examined how teachers support students through gradual, scaffolded portfolio writing assistance that enables learners to develop their skills over time. Additionally, the facilitation of vocabulary exploration as part of the portfolio process remains underexplored. Teachers often must help students uncover and practice new vocabulary in meaningful contexts to enrich their writing, but empirical investigations into these pedagogical interactions and their effects on writing development are limited. Addressing this gap provided

⁴ Hieu Manh Do, "Pedagogical Benefits and Practical Concerns of Writing Portfolio Assessment: Suggestions for Teaching L2 Writing," *Tesl-Ej: Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* 27, no. 1 (2023): 1–20.

⁵ Zein Bassam Mahmoud Baniyounes et al., "The Students Are Also Invited: Portfolio Assessment and Its Impact on EFL Learners' Critical Thinking, Growth Mindfulness, and Autonomy," *Computer Assisted Language Learning Electronic Journal (CALL-EJ)* 25, no. 4 (2024): 604–628.

valuable insights into how structured teacher intervention and vocabulary facilitation within the portfolio framework could optimize learning outcomes, especially in classrooms characterized by varied language proficiency levels.

The selection of SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung as the research site is grounded in the researcher's prior internship experience at the school. During the internship, the researcher observed notable diversity in students' English proficiency, especially in writing and speaking skills. This variance in experience levels suggested a classroom environment with heterogeneous learner needs, making it an ideal setting to study the implementation of portfolio assessments and progress monitoring strategies⁶. The firsthand experience also provided practical insights into classroom dynamics, student motivation, and teaching practices, reinforcing the relevance and feasibility of conducting this research at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung. This background situates the study within an authentic context where the potential benefits and obstacles of portfolio assessment can be explored meaningfully.

This research specifically selects portfolio assessment for its dual benefits to both students and educators within the SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung context. During the researcher's internship experience, it was observed that students' writing abilities in the classroom required significant improvement, a concern that was further confirmed by the English subject teacher in charge when the research topic was proposed. Writing skills, are an essential aspect of English learning but often

⁶ Omid Tajik, Shagofah Noor, and Jawad Golzar, "Investigating Differentiated Instruction and the Contributing Factors to Cater EFL Students' Needs at the Collegial Level," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education* 9, no. 74 (2024): 1–19.

present challenges that warrant strategic interventions. Portfolios serve as a long-term learning tool that enables students to revisit and reflect on their written works, thereby reinforcing their sense of achievement and promoting autonomous learning. This iterative engagement with writing not only supports sustained development of writing skills but also nurtures intrinsic motivation by providing a visible archive of personal growth⁷. From an instructional perspective, portfolios provide teachers with a detailed and adaptable framework for continuous, individualized assessment that suits the diverse learning preferences and proficiency levels found in heterogeneous classrooms⁸. Through such personalized pedagogical approaches, portfolios act as more than mere assessment instruments; they facilitate differentiated instruction and bridge the gaps often left by traditional evaluative methods⁹. These characteristics make the implementation of portfolios particularly suitable for enhancing students' writing competence in recount texts at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung.

Recount texts offer an especially appropriate genre for portfolio implementation in this study, as they reflect students' real-life experiences and require narrative coherence, chronological sequencing, and descriptive precision—core competencies in effective writing instruction¹⁰. The iterative drafting,

⁷ Ed Madison, Ross Anderson, and Tracy Bousselot, "Self-Determined to Write: Leveraging Interest, Collaboration, and Self-Direction Through a Journalistic Approach," *Reading and Writing Quarterly* 35, no. 5 (2019): 473–495, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2019.1579127>.

⁸ Andri Schoonen, "Learning To Engage Students Through Assessment: Reflective and Evidence-Based Portfolios As an Alternative To Traditional Assessment," in *ICERI2024 Proceedings*, vol. 1 (Seville: IATED, 2024), 5270–5275.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Irfan Fernando, Dewi Ismu Purwaningsih, and Alvina Yolanda, "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Recount Text At Tenth Grade Students Of SMAN 5 Pontianak," *Jurnal Jendela Pendidikan* 4, no. 4 (2024): 364–374.

feedback, and revision process inherent in portfolio use facilitates gradual skill acquisition and builds learner confidence. Through repeated practice and teacher guidance, students develop resilience and a proactive attitude toward overcoming linguistic challenges¹¹. Thus, portfolio assessment aligned with progress reports and teacher evaluation is well-positioned to nurture capable, confident writers among eighth graders.

Based on that background, this study aims to explore the “Implementing Portfolio to Improve Students’ Writing Ability in Recount Text at the 8th Grade Students of SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung.”

B. Statement of Research Problem

Based on the background of the study above, the research question formulated for this study is as follows:

1. How can the implementation of a portfolio improve students’ writing ability in recount texts at the 8th grade students of SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung?
2. How can the implementation of a portfolio increase student participation in learning writing recount texts at the 8th grade students of SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung?

¹¹ Soheila Esmaeilee, “English Language Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Using Electronic Portfolio on Iranian EFL Learners’ Speaking: A Grounded Theory Approach,” *Language Testing in Asia* 14, no. 11 (2024): 1–26.

C. Objectives of the Research

From the formulated research question, the present the study aims:

1. To investigate how the implementation of a portfolio can improve students' writing ability in recount texts at the 8th grade students of SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung;
2. To explore how the implementation of a portfolio can increase student participation in learning writing recount texts at the 8th grade students of SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung.

D. Significance of the Study

This research is expected to have various benefits that can be felt by students, teachers, and also researchers in the future as follows:

1. For Students

It is anticipated that their writing skills, especially in composing recount texts, would improve through continuous practice and reflective learning enabled by portfolio assessment. Furthermore, the portfolio approach was likely to enhance students' motivation and autonomy, encouraging them to take ownership of their learning process and engage more deeply in writing tasks. Through this process, students also developed improved self-assessment abilities, allowing them to critically evaluate their own work, recognize areas for improvement, and build confidence in their writing.

2. For Teacher

This research offers valuable insights into students' progress by providing a more comprehensive picture of their writing development over time, rather than relying solely on exam results. The implementation of portfolios allows teachers to tailor their instructional strategies based on clear evidence of students' strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, teachers can deliver more personalized and formative feedback, making assessment a supportive tool for learning rather than just a grading mechanism.

3. For Future Research

This study contributes empirical data specific to the Indonesian middle school context. It also highlights context-specific advantages and challenges that future researchers can explore further or examine in different genres or educational levels. Finally, the findings provide useful insights for curriculum developers and policymakers, encouraging the integration of portfolio assessments within writing education frameworks to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness.

E. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research is specifically focused on the eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Ngantru Tulungagung as its subjects. The study centers on investigating the implementation of portfolio assessment in the context of teaching and learning to write recount texts.

F. Definition of Key Terms

The purpose of defining key terms is to prevent any potential misunderstandings among readers concerning the terminology employed in this study. Consequently, this study offers various definitions of key terms relevant to the subject matter, as follows:

1. Portfolio

According to Brown and Hudson (1998), portfolio assessment promotes active student engagement in the learning process, cultivating a sense of ownership and accountability for their writing¹².

2. Teaching

According to Ainiyah e al., (2022), Implementation of learning is the execution or application of something that later provides positive impacts in the form of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes¹³.

3. Writing Skills

According to Abbas (2006:125), writing skills is the ability to express ideas, opinions, and feelings to other parties through written language¹⁴.

¹² Layla Aknouch, "Alternative Assessment Forms for Foreign Language Classrooms," *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies* 5, no. 1 (2023): 273–286.

¹³ Qurrotul Ainiyah, Noor Fatikah, and Eka Yuyun Faris Daniati, "Konsep Implementasi Pembelajaran Tafsir Amaly Dan Kaitannya Dengan Pemahaman Ayat Tentang Fikih," *Ilmuna: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam* 4, no. 1 (2022): 71–87.

¹⁴ Dwi Intan Febriana Sari and Wariyati Wariyati, "The Effect of Using Picture Media on Students' Writing Skill of Descriptive Text," *JCI: Jurnal Cakrawala Ilmiah* 4, no. 1 (2024): 4099–4106.

4. Recount Text

According to Anderson & Anderson (2002), a recount text is a written work that narrates past events, typically presented in the sequence in which they occurred ¹⁵.

G. Organization of the Study

To facilitate a systematically organized discourse, the author had to establish a writing framework that effectively conveyed the research findings while ensuring clarity and comprehensibility. Consequently, the author delineated the writing structure as follows:

The first chapter comprises the introduction, which encompasses the problem background, problem formulation, research objectives, research significance, definitions of key terms, and an overview of the systematic discussion. Chapter two provides a literature review that includes the principal theories (grand theory) as well as theories derived from qualitative research sources. In this chapter, theoretical frameworks obtained from existing literature or prior studies serve as the foundation for the subsequent explanations.

Chapter three details the research methodology employed, which includes data sources, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, validation of findings, and the various stages of the research process. The

¹⁵ Atikasari Husna and Akhmad Multazim, "Students' Difficulties in Writing Recount Text at Inclusion Classes," *LET: Linguistics, Literature and English Teaching Journal* 9, no. 1 (2019): 52–76.

fourth chapter presents the research results, featuring a systematic arrangement of data that is clearly organized, utilizing tables, graphs, and descriptive narratives to offer a comprehensive overview of the findings.

Chapter five was dedicated to the analysis and interpretation of the research results. In this chapter, the data collected was examined in depth to address the research questions and fulfill the established objectives.

The sixth chapter concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations. This section articulates the conclusions drawn from the research results, followed by the author's suggestions pertaining to the implications of the research.