

## **Assessing writing of descriptive text using portfolio assessment plan as formative assessment**

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### **Abstract**

Descriptive text is one of the genres which is included in the English Curriculum for the Tenth Graders of Senior High schools in Indonesia. The identification of the descriptive text is usually the main idea of the paragraph or called a general statement, and the description of the descriptive text is about the explanation of the general statement or main idea or supporting details to the general statement. Portfolio Assessment Plan (PAP) is one of formative assessment that becomes an alternative tool for assessing in English language teaching classrooms, including writing skills. The portfolio procedures comprise the collection, selection, self-assessment, reflection, and delayed evaluation and are embedded within multiple feedback sources. Possible challenges come up in implementing this PAP, such as the students could run of time before they finish the work, searching the information from Google could distract students, and similar writing could happen between students. To address the possible challenges above, there are some solutions. First, teachers have to notice the 'insufficient learner engagement. Second, reminding them to use their time wisely by searching the useful information only is needed. Third, it needs the teachers' management when find there is the same topic used by the students.

*Keywords: assessing writing; portfolio assessment; formative assessment; descriptive text*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Descriptive text is one of the genres which is included in the English Curriculum of Tenth Grader of Senior High school in Indonesia (*CP & ATP Fase E Bahasa Inggris, 2023; Kemendikbud, 2013*). As a learning goal, students are able to express and communicate their ideas through their own writing. In the process of writing, students are able to show pieces of evidence of a developing of writing process comprehending. Also, the students have the ability to present a demonstration of early awareness of written descriptive text through convention according to the context and purpose. Based on Anderson (2008), descriptive or description describes a certain place, thing, or person. It has the purpose to tell about the subject by describing its characteristics without including personal opinions.

Several characteristics in a descriptive text have to be concerned seriously, such as the characteristic in the construction of a description. A certain description has an opening paragraph that introduces the description's subject, followed by a sequence of paragraphs each describing one characteristic of the subject. The identification of the descriptive text is usually the main idea of the paragraph or called a general statement, and the description of the descriptive text is about the explanation of the general statement or main idea or supporting details to the general statement. Another characteristic is a grammatical characteristic of a description. Factual descriptions usually include the following grammatical characteristics: (1) verbs in the present tense, (2) adjectives to describe the characteristics of the subject, and (3) topic sentences to begin the paragraph and organize the various aspect of the description (Anderson, 2008).

In implementing the portfolio assessment, the teacher's role is essential. The teacher's role as a facilitator and mediator in learning is attached with learning innovations that have a correlation between an organization's learning and organizational innovation (Hsiao et al., 2014). These conditions want to change the teaching and learning activities are teacher-oriented to student-oriented. Benefits guidance for concept discovery or invention situations has been clearly demonstrated in teaching with discovery learning (Loibl & Rummel, 2014). The students are in the learning situation that determined by themselves, and they are asked to discover a concept to solve the problems. The students need to be guided during this activity of learning.

In the progress of constructing a description text, the teacher needs to implement a discovery learning model of teaching. The discovery learning model is a model to increase the way of active students' learning by investigating and discovering themselves, so the result will keep in their minds or become unforgettable to students. Students can also think about analysis and try to solve their problems themselves by using discovery learning. The model of discovery learning emphasizes the

importance of structure comprehending or important ideas, through the involvement of students' activity in the teaching-learning process. (Mukharomah, 2015)

According to Noprianto (2017), using the discovery learning model in teaching descriptive texts is believed to be suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century teaching paradigm in which the students are encouraged to be autonomous learners. Ariyana et al., (2020) and Widayanto (2021) found out that the discovery learning model was effective to use in teaching descriptive text. Based on these search results, it can be concluded that the discovery learning model is effective in teaching descriptive texts. The steps involved in this approach include describing topics, asking questions, formulating hypotheses, carrying out investigations, conducting observations, organizing or analyzing, and presenting the results of investigations. The discovery learning model can improve the learning outcomes of participants' products and processes. It also provides activities that help students explore and solve problems through certain activities such as creating, combining, and generalizing knowledge. Thus, besides assessing students' skills and enhancement in writing descriptive texts, this progress portfolio assessment also supports students to develop their 21st-century skills.

Portfolio assessment is an alternative tool to traditional testing methods in English language teaching classrooms (Narayan, 2022). There are some needs and challenges of ESL teachers in implementing portfolio assessment. First, teachers expressed the need for training to expose them to the 'what' and 'how' to implement alternative assessment in classrooms. Second, teachers still get challenges to implement the alternative assessment in teaching the English language. These challenges are such as selection of authentic assessments, selecting the content and learning standards to determine assessment activities, assessing student work based on learning objectives, providing feedback, and educating students on using feedback to improve learning. (Singh & et al., 2022).

Lam (2018) explained that portfolio assessment is defined as a learning catalyst that enhances to provide students with reflective skills, metacognitive thinking, and self-regulated learning capacity at the junior and senior high school levels. The suitable type for the portfolio assessment plan is the progress portfolio. Progress portfolios stimulate the students to arrange a span of artifacts in which they can evaluate their improvement of learning in a sustained manner (Lam, 2018). Progress portfolio tends to be a formative assessment although particular assignments of learning organized in the portfolio are measured for the purpose of accountability.

Astuti & Winarti (2020) implemented portfolio assessment with progress portfolio type. The rubrics were provided as guidelines for their students to produce writing in the form of essays. One of the results, most of their essays were of good quality. On average, the students got AB grades, or equal to 81-85 scores. There were some essays which have high originality and the writer had a good self-confidence. As a strategy for promoting students' commitment, they presented their essays at the conference.

Efendi (2017) conducted a study to find out the implementation of portfolio assessment improved students' writing skills and responses. The study employed a pre-experimental method with a one-group pre-test and post-test design and descriptive analysis of the students' responses after the portfolio assessment implementation for teaching English writing. From the results, the portfolio assessment implementation increased the writing skills and the responses of the students. A significant improvement in the students' writing skills and their responses after teaching by using portfolio assessment appeared in this study. It means that the use of portfolio assessment can increase students' writing skills and their responses. The positive effects of using portfolios on learning products were also found in the research of Demirel, M., & Duman, H. (2015). The result of the study showed that it revealed that portfolios had positive effects on students' achievement.

Alam & Aktar (2019) states that portfolio as formative assessment techniques are utilized to assess writing samples that learners produce over a defined period of time. Thus, this portfolio assessment will need 2 meetings, each meeting consisting of 90 minutes or equal to 2 lesson hours. In the first meeting, students try to create a descriptive text in a group. Later, the students construct the descriptive text on their own or it is done individually on the second meeting.

## **METHODS**

This study is conceptual-based article Jaakkola (2020). As Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) in Jaakkola (2020) explained, crafting conceptual papers are able to find valuable advice on problematizing. In conceptual papers, statements or opinions are not obtain from data in the traditional sense but involve the assimilation and combination of evidence in the form of previously improved theories and concepts (Hirschheim, 2008) in Jaakkola (2020). Typical conceptual papers concern on proposing new

relationships among constructs; the purpose is thus to improve complete and logical arguments about these associations (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). There are some approaches to designing conceptual articles. This paper applied a model type of conceptual paper. The typical model of paper provides a roadmap for comprehending the entity in question by delineating the focal concept, how it changes, the processes by which it operates, or the moderating conditions that may affect it (MacInnis, 2011) in Jaakkola (2020)

This study elaborates procedure in portfolio assessment plan to assess descriptive text writing. Not only procedure, this study also constructs an implementation that is the learning activities of using the portfolio assessment. Some possible challenges have been considered in designing the portfolio assessment plan. In the end of this study, several issues and how to address possible challenges are explained.

The framework that is used in this study is from Lam (2018). This portfolio assessment plan is implemented in the Tenth Grade of Senior High School in a discovery learning model of teaching. The discovery learning model is a model to improve the way of active students' learning by discovering and investigating themselves, so the result will get is permanent and memorable in their minds, it is unforgettable to students. By using discovery learning, students can also think analysis and try to solve their problems by themselves. The discovery learning model emphasizes the importance of structure comprehending or important ideas, through the involvement of students' activity in the teaching-learning process. (Mukharomah, 2015)

This assessment is a kind of formative assessment with a progress portfolio type. This assessment will be conducted in 2 meetings, each meeting consisting of 90 minutes (2 x 45 minutes lesson hour). This portfolio assessment plan is purposed to assess students' skills and enhancement in writing Descriptive Texts. The theme that is used in the writing is 'My Favorite Singer'. The learning objectives of this activity are to describe ideas and opinions followed by simple reasons for the description of their favorite singer and produce a written descriptive text with the topic of their favorite singer according to the context and purpose of writing. The learning indicators that have to be achieved are students are able to produce written Descriptive Texts with proper generic structure, that consists of identification and description. Deciding Specific Participant and the use of suitable tense (in this case simple present tense) are the indicators of this learning achievement. In addition, students are expected to be able to use adjectives to clarify nouns and action verbs to show activities.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In implementing portfolio assessment, there were several steps that have to be applied in the learning activities. Those steps were combined in a procedure. The portfolio procedures comprise the collection, selection, self-assessment, reflection, and delayed evaluation and are embedded within multiple feedback sources (Lam, 2018). In the collection phase, students collect information about the singer based on the teacher's guidelines. The information is in the form of phrases or points. They can search the information from anywhere. It is not limited to their knowledge only, but they are free to use any sources such as Google, Youtube, Podcasts, or any internet-based information. It is allowed to use other sources beyond the internet, for example, magazine, television, biography, etc. However, it goes back to the classroom condition, bearing in mind that implementing portfolio assessment only has ninety (90) minutes in a meeting.

In the selection phase, the students select the information to be added to their work after having a comment or opinion from the other students. In order to get comments or opinions from classmates, when the students work in a group, or in a first meeting, they presented the information to the whole class and the other groups gives their comments, opinion, or even suggestion. In the second meeting, or when the students work individually, they will share their work with their peers beside them to get any comments, opinions, or suggestions from them. From those phases, the students assess themselves from the feedback. After the students arrange the feedback, they come to the reflection phase. Close to self-assessment, reflection deals with a comprehensive mechanism of planning, monitoring, and reviewing the entire composing process (Lam, 2018). From self-assessment, the students are able to manage reflection more independently. As a reflection, the students construct the phrases or points into sentences. They develop the points of ideas that have been assessed by themselves before into the good structure of the sentences. For the delayed evaluation, the students produce descriptive texts based on the sentences that they have constructed before. The teacher gives the guideline about the Generic Structure of Descriptive Text. The students classify which sentences that belong to identification, and which sentences are the description.

In order to produce descriptive text, students have to get points or phrases to be constructed into sentences after they have specific participants. These sentences, that is in Present Tense, require adjectives to clarify nouns and action verbs to show activities. Those are the core or required content that has to be fulfilled by the students. Below are the documents that have to be submitted by the students, those are (1) the group worksheet that contains points or phrases about the information related to the given singer; (2) the descriptive text written by group work based on their worksheet; (3) the individual-worksheet that contain points or phrases about the information related to their favorite singer; and (4) the descriptive text written by students individually based on their worksheet.

After they construct the sentences in Present Tense, they produce Descriptive Text with a proper generic structure, that consists of identification and description. For identification, it contains information on the name of the singer, the age, and origin. In the description part of a generic structure, for the first, it describes the physical appearance of the singer. The students also provide information on his/her first song that made that singer become known in the music industry. The information about his/her top song that makes him/her become popular is also needed here. If the singer gets any achievement, the students can explain it in their writing. However, if there is no achievement that the singer receives, the students can elaborate on the reason why that singer become their favorite singer. Here are the supplementary entries that have to be fulfilled by the students.

Table 1. The Supplementary Entries

Title	
Identification	Name
	Age
	Origin
Description	Physical Appearance
	The First Song
	The Top Song
	Achievement / Reason to be Students' Favorite Singer

From the supplementary entries, the students can make it as a guideline, so the students know what information that has to be searched. It also avoid the students from wasting time in collecting the information.

### Learning Activities

In this section, the portfolio assessment plan is elaborated into the learning activities based on the portfolio procedure of Lam's (2018) framework. The learning activities are divided into two (2) meetings. The learning activities are shown in the table below.

Table 2. The Learning Activities Based on The Portfolio Procedure of Lam's (2018) Framework

The phase of Portfolio Procedure	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting		2 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting	
	Activities	Time Allocation	Activities	Time Allocation
Collection	In a group, students gather some information related to the singer based on the required content from the teacher.	10 minutes	Each student collects some information related to their favorite singer based on the required content from the teacher.	15 minutes
Selection	Each group presented what they have collected, and the other groups	50 minutes	Each student gives their work to another student on their right side and receive the work	5 minutes

	give comments or opinions about the information that is presented.		from the student on their left side.	
Self-Assessment	In a group, the students receive the comments, opinions, and suggestion from other groups, and it become their self assessment on what they present.		Each student receives feedback from their peers. The feedback become their self assessment on what they select.	
Reflection	In a group, the students construct the points or phrases that have been got feedback from other groups and done self-assessment into sentences. After that, the students produce a Descriptive Text.	30 minutes	Each student constructs the points or phrases that have been got feedback from their peers and done self-assessment into sentences. After that, Each student produces a Descriptive Text.	45 minutes
Delayed Evaluation	The teacher collects the students' writing to be evaluated.		The students give their work to another student on their left side and receive the work from the student on their right side. The students evaluate to their peers' work. After that, the teacher collects the students' writing to be evaluated.	15 minutes
<b>Total</b>	<b>90 minutes</b>		<b>80 minutes</b>	

In the first meeting, students are divided into 5 (five) groups. The groups are named after the singer that they discuss. The teacher takes names based on Top Indonesian Solo Singers in the version of SCTV Music Awards 2016 – 2022. Below is the name of the singers.

Table 3. The Chosen Participants for the Group Work

Group	Singer's Name	Year of Award
1 <sup>st</sup> Group	Raisa	2016 & 2017
2 <sup>nd</sup> Group	Rossa	2018 & 2019
3 <sup>rd</sup> Group	Judika	2019

4 <sup>th</sup> Group	Tiara Andini	2022
5 <sup>th</sup> Group	Rizky Febian	2022

In a group, students gather some information related to the singer based on the required content from the teacher. The information can be in the form of points or phrases with *Entry #1* (see the *Appendix*) as a guideline. In this phase, the students get knowledge about the vocabulary of adjectives and action verbs. It takes 10 minutes long. After collecting some information about the singer, each group presented what they have collected, and the other groups give comments or opinions about the information that is presented. The teacher also facilitates students by giving examples and revising their writing (if needed). This activity takes 50 minutes.

After all of the groups have presented, the teacher guides the students to construct the points or phrases they get into sentences. The teacher also gives *Entry #2* to guide the students in producing Descriptive Text. At the end of the meeting, the teacher collects the students' writing to be evaluated. It takes 30 minutes long. The teacher has to share the feedback before the second meeting with the expectation the students are going to learn about producing the proper Descriptive Text. The teacher informs that in the next meeting, the teacher will ask the students to decide on their favorite singers except the singer that has been discussed before. Then, the teacher distributes the Google Form link to be filled with their favorite singer by the students, and the deadline to fill in the form is a day before the second meeting. The teacher also informs that the students will do almost the same with the activity in the first meeting but individually.

In the second meeting, the teacher directs the students to collect some information related to their favorite singer based on the required content from the teacher with *Entry #1* as a guideline. It takes 15 minutes long. After collecting some information about the singer, the students give their work to another student on their right side and receive the work from the student on their left side. After that, they give feedback on their friend's work. It takes 5 minutes long.

The students receive feedback from peers, then they have to construct the points or phrases they get into sentences using their group work in the previous meeting as a guideline. After that, they develop the information into sentences by the guidance of *Entry #2*. It takes 45 minutes long. After finishing the writing, the students give their work to another student on their left side and receive the work from the student on their right side. The students evaluate their peers' work using the form in Table 3. It takes 15 minutes long. After that, the teacher collects the students' work and gives them feedback. In giving feedback, it is rather impossible to finish right away in that time. However, the teacher should promise that she/he will assess them soon, not longer than two (2) days.

Table 4. The Peer Assessment

Aspects	Self-Assessment √	Peer-Assessment √	Peer's Comment (optional)
Title			
The writing is arranged into paragraphs. Each paragraph consists of one topic.			
The first paragraph presents the singer. The information contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Origin</li> </ul>			
The other paragraphs contain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical appearance</li> <li>• His/her first song</li> <li>• His/her top song</li> <li>• Achievement / reason to be peer's favourite singer</li> </ul>			
Using the descriptive words, and write the clear adjectives to help the readers in imagine the idea. The dictions are natural.			

The accuracy of the spelling			
The text consist of 100 to 200 words.			

The other 10 minutes is used before the teacher ends the class. The students in a group of first meeting search the appropriate picture of the singer they have been discussed from the internet, and post it into their class social media or blog with the source of the picture and the Descriptive Text as a caption. After that, the teacher asks the students to write down things that are not understood from the subject matter they have learned. The teacher also asks the students to reflect on the points they have learned in this lesson. The teacher informs the students that the reflections they did followed the instruction below:

Please reflect on our activity. Write your reflection.  
The questions below become the guideline.

1. Tell your experience about this activity!
2. Mention three things you learned!
3. Is there any question about this activity? What is it?

Figure 1. The Guideline for Students' Reflection on the Process of Completing Their Portfolio

The peer assignments are printed and displayed in a wall magazine after they get feedback from other students and the teacher. Also, they post their work on their class social media accounts. That means it needs five days or a week of school days to post all assignments. The students have to attach the source of the picture to the caption. To confirm the posting, they will tag the teacher. The individual assignment is posted on their own social media account after getting feedback from the teacher. Also, the students attach the source of the picture to the caption. They tag the teacher to confirm the posting, too.

### Criteria of the Whole Portfolio

In producing a good quality descriptive text, students have to follow the guideline that is provided by the teacher. At the very beginning of the writing, it must have a proper title of the text. The title can be the name of the participant. For the advanced level in giving a title, it can be a name with words or a phrase that represents the singer's achievement or the reason to be a student's favorite singer, for example, 'Raisa: The Singer with Many Awards'.

The writing is arranged into paragraphs. Each paragraph consists of one topic. The students have to be able to classify similar or continuous ideas in a paragraph. The first paragraph introduces the singer that contains the name of the participant or in this case singer, age, and origin. The other paragraphs include physical appearance, the singer's first song, the singer's top song, and achievement and/or reason to be students' favorite singer.

The ability to use descriptive words also becomes an important thing in constructing a descriptive text. The students should be able to write clear adjectives to help the readers imagine the idea. The dictions or choice of words are natural. Besides the diction, the words' spelling and punctuation must be accurate. Since improper punctuation and spelling can drive to ambiguous meanings, the teacher should appreciate more to the students who produce descriptive text with accurate spelling and punctuation. Also, the length of the test must be determined. The ideal length of the tenth-grade of senior high school students is between 100 to 200 words.

### Issues and Challenges

Creating a portfolio assessment will be faced with individual, institutional, and systemic issues (Lam, 2020). Burner (2014) and Lam (2017) stated about the individual issue that simplifying portfolio keeping, giving feedback that is uncomplicated to be revised, and bringing up the learner's self-monitoring capacity. Also, all demand practice-oriented and well-planned teacher education training, that supplies teachers with proper assessment skills and knowledge. For institutional issues, teachers have to reconstruct the writing curriculum to accommodate the processes of self-regulation (setting of goals, monitoring of progress, adjustment, and evaluation) and promote the use of metacognitive composing strategies like planning, reorganizing, and revising (Lam, 2020). Those are done during

the introduction of the portfolio assessment. For systemic issues, not only teachers but also administrators are suggested to work hand in hand to support a microcosmic “portfolio culture”, which is a change in curriculum design and classroom environment; improved teacher knowledge and skills; and renewal of context-specific assessment policy could create scope for developing a sustainable writing portfolio assessment program that develops teaching and learning of writing (Lo, 2010 in Lam, 2020). From those statements, it is concluded that implementing portfolio assessment helps both teachers and students in teaching and learning especially writing skills.

There are three (3) possible challenges in implementing this portfolio assessment plan. First, the students could run out of time before they finish the work. Second, searching the information on Google could distract students. Third, similar writing could happen between students.

In addressing the possible challenges above, there are some solutions. It cannot be denied that some students could run out of time in doing the tasks. I have to notice the ‘insufficient learner engagement’ (Lam, 2020). After listing them, I will go around them and offer help to them if they find any difficulties. I can correct their work before they present it to peers or the class.

Google provides much information that is related or not to the students’ needs. Surfing in unrelated information can distract the students’ focus. That is the reason when I decide which information they must search such as the singer’s age, origin, top song, etc. I also always remind them to use their time wisely by searching the useful information only.

To avoid the similarity between students’ work, I determine the singer in the first meeting to do in a group. In the second meeting, the students will choose the singer themselves. I have to ask them in the previous meeting to decide on the singer. It makes they are ready with their specific participant. Then I will distribute the link to Google Form to be filled the name of the student and their favorite singer before the first meeting closed to let me know which singer they choose. The link is due to a day before the second meeting. If I find the same singer, in the second meeting I will inform them to have different opinions on the achievement or reason aspect.

## **CONCLUSION**

Descriptive text is one of the genres which is included in the English Curriculum for the Tenth Grade of Senior High school students in Indonesia. The identification of the descriptive text is usually the main idea of the paragraph or called a general statement, and the description of the descriptive text is about the explanation of the general statement or main idea or supporting details to the general statement. In assessing the writing of a descriptive text, the teacher needs a tool. Portfolio Assessment Plan (PAP) is one formative assessment that becomes an alternative tool to assessing in English language teaching classrooms, including writing skills. The portfolio procedures comprise the collection, selection, self-assessment, reflection, and delayed evaluation and are embedded within multiple feedback sources. In applying the portfolio procedure, it needs two (2) meetings, each meeting consisting of 90 minutes (2 x 45 minutes lesson hour). The first meeting is group work, the second meeting is individual work.

Possible challenges come up in implementing this PAP, such as the students could run of time before they finish the work, searching the information from Google could distract students, and similar writing could happen between students. To address the possible challenges above, there are some solutions. First, teachers have to notice the ‘insufficient learner engagement. Second, reminding them to use their time wisely by searching the useful information only is needed. Third, the teachers manage when find there is the same topic used by the students.

Creating a portfolio assessment will be faced with several issues. The individual issue is about simplifying portfolio keeping, giving uncomplicated feedback to be revised, and bringing up the learner’s self-monitoring capacity. Also, all demand practice-oriented and well-planned teacher education training, that supplies teachers with proper assessment skills and knowledge. For institutional issues, teachers have to reconstruct the writing curriculum to accommodate the processes of self-regulation and promote the use of metacognitive composing strategies. Those are done during the introduction of the portfolio assessment. For systemic issues, not only teachers but also administrators are suggested to work hand in hand to support a microcosmic “portfolio culture”. From those statements, it is concluded that implementing portfolio assessment helps both teachers and students in teaching and learning especially writing skills.

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**APPENDIX**

**Criteria for Each Required Entry**

• **Entry #1**

No	Aspect	Check √
1	Name	
2	Age	
3	Origin	
4	Physical Appearance	
5	The First Song	
6	The Top Song	
7	Achievement / Reason to be Students' Favorite Singer	

• **Entry #2**

No	Aspects	Check √
1	Identification (first paragraph) consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Origin</li> </ul>	
2	Description (rest of paragraph) consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Appearance</li> <li>• The First Song</li> <li>• The Top Song</li> <li>• Achievement / Reason to be Students' Favorite Singer</li> </ul>	