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The Implementation and Challenges of Performance Based Authentic Assessment in Descriptive Text Reading Comprehension at SMAN 1 Padang Panjang

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the implementation of performance-based authentic assessment in descriptive text reading comprehension and to identify the challenges faced by students at SMAN 1 Padang Panjang. This research employed a descriptive qualitative design, with data collected from ten tenth-grade students through a reading task and a questionnaire as the main data sources. The reading task consisted of a descriptive text followed by open-ended comprehension questions, while the questionnaire was distributed via Google Form to explore students' difficulties in reading activities. The instruments used in this study were a reading comprehension task and a structured questionnaire, and the data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis to interpret students' responses and identify common patterns of difficulties. The findings revealed that performance-based authentic assessment was implemented through meaningful tasks requiring students to construct their own responses based on text comprehension. Most students achieved high scores, with an average of 85%, indicating generally good comprehension ability; however, several challenges were identified, particularly in understanding new vocabulary, identifying the main idea, and comprehending long sentences. Despite these challenges, students were generally able to understand the overall meaning of the text. The study implies that performance-based authentic assessment is effective in evaluating students' reading comprehension in a more meaningful way, but its success depends on students' vocabulary knowledge and reading strategies; therefore, teachers are recommended to provide vocabulary support and explicit instruction on reading strategies to improve students' performance in authentic assessment tasks.

Kata Kunci

Performance-Based Authentic Assessment, Reading Comprehension, Descriptive Text, Vocabulary Difficulties, EFL Students

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INTRODUCTION

Assessment plays a crucial role in English language learning because it provides information about students' learning progress and helps teachers

evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading comprehension is one of the essential skills that enables students to understand, interpret, and respond to written texts in meaningful ways. One of the important text types taught in the Indonesian curriculum is descriptive text, which helps students identify main ideas, supporting details, and structured information clearly. Along with the demands of 21st-century learning, assessment is expected not only to measure students' final results but also to evaluate their ability to think critically and demonstrate real understanding. Therefore, authentic assessment, particularly performance-based authentic assessment, has been introduced as an alternative approach to provide a more meaningful and comprehensive evaluation of students' reading comprehension. However, the implementation of performance-based authentic assessment in descriptive text reading comprehension still faces several challenges in classroom practice.

Harida (2015) examines the use of authentic assessment in evaluating students' reading comprehension in a more meaningful and contextualized way. Authentic assessment emphasizes real-world tasks that allow students to apply their knowledge and skills, in contrast to traditional assessments. Harida (2015) also explains that reading comprehension involves understanding texts through vocabulary, main ideas, and supporting details. Therefore, the use of techniques such as retelling, writing samples, and portfolios is considered more effective as they provide a more comprehensive picture of students' reading abilities.

Heydarnejad et al. (2022) investigate the impact of performance-based assessment (PBA) on reading comprehension, academic motivation, foreign language anxiety, and students' self-efficacy among EFL learners. Using a quasi-experimental design with two groups, the findings reveal that students exposed to PBA significantly outperformed those who experienced traditional assessment. Heydarnejad et al. (2022) emphasize that PBA not only improves reading comprehension but also enhances students' motivation and self-confidence while reducing language anxiety. This is because PBA involves authentic tasks, social interaction, and self-assessment, making the learning process more meaningful and student-centered.

Siregar and Harida (2021) aim to analyze students' reading comprehension in descriptive texts among eighth-grade students of MTs Muhammadiyah 22 Padangsidempuan using a descriptive quantitative method. The findings show that the mean score of 56.76 falls into the "fair" category, with students demonstrating varied levels of ability ranging from very low to very high. Siregar and Harida (2021) also reveal that many students still face

difficulties in understanding texts, particularly in identifying main ideas and key information, which are influenced by limited reading habits and lack of practice. Additionally, there is an inconsistency between the statistical results and the hypothesis testing, suggesting a possible error in the research instrument or calculation.

This study aims to examine the implementation of performance-based authentic assessment in descriptive text reading comprehension at SMAN 1 Padang Panjang and to identify the challenges faced by teachers during its implementation. The main objective of this research is to provide a clear description of how performance-based authentic assessment is applied in real classroom settings and how it supports students' reading comprehension development.

The need for this study arises from the fact that many students still experience difficulties in understanding descriptive texts, especially in identifying main ideas, interpreting information, and understanding unfamiliar vocabulary. Performance-based authentic assessment is expected to help students demonstrate their real reading abilities through meaningful tasks and active participation in learning activities. In addition, teachers need to understand the challenges they face in implementing this assessment approach in order to improve instructional strategies and classroom practices. By examining both implementation and challenges, this study is expected to contribute to improving the quality of reading instruction and assessment practices in English language learning.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of authentic and performance-based assessment in supporting students' reading comprehension. Research on authentic assessment for reading comprehension shows that descriptive texts can help students perform well in reading tasks due to their structured format, although students still face difficulties related to vocabulary and identifying main ideas. In addition, a study conducted by Allehyani (2025) on reading comprehension challenges in the EFL classroom found that students face various linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties in understanding texts, such as limited vocabulary, difficulties in understanding grammatical structures, problems in distinguishing main ideas and supporting information, and low use of reading strategies. The study also revealed that low reading awareness, poor reading habits, and less effective teaching methods contribute to students' reading comprehension difficulties in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, research on performance-based assessment indicates that this approach can improve students' reading achievement, academic motivation, and self-efficacy in language learning. These findings emphasize the

importance of implementing meaningful assessment to support students' reading comprehension development and address the challenges they experience in learning.

This study investigates the implementation of performance-based authentic assessment and the challenges faced by teachers in applying it in descriptive text reading comprehension at SMAN 1 Padang Panjang. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach through performance-based assessment activities in the form of reading tasks and students' responses to questions provided through Google Form. The findings are expected to provide practical insights into the effective application of performance-based authentic assessment in English language teaching. In this study, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the context of learning English in the classroom, performance-based authentic assessment refers to meaningful tasks that require students to demonstrate their understanding, reading comprehension refers to students' ability to interpret descriptive texts, and SMAN 1 Padang Panjang refers to the senior high school where this research is conducted.

RESEARCH METHODE

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the implementation of performance-based authentic assessment in descriptive text reading comprehension and to identify the challenges faced by students and teachers at SMAN 1 Padang Panjang. The study was conducted with tenth-grade students, involving 10 students as the research participants. The population of this study consisted of tenth-grade students at SMAN 1 Padang Panjang, and the sample was selected purposively based on their participation in reading tasks and responses provided through Google Form. This design was chosen because the research aimed to describe real classroom practices and explore students' experiences in performance-based authentic assessment without manipulating variables or applying experimental procedures.

The data were collected using two main instruments, namely a reading task and a questionnaire distributed through Google Form. The reading task was used as a performance-based assessment to evaluate students' ability to understand descriptive texts by requiring them to read a descriptive passage and answer open-ended questions that demonstrate their comprehension of the text. Meanwhile, the Google Form questionnaire was used to gather information about students' perceptions, experiences, and difficulties during the reading assessment process, particularly in identifying vocabulary, main

ideas, and supporting information in descriptive texts. Both instruments were designed to provide a clear understanding of students' reading comprehension performance and the challenges they encountered during the assessment activities.

The data obtained from the reading task and Google Form were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by summarizing and organizing students' responses and reading task results to identify important information related to assessment implementation and challenges. Data display was carried out by presenting the findings in descriptive form to clearly explain students' reading performance and difficulties. Finally, conclusion drawing was conducted to interpret the findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of how performance-based authentic assessment was implemented and what challenges were experienced by students and teachers. This study did not use complex statistical tests; instead, it relied on descriptive analysis, including simple scores and percentages to support qualitative findings.

The scope of this study was limited to the implementation of performance-based authentic assessment in descriptive text reading comprehension at SMAN 1 Padang Panjang, focusing on tenth-grade students and the English teacher involved in the learning process. The research specifically examined the use of performance-based reading tasks and Google Form responses to identify students' reading comprehension abilities and the challenges encountered during the assessment process. Therefore, the findings of this study were intended to provide a contextual and practical description of performance-based authentic assessment implementation and its challenges within a real classroom setting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of performance-based authentic assessment was carried out through a reading task using a descriptive text about Bali, followed by open-ended questions. Unlike multiple-choice formats, these questions required students to construct their own answers, allowing for a deeper evaluation of their reading comprehension. The task was designed to assess key reading skills, including identifying important information, determining the main idea, and understanding specific details within the text.

During the activity, most students were actively engaged in reading. They demonstrated the use of strategies such as rereading the text and locating relevant information, indicating meaningful involvement in the learning

process. However, students' abilities varied. Some students were able to provide clear and accurate responses, while others still faced difficulties in understanding the text and organizing their answers. These differences in performance are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Students' Reading Task Results

Name	Correct	Score
Jingga Arta Afdhali	4/4	100%
Ezekiel Gilchrist Depari	4/4	100%
Kristian Prananda Hutapea	4/4	100%
Heru Kurniawan	4/4	100%
Febrian Estommyhe Pardede	4/4	100%
Hanjes Bakara	4/4	100%
Alep Akhbar	4/4	100%
M. Ariq Shidqi Adifa Lubis	2/4	50%
Pasca Agung Sihombing	2/4	50%
Fabio Sitinjak	2/4	50%

Based on the data in Table 1, it can be seen that the majority of students (7 out of 10) achieved perfect scores, indicating a strong ability to comprehend descriptive texts and respond accurately to open-ended questions. These students were able to identify main ideas, extract important information, and understand details effectively. Meanwhile, 3 students obtained moderate scores (50%), suggesting that they still experienced difficulties in comprehension and in expressing their answers clearly. Overall, the findings indicate that performance-based authentic assessment can effectively reveal students' actual reading abilities while also highlighting differences in individual performance.

This result is in line with Heydarnejad et al. (2022), who argue that performance-based authentic assessment can effectively reflect students' actual reading abilities and reveal variations in individual performance, as it enables a more comprehensive evaluation of learners' skills. In this study, the use of open-ended reading tasks allowed differences in students' comprehension and response quality to become more visible, thereby supporting the effectiveness of this assessment approach.

To examine the challenges experienced by students, data were gathered from questionnaire responses and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings revealed several common difficulties faced by students during the reading activity.

Table 2.
Students' Difficulties in Reading

Difficulty	Number of Students	Percentage
Understanding new vocabulary	9	90%
Finding the main idea	7	70%
Understanding long sentences	4	40%

The data indicate that the most dominant difficulty faced by students is understanding new vocabulary (90%), followed by finding the main idea (70%), and understanding long sentences (40%). This shows that vocabulary mastery is the primary barrier in reading comprehension, which then affects students' ability to identify main ideas and interpret more complex sentence structures. Overall, the results suggest that students' reading difficulties are mainly rooted in linguistic limitations, particularly vocabulary, which subsequently influences higher-level comprehension skills.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Allehyani (2025), which found that EFL students experience various linguistic and non-linguistic challenges in reading comprehension, including limited vocabulary, difficulty understanding grammatical structures, and problems distinguishing main ideas from supporting details. In this study, the high percentage of students struggling with vocabulary (90%) supports Allehyani's claim that lexical limitation is a major obstacle in comprehending texts. Furthermore, the difficulty in finding main ideas (70%) aligns with the finding that students often struggle to differentiate key information from supporting details.

Additionally, Allehyani (2025) highlights that low reading habits and limited use of reading strategies contribute to these difficulties. This is also reflected in the present findings, where a portion of students still struggle with understanding long sentences (40%), indicating challenges in processing more complex textual information. Therefore, the results of this study are acceptable and consistent with previous research, as they confirm that reading comprehension problems in EFL contexts are largely influenced by vocabulary limitations, insufficient reading strategies, and lack of effective reading practices.

Apart from analyzing students' reading performance and the difficulties they experienced, the researcher also investigated students' perceptions of the reading activity. A questionnaire was distributed to the students after they completed the reading task. The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect information about students' experiences during the reading activity as well as

their opinions about the usefulness of the reading task. The summary of the questionnaire results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Summary of Questionnaire Results

Statement	Agree	Strongly Agree	Percentage
Students read descriptive texts in English class	4	2	60%
Teacher provides reading activities in class	5	2	70%
Reading tasks help improve comprehension	4	2	60%
Students can identify the main idea	4	2	80%

The data presented in Table 3 indicate that the majority of students have positive perceptions toward reading activities in their English classes. Sixty percent of the students reported that they regularly read descriptive texts during English lessons. This suggests that descriptive texts are commonly used as instructional materials, allowing students to become familiar with this type of text and its structure. In addition, seventy percent of the students agreed that the teacher provides reading tasks in class, indicating that reading activities are consistently integrated into the learning process to support students' comprehension.

Furthermore, sixty percent of the students stated that reading tasks help improve their reading comprehension. This finding shows that most students perceive these activities as beneficial in developing their ability to understand English texts. Through these tasks, students are encouraged to identify important information, analyze the content, and respond to comprehension questions, which contributes to the development of their reading skills. Moreover, eighty percent of the students reported that they are able to identify the main idea of a text, suggesting that most students have acquired basic comprehension skills, although some still experience difficulties in fully understanding the overall message.

Overall, the findings suggest that reading activities and performance-based tasks play an important role in supporting students' learning. Most students were able to complete the reading task successfully, which aligns with their positive responses in the questionnaire. However, despite these positive perceptions, challenges such as limited vocabulary and difficulty in understanding certain parts of the text were still observed. These findings indicate that while performance-based authentic assessment is effective in

engaging students and supporting comprehension, further support is still needed to address specific difficulties faced by some learners.

Discussion

The findings of this study verify that most students were able to perform well in the reading comprehension task using a descriptive text. The high scores achieved by the majority of participants indicate that descriptive texts can serve as effective materials for reading activities. This is likely due to their clear and organized structure, which presents information in a logical sequence. As a result, students are able to identify key information and supporting details more easily, especially when they are already familiar with this type of text.

However, the findings also confirm that students still experienced several challenges during the reading process. The most prominent difficulty was related to unfamiliar vocabulary, which limited students' ability to fully understand certain parts of the text. In addition, some students struggled to identify the main idea, indicating that they may lack sufficient reading strategies to process information at a deeper level. These findings verify that vocabulary knowledge and strategic reading skills are essential components in achieving effective reading comprehension.

From the perspective of English language learning, these findings imply that reading instruction should not only focus on comprehension outcomes but also on the development of supporting skills. Teachers need to provide explicit vocabulary support and guide students in applying reading strategies, such as identifying main ideas and understanding sentence structures. By addressing these areas, students can improve their ability to interpret texts more effectively.

Furthermore, the use of performance-based authentic assessment in this study provides meaningful implications for classroom practice. This type of assessment allows students to actively construct their own responses, making their level of understanding more visible. It also enables teachers to identify both students' strengths and difficulties more clearly compared to traditional assessment methods. Therefore, incorporating performance-based tasks in reading activities can enhance both assessment quality and student engagement in English language learning.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the use of performance-based authentic assessment provides a meaningful way to evaluate students' reading comprehension in descriptive texts. The findings show that most students were able to demonstrate strong comprehension, indicating that this type of

assessment can capture students' ability to identify key information and construct understanding in a more contextualized manner. At the same time, the variation in students' performance reveals that reading comprehension is not uniform, as some learners still face difficulties in processing textual information.

These results highlight an important point: successful reading comprehension is not solely determined by the assessment method, but also by students' underlying linguistic knowledge and strategic skills. The persistence of difficulties, particularly in vocabulary and identifying main ideas, suggests that without sufficient support, some students may struggle to fully benefit from authentic assessment tasks. Therefore, reading instruction should not only aim at measuring comprehension but also at strengthening the foundational skills that enable students to engage with texts more effectively.

In a broader context, this study confirms the relevance of performance-based authentic assessment in EFL classrooms as both an evaluative and pedagogical tool. It not only makes students' actual abilities more visible but also provides insights into their specific learning needs. This makes it valuable for improving teaching practices, as it encourages a more balanced approach between assessment and skill development. Ultimately, the findings suggest that integrating authentic assessment with appropriate instructional support can contribute to more effective and meaningful reading learning experiences.

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