

The Impact Of Portfolio Assessment On Iranian EFL Students' Essay Writing: A Process-Oriented Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of portfolio assessment as a process-oriented assessment mechanism on Iranian EFL students' English writing ability. Sixty one students of similar writing ability were chosen as the participants of this study. They were divided into two groups. The experimental group received the treatment i.e. portfolio assessment while the control group underwent the traditional assessment. The results of data analysis revealed that the students in the portfolio assessment group outperformed the students in the control group in their overall writing ability and in the sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization and vocabulary. To triangulate the quantitative data, students' views and reflections about portfolio assessment were elicited via semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data underwent thematic analysis and the major extracted themes were discussed. The findings suggest that portfolio assessment empowers students' learning of English writing, hence emphasizing the formative potential of portfolio assessment in EFL classes. The results have some implications for teaching and assessment of L2 writing.

Keywords: portfolio assessment, essay writing, writing sub-skills, learning, EFL students.

Introduction

The ability to write effectively is becoming more and more important and writing instruction is assuming an increasing role in L2 language education (Weigle, 2002).

Similarly, assessing the construct of writing is equally becoming the concern of experts in the field. The emergence of portfolio assessment as a direct method of writing assessment has been motivated to some extent by a desire to bring writing assessment in line with current cognitive and social views of writing (Graziano-King, 2007). Also, new understandings of learning process indicate that assessment and learning are closely tied to each other. These new trends to language assessment need to be incorporated into classroom-based assessment practices (Marzano, Pickering & McTighe, 1993).

The classroom portfolio is intended to enhance teaching and learning in a learning-centered framework (Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005). It is also an excellent pedagogical tool which integrates assessment and teaching (Hamp-Lyons, 1994 as cited in Chen, 2006; Nunes, 2004; Klenowsky, 2002). Portfolios indicate students' growth and integrate assessment with learning (Nunan, 2004; Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002). A well-developed student portfolio emphasizes what the students can do to participate in an ongoing modified instruction in which assessment takes place all the time (Valencia, 1990). Portfolios are considered to be useful especially for non-native English students because they "provide a broader measure of what students can do, and because they replace the timed writing context, which has long been claimed to be particularly discriminatory against non-native writers" (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000, p.61). They appear to show the greatest promise in enhancing different dimensions of learning and promoting student autonomy (Chen, 2006) and they stimulate student ownership of their work (Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Tierney, Carter & Desai, 1991).

Despite its potential benefit to students, using writing portfolios is not popular in the Iranian EFL context. Students are usually given numerical grades for their end of term writing assignment which may not be accurate indicators of their writing ability and the teachers are not in a position to make accurate judgments about the development of their students as writers. Hedge (2000) states that portfolio assessment is seen as a more comprehensive portrait of students' writing ability than one essay composed under restricted circumstances. Thus, evaluating portfolios instead of only one impromptu timed writing sample of students will put teachers in a better position to make informed judgments about students' writing ability. In addition to this summative function of portfolio assessment, it also enables teachers to provide ongoing feedback that informs both teaching and learning (Dysthe, 2008). This formative function of portfolio assessment is under-explored especially in the EFL context (Lam & Lee, 2010). This study was an attempt to explore if portfolio as a process-oriented writing pedagogy improves Iranian EFL students' essay writing ability and its sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary. Additionally, students' qualitative descriptions were investigated for two reasons; first, whether they match the quantitative findings and second, to see the impact of portfolio assessment on the students' writing process.

Theoretical Background

Emergence of portfolio assessment

In the constructivist post method era, there has been a paradigm shift from testing the outcome to assessing the learning process. Because of the incompatibility of process learning and product assessment (Moya & O'Malley, 1994), language assessors have proposed a number of alternative assessment options including self-assessments, portfolio assessment, student designed tests, learner-centered assessment, projects and presentations that "can be used with great success in today's language classrooms" (Coombe, Folse & Hubley, 2007, p.xx). It is believed that alternative assessment provides a strong link between instruction and assessment by forming part of a feedback loop that enables teachers to monitor and modify instruction according to results of student assessment (Tsagari, 2004). Assessment and instruction are considered to be inseparably related to each other. Assessment is an "interactive and collaborative process in which information is collected in natural classroom instructional encounters" (Hedge, 2000, p.395). Hence, having portfolios as an assessment method is related to instruction since portfolio is regarded as one of the most popular alternatives in assessment, especially within the framework of communicative language teaching (Brown, 2004). It is defined as "a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas" (Genesee & Upshur, 1996, p.99).

Portfolio assessment in teaching and learning EFL/ESL writing

In the domain of teaching and learning EFL/ESL writing, there have been two lines of research which explore the use of portfolios. The first line of research is mainly concerned with students' reflections, comments and attitudes toward portfolio assessment. For example, Wang and Liao (2008) investigated student satisfaction of portfolio assessment. They found that students in their portfolio assessment group experienced greater satisfaction than those in their control group. Besides that, they also found after some interviews that this assessment has a positive effect on the students' English learning process, specifically they liked being involved in the English writing process and with the help of portfolios they could understand and further address their writing problems. This is evident when they reported that the writing portfolio enabled them to understand their grammar and writing problems. A related study by Marefat (2004) investigated students' views on portfolio use in an email-based EFL writing class. The majority of the participants found that the portfolio approach was a positive and refreshing opportunity for their writing repertoire. In addition, some students developed a personal understanding of their learning process. Similarly, Paesani (2006) conducted a writing portfolio project whose goal was to integrate the learning of skills, content and language competencies through literary study. Students' reactions to the portfolio writing project emphasized the perceived value of the project in boosting the development of students' writing skills and grammatical competence. Hirvela and Sweetland (2005) described two case studies which investigated student experiences with portfolios in two ESL writing courses. The results showed that the participants liked the idea of portfolios but they did not endorse their use as employed in those writing courses.

The second line of research is mainly concerned with the effect of portfolio assessment on learners' achievement in writing. Fahed Al-Serhani (2007) found that portfolio assessment had a significant positive effect on students' writing performance in general and the product skills of purpose, content, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure and mechanics in particular. The participants' use of writing processes was also improved. There was a significant difference between the portfolio and non-portfolio groups' use of each of the four writing processes of planning, drafting, revising and editing. Elahinia (2004) investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on Iranian EFL learners' writing achievement. She found that portfolio assessment had a significant positive effect on writing performance of the participants. The students in the experimental group (i.e. portfolio assessment group) outperformed those in the control group on a writing test given at the end of the experiment. Moreover, the participants of the study had a positive attitude toward their writing experience. Yurdabakan and Erdogan (2009) investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on reading, listening and writing skills of a group of secondary school students in Turkey. They found that portfolio assessment had significant positive influence on students' writing skills. The mean score of writing in the portfolio assessment group was significantly higher than that in the control group. The same results were not found for reading and listening skills. In other words, portfolio assessment did not affect students' reading and listening skills.

The Present Study

Most of the literature on the use of portfolios comes from first language writing and there is little literature on the use of portfolios for L2 learners either in teaching and learning or assessment domains (Hamp-Lyons, 2006). Furthermore, the existing literature on portfolio assessment is generally anecdotal in nature (Gottlieb, 2000) and has not been much augmented by quantitative research (Song & August, 2002). There is scarcity of quantitative research as to the impact of portfolio assessment on EFL students' writing ability and no study has been done - to date - to investigate the impact of portfolio assessment on sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary. Moreover, with regard to EFL writing instruction there has been little research exploring student responses on the use and value of portfolios. Thus, the present study aims at investigating the impact of portfolio assessment on Iranian EFL students' overall writing ability and its sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary. In addition, interviews were conducted to understand students' perceptions about the impact-captured via quantitative results - of portfolios on their writing ability in general and the aforementioned sub-skills in particular. Accordingly, the present study aims at investigating the following research questions:

1. Does portfolio assessment affect the participants' achievement in their overall essay writing ability?
2. Does portfolio assessment affect the participants' essay writing ability in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary?
3. What are students' perceptions about portfolio use?

Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study were 61 undergraduate EFL students at University of Isfahan. They were junior students who had passed general courses such as reading comprehension, speaking, grammar and a course on paragraph writing. In selecting and dividing them into groups, they were given a writing test (as explained in the Instruments section below) and were matched on a case-by-case basis in terms of writing ability. Class A with thirty students and class B with thirty one students were our experimental and control groups respectively.

Research design

The design of the study was quasi-experimental. We had a control group and an experimental group. Each group was given a pretest and posttest but the participants were not randomly selected and assigned to the groups for practical constraints (see Dornyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Nunan, 1992). For each group a writing test was given as the pretest and posttest.

The independent variable was the implementation of portfolio assessment in an essay writing class. The dependent variables were the writing ability and its sub-skills which were measured through a writing scoring rubric modified from Wang and Liao (2008, see Appendix A). The statistical procedures of independent-samples T-test and Mann-Whitney U test were used to determine if there existed any difference between the writing performance of the groups prior to and after the treatment. As for the qualitative data, inductive thematic analysis was used and the themes emerged from the data were discussed.

Instruments

The instruments used in the study were a writing test and interviews. The writing test involved students' performance on an argumentative writing task. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit students' opinions and reflections on the impact of portfolio assessment on their writing. All the interviews were conducted in English and tape-recorded and transcribed. An interview guide (see Appendix B) was used since using a schedule always helps the interviewer to stay focused and save time (Pramela Krish, 2008). The purpose of the interviews was on the one hand to match the quantitative results with the qualitative descriptions and on the other hand to tap students' perceptions about using portfolios.

Procedure

In choosing the design and implementation of portfolios, Gottlieb (2000) stated that there is much freedom; for instance, a portfolio's portrait is influenced by the variety of educational contexts, diversity of student population, and numerous teaching approaches. The portfolio model utilized in this study was based on the "classroom portfolio model" whereby the portfolios are assigned primarily for learning rather than assessment purposes (see Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005), and the portfolio procedure consisted of

collection, selection and reflection, as recommended by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000). Figure 1 depicts these procedures.

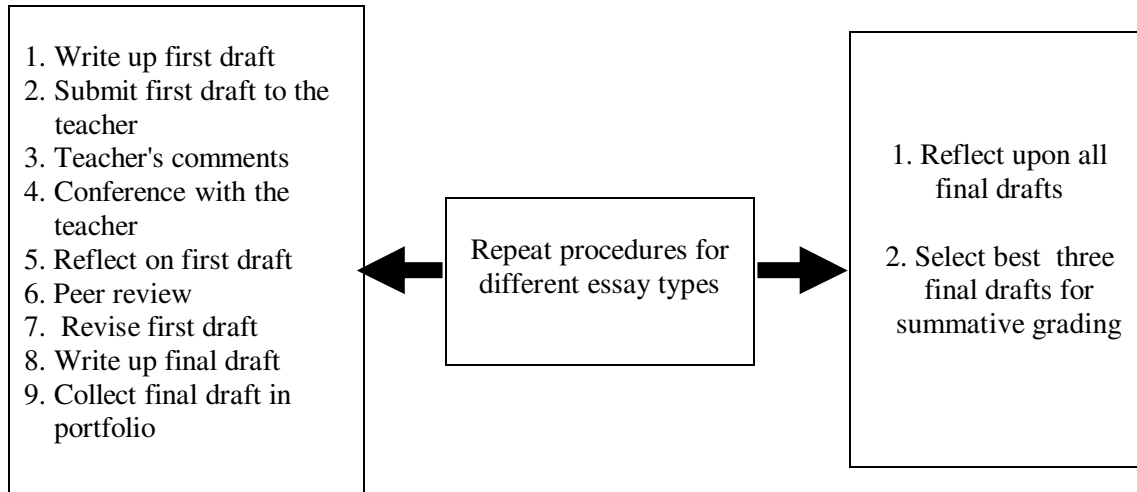


Figure1: Procedures of the portfolio process

At the beginning of the course, the experimental group was provided with the explanation of the nature, purpose and the design of portfolio assessment. The students were asked to write essays of different genres (i.e. example, classification, cause-and-effect analysis, comparison and contrast and argumentative essays) during the term. The students chose topics which were of interest to them and did not require expert knowledge. Having received the first draft of students' essays the teacher read them carefully. Then, under each assignment he wrote his comments as to focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary of students' written tasks. Therefore, the students gained information about their strengths and weaknesses in these aspects of their essays. The students were asked to self-assess or reflect on their writing in the classroom and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. They were also asked to review their peer's written tasks in groups of two. Moreover, the students consulted their teacher to receive comments in a one-to-one conference after the class. Then, at home, the students revised and redrafted their essays based on their own reflections and the teacher's and peer's comments. In short, the portfolio project required that students write essays of different genres. They revisited, reflected on and revised the essays in response to peer and teacher feedback during the term.

The control group received traditional assessment. The instructor explicitly taught the structure of the essay, how to develop the thesis statement, body paragraphs and conclusion, outlining, etc. The students were asked to write essays of different genres during the term using topics which were of their interest and did not require expert knowledge. Contrary to the experimental group, the participants were not asked to reflect on, redraft and revise their essays. The evaluation of their writing ability was based solely on the final examination.

The students were required to select three out of five of their best final drafts for summative grading. As in Lam and Lee's (2010) study, the average of scores on the three pieces of writing was considered as the portfolio score of the students. Evaluating the portfolios was based on analytic ratings. In line with Lam and Lee's study, to foster a close connection between teaching and assessment, the assessment criteria were made explicit and clear to the participants before they compiled their portfolios. As shown in Appendix A, the writing scoring rubric has five subscales, each with five levels. Therefore, the writings of the participants were rated on a 25-point scale. It should be mentioned that the rubric was also used to rate students' essays at the beginning and end of the term (i.e. pretest and post test). The ratings were made twice by the instructor to ensure reliability. The intra-rater reliability coefficients for the pretest and posttest ratings were shown to be 0.86 and 0.92 respectively.

Results

As mentioned earlier, the main aim of the study was to find out the impact of portfolio assessment on students' writing. For this aim a number of research questions were posed to be examined in the light of a classroom research. In order to investigate the first two research questions posed, the following null hypotheses were set forth to be studied as follows:

- (1) Portfolio assessment does not affect the participants' achievement in their overall essay writing ability.
- (2) Portfolio assessment does not affect the participants' essay writing ability in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary.

In order to investigate the above mentioned hypotheses, various statistical analyses including both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for different purposes. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used in order to check the underlying assumptions of the statistical procedures applied in the study. For the purpose of testing the hypotheses, inferential statistical procedures were applied. To test the first and second null hypotheses, the independent samples t-test and Mann-Whitney U test were used respectively using SPSS 13. To probe the third research question, we interviewed eight students in the experimental group and investigated students' perceptions about the impact of portfolios on their writing ability.

Results concerning the overall writing performance of the groups

The writing scores of the participants in the posttest were normally distributed. Thus, to see whether the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-administration of the writing test, the parametric test of independent samples t-test was run using SPSS 13. Table 1 shows that the mean scores of the control and experimental groups are 12.70 and 16.46 respectively.

Table 1: The mean scores of groups in posttest

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest scores Control	31	12.7097	2.91197	.52301
Experimental	30	16.4667	3.81226	.69602

To see if the difference in their performance is statistically significant Table 2 should be examined.

Table 2: T-value for the writing performance of the groups in posttest

Posttest scores	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	2.528	.117	-4.334	59	.000
Equal variances not assumed			-4.315	54.269	.000

As shown in Table 2, the p value of .00 is much lower than .05. This shows that the difference between the means is statistically significant. Accordingly, the first null hypothesis which stated that portfolio assessment does not affect the participants' achievement in their overall essay writing ability is rejected. In other words, portfolio assessment affected the participants' achievement in their overall essay writing ability. Students improved their overall writing ability as a result of the treatment.

Results concerning the performance of the groups in writing sub-skills

Since the distribution of scores in all writing sub-skills were not normal, Mann-Whitney U test which is the non-parametric equivalent to the independent-samples t-test was used to see if the experimental group outperformed the control group in writing sub-skills. The writings of the students were rated holistically on a five-point scale for every sub-skill as shown in Appendix A. Table 3 shows the writing performance of the control and experimental groups on each of the sub-skills in the post-administration of the writing test.

Table 3: The mean ranks of the writing sub-skills scores of groups in the posttest

Sub-skill	Groups	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Focus	Control	24.47	758.50
	Experimental	37.75	1132.50
Elaboration	Control	22.84	708.00
	Experimental	39.43	1183.00
Organization	Control	22.37	693.50
	Experimental	39.92	1197.50
Conventions	Control	29.39	911.00
	Experimental	32.67	980.00
Vocabulary	Control	23.23	720.00
	Experimental	39.03	1171.00

To see whether the differences in the mean ranks are statistically significant Table 4 should be examined.

Table 4: Results of Mann-Whitney U test for writing sub-skills in the posttest

	Focus	Elaboration	Organization	Conventions	Vocabulary
Mann-Whitney U	262.500	212.000	197.500	415.000	224.000
Wilcoxon W	758.500	708.000	693.500	911.000	720.000
Z	-3.038	-3.829	-4.125	-.768	-3.787
Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.000	.442	.000

The U-values revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the groups in the sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization and vocabulary (the p-value is less than .05). As illustrated in the above Table, students showed improvement in these sub-skills. Therefore, the second null hypothesis which stated that portfolio assessment does not affect the participants' essay writing ability in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary is rejected.

Students in the experimental group did show improvement in the sub-skill of conventions. Their mean ranks of scores in the pretest and posttest were 31.40 and 32.67 respectively. However, the difference in the performance of the groups was not statistically significant. In sum, it could be said that portfolio assessment positively affected the participants' essay writing ability in terms of focus, elaboration, organization and vocabulary.

Results of qualitative data: student perceptions about portfolio assessment

To see the suitability of portfolio assessment for Iranian EFL students the study took students' views to this process. To achieve this, interviews were conducted -when the treatment was over-with students of different writing ability (four students with higher writing scores and four students with lower writing scores) in the hope that different opinions could be sought. The length of the interviews varied between thirty to fifty minutes depending on the interviewees' willingness to talk. Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed inductively and the themes that emerged from the data were identified. The major extracted themes were *writing achievement*, *use of reflection* and *awareness of writing* as explained below.

Writing achievement: In the interview, the students mentioned their ideas about their improvement in writing. Generally, all the students felt they have improved in their overall writing ability but there was no agreement among the eight about which sub-skill they had improved most. However, most of the interviewees said that the sub-skill they could improve least was vocabulary due to the shortage of time. They believed that improving vocabulary requires more and more reading. As Sedig said:

"I have little knowledge of vocabulary to use words effectively in my writing. Because I haven't enough time to read some stories, etc to improve my vocabulary. I have such kinds of problems".

Most of the students said that the sub-skill they could improve most was organization as shown in the interview data below:

"I believe my most noticeable improvement in terms of writing especially in essay was about organization. How to start an essay, how to finish it, how to use connectives or transitions in writing. First I didn't use at all any transition in my essay. My paragraphs seemed to be separated from each other (Alir).

Most of them believed that portfolio assessment helped them to become a better writer by exerting positive influence on the process of English writing. This is manifested in the following excerpts taken from the participants' conversation transcripts.

"The portfolio program helped me to write better by giving me more confidence and motivation in writing and by forcing me to write a lot" (Parand).

"I think the positive aspects of the writing class were the class participation and giving opportunity to the students to involve in the learning process..... I paid more attention to the components of writing such as organization, mechanics, etc"(Alisa.)

Use of reflection: In this study, attempts were made to generate the "portfolio culture", to use Hirvela and Sweetland's (2005) term, that engaged the students in the process-based reflection. All the interviewees commented on the usefulness of reflection in the writing

portfolio program. As one of them said "reflection was very useful to me because it leads to better understanding of our problems in writing" or another one noted that "by reflecting I could understand my mistakes which I had never noticed them.... It is better for some one evaluate herself before anyone else do this for her".

The students also perceived the value of writing portfolios in linking assessment, learning and instruction. This is shown in the following interview data:

"Reflecting on our essay was beneficial because I learned to find some of my mistakes. It was a chance for me to look at my essays critically and myself try to find my mistakes and it is really helpful not to repeat the mistakes again. I also criticized my instructor to have a better performance in class" (Sedig).

Awareness of writing: The last major theme emerged from the data is awareness among the students of what writing is. As one of them said "I have planned to keep a diary, read more books and pay more attention to all writing sub-skills. Writing is not just grammar and spelling". Another student also said that "there is more to writing, and I have a long way to go". The students could identify their weaknesses in writing and seemed to be determined to solve their writing problems. The students were also aware of the fact that writing is a time-consuming process but they believed that "it is the way it is".

Discussion and Conclusion

The present research aimed at investigating the impact of portfolio assessment on students' overall writing ability and the sub-skills in writing which comprised focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary. Qualitative data were also utilized to triangulate the data and investigate students' perceptions about portfolio use.

The results of quantitative data analysis showed that portfolio assessment affected the students' achievement in their overall writing as well as their achievement in terms of focus, elaboration, organization and vocabulary. The results echo earlier findings in the literature. It is consistent with Elahinia's (2004) and Yurdabakan and Erdogan's (2009) findings that portfolio assessment significantly improves students' overall writing ability. The results are also to some extent in accord with Fahed Al-Serhani's (2007) findings that portfolio assessment significantly improves students' writing performance in general and the product skills of purpose, content, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure and mechanics in particular. Fahed Al-Serhani's study showed that portfolio assessment affected the sub-skill of conventions (i.e. structure and mechanics); however, this was not statistically significant in the present study.

The difference in findings might be related to the gender of the participants. The participants in Fahed Al-Serhani's study were all female students while the participants of the present study consisted of both males and females. The factor of gender might moderate the effect of portfolio assessment on "conventions" of writing. Students' perceptions about portfolio use were elicited via semi-structured interviews. The participants had a positive attitude toward portfolio assessment and overwhelmingly said

that the portfolio-based class improved their writing ability and its sub-skills. However there was no agreement among the eight about which sub-skill they had improved most which might suggest the opportunity they had found in the writing class to individualize learning. Five students said that the sub-skill they had improved most was "organization" and seven students said that the sub-skill they had improved least was "vocabulary". It could be suggested that more reading input could be given in writing portfolio programs so that students can perceive their improvement in vocabulary. In line with qualitative studies done by Wang and Liao (2008), Paesani (2006) and Mohd Rashid Mohd Saad and Mohd Asri Mohd Noor (2007), students perceived the value of the portfolio project in boosting the development of their writing.

Portfolio assessment could be used in writing classes on the one hand to resolve the teaching-testing incoherence (Walker & Perez Riu, 2008) prevalent in most EFL writing classes and on the other hand to boost students' achievement in writing ability. In sum, this study demonstrated the formative potential of portfolio assessment to help students foster their English writing ability. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to find out the impact of writing portfolios on Iranian EFL learners' writing ability. The results showed that portfolio assessment as a process-oriented teaching and assessment tool improved the students' overall writing ability and the sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization and vocabulary. The students also perceived the positive effects of portfolio assessment on the product as well as the process of English writing. The positive effects of portfolios on students' writing might be due to the "opportunities they afford students to become actively involved in assessment and learning" (Genesee & Upshur, 1996, p.99). In line with Murphy (2006), learning processes can be improved if formative assessment procedures are applied appropriately.

The students in the portfolio group were actively involved in assessment and learning in the process-oriented portfolio program. They revisited, reflected on and revised their writing during the term and put their selected pieces of writing in their portfolios. In line with the constructivist approach in which formative assessment procedures are incorporated into teaching and learning (see Hagstorm, 2006), assessment should be viewed as a process designed for learning rather than a product separated from learning. Writing portfolios can be used in EFL classes as a mechanism whereby learning, teaching and assessment are linked. They can be used to boost the development of EFL students' writing ability. Students' genuine writing performances during the term should be the target of evaluation. In fact, assessment should be seen as a collaborative formative process which helps students as they move toward their writing goals.

There are several limitations to the present study. First and foremost is that the portfolio score is considered to be the average of scores on the three selected pieces of writing. In other writing portfolio programs quantitative grades could be accompanied by a qualitative profile of students' efforts and achievements, hence reporting assessment results in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Second, age, gender and affective factors which are left untouched in the present study could be dealt with in further research to see if they moderate the effect of portfolio assessment on writing and its sub-

skills. Finally, this study did not investigate how students' beliefs about writing could shape their engagement with the writing process during this portfolio program.

Note

Students' names are pseudonyms, and in renderings of their utterances, all errors in conventions and vocabulary are retained.

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Appendix A

Writing Scoring Rubric modified from Wang and Liao (2008)

Criteria	Descriptors	Scores
Focus	1. Having problems with focus or failing to address the writing task.	1
	2. Inadequately addressing the writing task.	2
	3. Addressing the writing task adequately but sometimes straying from the task.	3
	4. Addressing most of the writing task.	4
	5. Specifically addressing the writing task.	5
Elaboration/Support	1. Using few or no details or irrelevant details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	1
	2. Using inappropriate or insufficient details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	2
	3. Using some details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	3
	4. Using appropriate details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	4
	5. 5. Using specific appropriate details to support topics or illustrate ideas.	5
Organization	1. The logical flow of ideas is not clear and connected.	1
	2. The logical flow of ideas is less clear and connected.	2
	3. The logical flow of ideas is mostly clear and connected.	3
	4. The logical flow of ideas is generally clear and connected.	4
	5. The logical flow of ideas is specifically clear and connected.	5
Conventions	1. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are poor with frequent errors.	1
	2. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are inappropriate with obvious errors.	2
	3. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are fair with some minor errors.	3
	4. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are almost accurate.	4
		5

	5. Standard English conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) are perfect or near perfect.	
Vocabulary	1. Little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms and verb forms. 2. Frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage. Meaning confused or obscured. 3. Occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured. 4. Almost effective word/idiom form, choice, usage. Almost appropriate register. 5. Effective word/idiom form, choice, usage. Appropriate register.	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

Interview Guide

1. Do you think that your overall writing ability improved as a result of the portfolio program?
2. Do you think that the sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary improved as a result of the portfolio program?
3. Which sub-skill do you think improved most/least as a result of the program?
4. What is your attitude toward portfolio use?
5. What aspect of portfolio assessment you liked most/least?

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