FROM AUTHENTIC TO HOLISTIC:
THE EVOLVING TREND OF PORTFOLIO – BASED ASSESSMENT

Rido Imam Ashadi[1],
Elysa Rohayani Hasibuan[2]
[1]Faculty of Education and Teacher Training,
English Department,
Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah,
Medan, Indonesia
[2]STKIP Labuhan Batu,
Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Abstract:

This article attempts to overview literature on the evolving trend of portfolio-based assessment which has been argued to be the answer for the non-holistic and non-authentic nature of traditional tests. Both empirical and theoretical studies presented to explore the utilization of portfolio as well as the challenges faced over this type of assessment. This article also provides some implications for future studies particularly on the development of portfolio assessment literacy or professional training to teachers and the use of electronic portfolios. Most studies on the use of portfolio particularly in Indonesian setting have been mainly focused on writing skill rather than other language skills. Therefore, addressing the integration of portfolio assessment in other skills is suggested for future examinations.

Keywords: authentic, evaluation, language teaching, portfolio assessment, writing skills

1. Introduction

The role of portfolio has been prominent as an authentic type of assessment in teaching and learning process (Srikaew, Tangdhanakanond and Kanjanawasee, 2015). One of the authentic types of this authentic assessment is called portfolio as mentioned by O'malley and Pierce (1996). It is defined as an organised collection of student work which is purposely selected to display clear evidence of students' effort and attainment in a certain area of the curricula for a specific period of time (Arter, 1990; Ocak and Ulu, 2009). The systematic collection of this portfolio is aimed at analysing the progress of students' works over period of time with reference to the teaching and learning objectives. Thus, the quality of students' academic skills and performance are presented and appraised through several different assignments or tasks. The students' holistic

attainment is observed by compiling different sources which origin is from a number of students' works or craftsmanship. Portfolio is deemed to be a valuable type of assessment for monitoring the progress of students' in regard to their knowledge, attitudes and skills (Barabouti, 2012). This is aligning to the notion from Kemp and Toperoff (1998) who stated that one strong characteristic of portfolio assessment is on its spectrum which allows students and teacher to work together. However, the second characteristic still heavily demands students to do the selection of their works; crafts that they consider to be worth presenting and the best samples which can display their accomplishments. Therefore, students will still be mainly involved in doing reflection and evaluation as well as assessing their works before assignment submission. The downside of traditional tests such multiple choice and essays has given impetus for the arising recognition of portfolio assessment (Nezakatgoo, 2011). Some of these traditional tests may produce inadequate portion showing the holistic and authentic picture of a students' academic achievement and provide limited information to teachers particularly on students' overall skills as it somehow takes solely on the final score or result of cognitive skill in a single summative examination. This phenomenon also seconds the view of the traditional tests which have been reckoned to be unsuccessful in reflecting student's authentic ability holistically (Carlson and Albright, 2012). Specifically, the portfolio has three different types as explained by Columba and Dolgos (1995). These three are called respectively as Showcase Portfolios; Teacher-Student Portfolio; Teacher Alternative Assessment Portfolio. Showcase Portfolios is when students are asked to select their most representative and best work which is usually also shown during teacher-student conference. Teacher-Student Portfolio is when teacher and student make a discussion and agreements mostly on communicating about materials to be included or excluded in the presentation folder. This type is also known as an interactive portfolio or working folder. Teacher Alternative Assessment Portfolio is quite the opposite of the first type as teachers will evaluate and rate all items or possibly all collected assignments from a student in order to result in a more focused and holistic assessment. This article is also divided into some parts and attempts to further overview literatures for both empirical and theoretical data. It begins with the historical benchmark for the utilization of portfolio assessment, followed by the current and some related core issues, challenges and arguments over the portfolio assessment. The article ends with the implications for further studies in language assessment.

2. The Use of Portfolio as an Assessment

The historical emergence of this assessment was started around 1980's and triggered by the scholars dissatisfaction of the shortcomings of traditional writing assessment such as impromptu essays and multiple choice which did not indicate students' higher order thinking skills, creativity and problem solving (Wolf, 1988). Thus, some writing practitioners and theorists had joint forces to advocate the portfolio assessment through publications highlighting the nature of portfolio which employs multiple samples (Burnham, 1986, as cited in Kiefer and Neufeld, 2002). The holistic nature of portfolio in

evaluating the work is also argued to promote students' autonomy (Richards and Renandya, 2001). There are three stages for students to develop the portfolio as listed by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) namely, 1) collecting the assigned works given by teachers which were adhered to the objectives of learning, 2) selecting the revised piece of works which will be included in portfolio, and 3) reflecting the strengths and weaknesses of each work throughout the learning process. Hamm and Adam (1991) said that allowing students to select their best academic woks will not only give them a meaningful avenue of reflecting to their accomplishment but also provide them skill of critical thinking. It is because they must be meticulous in collecting, revising and presenting their selected best works. The study of Elbow and Belanoff (1986) is one of the pioneers and earliest introduction of portfolio assessment when they employed it as a substitution of writing proficiency test in the State University of New York. It found that 90% of students passed the portfolio as they were given support in improving the draft as well as additional time to revise. The instructors also felt more empowered for being a professional team and involved actively in the process of decision making of students' portfolios. This is similar to other pioneers in portfolios who applauded this type of assessment for improving the professionalism of teachers in regard to their active engagement in students' assessment (Hiebert and Calfee, 1989).

3. Current and Core Issues

The popularity of portfolio assessment has influenced many other disciplines particularly in performance-oriented departments such as architecture, performing arts, textiles and clothing, food, music, drama and dance where the collection of works or artefacts speaks volume to the degree of developmental growth and skills attainment (McDonald, 2012). This is one of the evolution of the initial use of portfolio by Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff (1986) which was initially intended only as a writing program experiment in which students were asked to write several genres and compiled in a folder (Lombardi, 2008). The presence of portfolio assessment as formative-process oriented is a shift from summative-product oriented because it is not simply comparing better and worse but also observing the sign of learning process from a collection of product (Qvortrup and Keiding, 2015). Though portfolios have been referred as an instrument in assessing the general ability of language (Kohonen, 1999), writing assessment has adopted this more than other language skill assessment (Genesse & Upshur, 1996). The evolution of portfolio is also initially regarded as an alternative in L1 writing assessment (Simmons, 1990). However, there is a current trend of employing portfolio for L2 writing assessment (Wang, Shen and Lu, 2016). The low stake environment of portfolio-based L2 writing and delayed-evaluation has given students less pressure to hone their writing skill (Lee, 2107). Research in portfolio based writing have also come up with some positive attitude such as students are found to be more independent, language aware and self-reflective (Hirvela 1997; Aydin 2010), better writing performance (Boumediene, Berrahal, Harji, 2017) and fostering self-regulated development (Mak and Wong, 2017). Despite most studies in portfolio have been done

in writing assessment, the speaking assessment has also employed this type of assessment (Safari and Koosha, 2016; Srikaew, Tangdhanakanond and Kanjanawasee, 2015).

Another current trend regarding this type of assessment is also e-portfolio where student make use of the internet to digitize or store their works over period of time (Gray, 2008, as cited in Yastibas and Yastibas, 2015). This has been also used by Baturay and Daloğlu (2010) for an online writing portfolio which gained a positive perception from the students. Social media like YouTube, blogs, Facebook or Wiki-like website can be a new platform in applying this kind of assessment as internet can be storage for students' to collect their works. Jee (2008) also used blogs to assess students writing e-portfolios. Using current millennial trendy tools can be a new alternative which targets students' enthusiasm and interest. This internet as a platform is not only restricted to writing skills only as most studies may have focused more on integrating blogs and other accessible accounts for students' writing project. Instead, video sharing websites such as YouTube or Vimeo can be used by students as a platform for their speaking projects. Some ideas can be in form of making *vlogs* or interviewing activities which are later uploaded and submitted for a speaking assessment. The collection of their speaking projects in these websites can be easily accessed and assessed by the teacher for the grades-making purpose. This E-portfolio has actually been utilised in speaking assessment by many educators in recent years (Loan and Tin, 2016; Yastibas and Cepik, 2015). Zulfikar (2016) article on highlighting the benefits of web-based or electronic portfolio assessment in ESL classroom can be a good source for some interesting insights. He argued that electronic portfolios can actually promote self-assessment and learning as it serves as an everlasting storage of students' life experience, notions, archives and chronicles especially for future needs. Some of specific web – based electronic portfolios are also featured in the article such as Blog, DoYouBuzz, PathBrite, Flavors.me, Shown'd, Weebly, and Portfolio Gen. These sites are free of charge and can be used to compose reflection, stories and narratives for the purpose of personal, academic or professional use (Babaee and Tikoduadua, 2013). The higher level of practicality of electronic portfolios is also the strong point of this type of format compared to conventional paper-based portfolios. The appealing features and accessibility of this web-based portfolio storage make this alternative seem current and a solution to the manual problem of assessing paper-based portfolio. Moreover, the collection of students' works is not used for the academic purpose only but also electronically accessible to be used as a report to schools' headmaster or students' parents. The various forms of digital artefacts can be stored and assessed in this form of portfolio such as audio, video, photo, clips, short movies, text, vlog etc. This kind of collection and organization does require students' learning autonomy for students should be able to assess their work and evaluate their learning outcome.

4. Controversies of the Use of Portfolio Assessment

There are some major debate arising on assessing portfolio such as reliability and the nature of being too time-consuming (practicality), fairness and large-scale test implementation. This section will highlight some disputes and propositions. Portfolio assessment demands significant amount of teacher time in order to read different entries (Kim and Yazdian, 2014). However, as Elmore (1995 as cited in Kim and Yadzian, 2014) suggests teacher must have clear instructional objectives and classroom activities as the key management. This is also felt by the 204 Turkish university students in Aydin's (2010) study. Although the gain in vocabulary and English writing skill, they still reckoned the process as labour-intensive and tedious. Lam (2017) states that this can be overcome by equipping students with planning and evaluating capacity which can promote self-regulated learning. The feasibility of portfolio assessment in a larger-scale level has also been doubted (Spalding, 2000). This is again still related to the amount of time spent to check numerous entries. Some teachers may have been assigned to teach different skill lessons which will eventually affect to the limited amount of time to assess students' entries in a meticulous manner. The fairness issue is susceptible to occur in those large scale situations as multiple genres and reflective section can be challenging for raters (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 1993). Standardizing the design of portfolio rubric and its scoring measurement has been also part of the reliability debate (Nezakatgoo, 2011). One of the utmost assets of the portfolio is also its weakness which is the uniqueness for each writer (Noel, 2017). Some students may present different types of signature styles in their craftsmanship. The uniqueness of their works requires special treatment and understanding in regard to the individual's assessment. This can also be lengthy process of work analysis because evaluating the diverse works can generate problems in terms of reliability (Bailey, 1998). Weigle (2002 as cited in Noel, 2017) suggests the use of analytical scoring with clear set of rubric and the control on the content of portfolio to produce reliable outcomes.

5. Implications for Language Assessment

Some aspects of portfolio assessment are still found to be underrepresented which possibly need further empirical studies, for example, in the area of discovering the impact of L2 writing portfolios in school setting (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000). It is because most of the empirical studies have been more interested in conducting writing portfolio research in the context of post-secondary or tertiary educational level (Lam, 2017). The role of training L2 writing teachers in implementing portfolio assessment has also been echoed as matching rubrics to learning objectives, instruction to self-assessment, scoring method and making reflection does require specialist knowledge and skill (Coombe, Troudi, & Al-Hamly, 2012; Lee, 2017; Lam, 2017). There are still few documents investigating the portfolio assessment literacy to teachers. Some of them are Fulcher (2012) who conducted survey approach and found that there is an urgent need for university-level instructor's language assessment in order to inform them with

better instructional design. Hamp-Lyons (2007) also pointed out the importance of professional training in portfolio assessment to teachers particularly in the reflective activities. This is also the reason why many teachers are still doubtful in applying this kind of assessment as they have many technical inquires pertaining to the portfolio assessment. It is unfortunate to notice that the role of school and government are still not effectively seen in order to educate the teachers with this knowledge. Therefore, the training or workshop which covers this kind of topic must be held more frequently as the massive dissemination can be done by this way. Portfolio assessment has been claimed to be appropriate to be used in assessing language skills (Kohonen, 1999). However, more studies have been concern more in writing skill and a small number of studies in speaking. Therefore, other studies addressing the integration of portfolio assessment in other skills can also be part of future examinations. As a matter of fact, Indonesian institutions have also been part of the study particularly on how they managed to apply the portfolio assessment in their lessons. Unfortunately, most of the studies are still in favour of researching the use of portfolio assessment in writing skills or academic writing course. A pre-experimental and descriptive analysis study was conducted by Efendi, Usman and Muslem (2017) to investigate whether students' writing skills in Banda Aceh vocational school can be improved by the portfolio assessment. They found that students' skill in writing recount text improved significantly for they argued that the nature of portfolio assessment has allowed students to revise and correct their mistakes. This is also about the fact that teachers will also be participating actively in answering students' inquiries in order to help them in completing assignments. Syafei (2012) argued that students have responded positively to the use of portfolio assessment in the Academic Writing class. He also found that the assessment has provided many positive effects for students also perceived portfolio assessment as a fairer test.

This study collected students' work and assignments over one semester period for the course of Academic I and II. The incorporation of peer editing was also employed in order to improve the quality of the essays. The integration of portfolio assessment to EFL writing is also conducted by Nopita (2018) which study concluded that the implementation of portfolio assessment has given positive contribution to both instructor and students. Instructor has succeeded in improving the quality of their EFL writing teaching as the use of portfolio has helped them in analysing the students' needs especially on observing difficulties and mistakes faced by students in their writing. This information will help the writing instructors to design their future instructional goals as well as to evaluate their teaching weaknesses particularly on improving the content, syllabus and the course materials. On the other hand, portfolio assessment has also influenced students' motivation, thinking quality and learning styles. This may be caused by the fact that portfolio assessment has improved the classroom interaction, input, process and eventual product of EFL writing. The integration of portfolio to skills lesson in Indonesian context is still apparently dominated by the writing course. Sabrina (2012) conducted research for two months with 31 students in a junior high school in Yogyakarta in which she found that portfolio

assessment has enhanced students' writing especially in five aspects: vocabulary, mechanics, content, language use and text organisation. The current trend of using portfolio assessment in writing course may be resulted from the aim of portfolio in showing sequential stages or phases in the process of writing which means that it is not always based on the final product but more importantly on the growth and learning development (Coombe and Barlow, 2004). Apart from language lessons, the portfolio assessment has also been utilized in other lesson such as Physics teaching particularly in Indonesian educational institutions. Wartawan (2017) investigated the effect of portfolio in the teaching Physics lesson which focus is on the scientific attitude of students. The portfolio assessment is mainly concentrated on the writing process and the Physics teaching product which will be presented in the form of reports on practicum. This treatment was followed by data collection on students' scientific attitude questionnaire. The study found that there is a scientific attitude difference between Physics students with portfolio assessment and students who learned with traditional assessment. Teaching Physics with portfolio assessment is found to be effective in improving the scientific attitude of students which involved 4 components: the existing folder of the student's work, clear criteria of assessment, self-assessment and conference of teacher and student. This study also echoes study from Komarudin (2017) which also found the same finding that the utilization of portfolio assessment in Physics education has effectively enhanced students' psychomotor domains and learning achievement.

6. Conclusion

This article has presented some parts highlighting the evolving trend of portfolio assessment which is deemed to be authentic and holistic compared to traditional tests. This portfolio assessment might be the answer for teachers' choices on traditional test which is still dominated by low order focused questions and summative oriented particularly in Indonesian tertiary institution (Ashadi and Lubis, 2017). Some pioneers studies in portfolio assessment have also been contrasted to the current utilisation of portfolio particularly the shifting trend from initially L1 to L2 writing assessment. The challenges and controversies section have also been provided to show some issues that are tend to inhibit portfolio as an assessment. Some implications for future research are included to promulgate the gap and possible future examination on the implementation of portfolio assessment. Despite the fact that portfolio has already been employed for almost a decade (Lam, 2013) but is still not known to many teachers. The implementation of portfolio assessment has not also been employed in many different lessons. Most studies are still focused on researching the portfolio assessment to the writing skill/ lesson/ course. Apart from that, there is still few studies found highlighting the implementation of portfolio assessment in Indonesia to other skill lesson which reflected the lack of knowledge dissemination in this area. This is also related to the fact that many teachers are still influenced by the traditional standardized testing formats as well as lack of familiarity. Hanifa (2017) study on investigating

teachers' understanding in the implementation of portfolio assessment shows that Indonesian teachers are surprisingly having good knowledge of portfolio assessment as a tool of evaluation. However, teachers' capabilities in implementing portfolio assessment effectively are still problematic particularly on the absence of students' involvement in choosing topics and time allocation for revising the final work. The initiative of intensive and well-designed professional training for teachers is one of the urgent strategies in making aware of the advantages of portfolio assessment. Through this kind of program, it is hoped that teachers can be guided on how to incorporate or embed this type assessment into their teaching (Afrianto, 2017; Gómez, 1999). Thus, it is concluded that although there are already a number of teachers who have been aware of portfolio assessment but some technical skills must be trained and carried out through a professional development workshops or other training programs which purpose is to improve teachers' skills in portfolio assessment implementation and to educate them in overcoming some present problems.

About the Authors

Rido Imam Ashadi is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training at the University of Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah, Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. He got his Master of Education in TESOL from the University of Sydney, Australia. Some subjects that he is currently teaching include Sociolinguistics, Cross Cultural Understanding, TOEFL Preparation and Discourse Analysis. He has also taught previously in several schools and language centres in Medan, North Sumatra.
Elysa Rohayani Hasibuan is a lecturer in STKIP Labuhan Batu. She teaches English in the Department of Biology Education.

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