



The Effects of Portfolio Use in Teaching Report Writing: EFL Students' Perspective

Hussein Taha Assaggaf (Corresponding author)

Department of English Language, College of Science & Arts- Qelwah, AlBaha University, AlBaha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

E-mail: saggaf11@yahoo.com

Yousef Salem Bamahra

English Language Institute (ELI), King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

E-mail: bamhra20@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Portfolio has widely been used in various areas including second language writing. The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of students in using portfolio in teaching technical report-writing. The participants are computer science students enrolled in a report writing course at a university in Yemen. For data collection, the study used three techniques; namely, group discussions, written reflections and a short questionnaire. The findings showed participants' positive views towards the use of portfolio in teaching writing in general and report writing in particular. The main views concerning the use of portfolio in teaching writing in general are: improving writing learning, making writing more fun and monitoring one's writing. The main findings regarding report writing were improving areas such as elements of writing, getting better feedback and report writing elements. The study concluded with a number of recommendations pertaining to both the practice of portfolio in EFL writing settings, as well as the future research.

Keywords: Second language writing, EFL writing, Portfolio

1. Introduction

It is crucial for any course of writing to utilise new techniques so as to enhance students' learning. This indisputably needs to be implemented in various situations including EFL universities in the Arab world. Writing in the Arab world, however, is below the experts' expectations (Ezza, 2010). Previous research referred that to a number of factors including the poor writing in the mother tongue (Al-Khuweileh & Al Shoumali, 2000), the old educational policies (Ezza, 2010), and the use of traditional techniques in teaching the English language (Assaggaf, 2010). In such traditional EFL settings, writing is merely looked at as a product and not a process (Hyland, 2003). The procedure is to assign a task, collect it, and then return it for further revision with the errors either corrected or marked for the student to do the corrections (Raimes, 1983). This practice, indeed, ignores the processes of writing that any written task should pass through to be completed (Flower and Hayes, 1981).

One of the techniques used to improve students' writing is to use portfolio in the writing classes. Basically, Johnson, Mims-Cox, & Doyle-Nichols (2006) consider portfolio as simply a collection of students' work that has been compiled over a period of time in the learning process. With a more profound look, (Genesee & Upshur, 1996 cited by Oztruk and Cecen, 2007) define it as a purposeful collection of students' written work that shows to students and others their efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas. Nunes (2004) illustrates that some teachers use the portfolio as an alternative assessment where it can either include a record of students' achievements or simply document their best work. Others, however, use it to document the students' learning process, or to promote learner reflection.

In an attempt to enhance the teaching and learning of writing of Arab EFL students, the researchers introduced portfolio technique in the teaching of report writing at a Yemeni university. In the present study, therefore, portfolio has been used majorly as a tool to enhance the learning of writing. The major focus, however, is on reflecting students' voice in using portfolio in the teaching and learning of report writing. Specifically, this study seeks to examine the following research questions:

1. What are students' overall views on using portfolio in teaching writing?
2. What are students' perspectives on using portfolio in teaching report writing?

The answers of these questions are important in two directions. First, they might inform policy makers at the university where this study was conducted in particular and other institutions at the tertiary level across the nation at large. This will perhaps lead to better design and implementation of this course and other similar writing courses. Second, this study might enrich researchers' knowledge of the views of learners studying report writing in an EFL context, which may result in more investigation of this important area of research.

2. Literature Review

This study intends to find out students' views with regards to portfolio use in a report writing class in an EFL context. In order to link the readers with the basic concepts and theories in the relevant literature, this section is divided into three sections: major approaches to EFL writing, portfolio and previous relevant studies.

2.1 Approaches to EFL writing

There is a bulk of literature that reviews the various theories and approaches in the teaching of writing as a second/foreign language (Raimes, 1991; Silva, 1990; Hyland, 2002). The major ones include: product-based approach, process-based approach, and genre-based approach. These will be briefly reviewed below.

The Product approach of second/ foreign language writing focuses mostly on the finished product (i.e. the text) produced by learners. The teaching of writing is largely directed towards language. "Viewed essentially as secondary and in some sense inferior to the spoken language, writing was used as a means of reinforcing language which had already been dealt with in spoken form" (White, 1988: 5).

The theory offered by the product approach, however, was not properly justified by many as it focuses mostly on the language, form and structure. They, instead, believed that writing is not a straightforward plan-outline-write process (Taylor, 1981). As a result, and on the contrary, emphasis was given to the process of writing rather than the form or structure. Learners are given roles as initiators and are encouraged to communicate by all means with the emphasis on fluency rather than accuracy (White, 1988).

Responding to the theory and research in this approach, teachers allowed their students time and opportunity for selecting topics, generating ideas, writing drafts and revision, and providing feedback (Raimes, 1991). This is achieved through setting pre-writing activities to generate ideas about content and structure, encouraging brainstorming and outlining, requiring multiple drafts, giving extensive feedback, seeking text level revision, facilitating peer responses, and delaying the correction stage until the final editing (Hyland, 2003). As for linguistic accuracy, it is often downplayed and usually delayed to the final editing. Other means such as teacher-student conferences, peer response, audio taped feedback and reformation are used (Hyland, 2003).

According to Williams (2003), there are three factors that mark one of the most significant innovations of this approach. These are (a) asking students to write often, in meaningful contexts, (b) providing frequent feedback on work in progress, and (c) requiring numerous revisions based on that feedback (Williams, 2003). All these factors can be implemented when preparing a portfolio in the writing class. This, indeed, makes the writing tasks more recursive process which would perhaps entail better outcomes.

Although the process movement made large changes in the teaching of writing in the whole world, it was considered insufficient for many researchers (Horowitz, (1986; Hyland, 2003; Johns, 2003). As a result of that, emphasis was given to genres on which learners are particularly involved. Even though the genre approach might be regarded as an extension of product approach (Badger & White 2000), it emphasizes the variability of writing according to social contents in which they are produced. In particular it gives emphasis to analyzing the particular grammatical and organizational conventions of specific types of texts that the students need to be able to produce (Badger & White 2000: 155).

All these approaches can inform the teaching and learning of report writing in the Yemeni context. In dealing with portfolio, learners need to go through different processes of writing such as writing in drafts and considering the audiences. In addition, the teaching of report writing entails focusing on the genre of report as it is the particular genre used in this particular context.

2.2 Portfolio

After reviewing the basic approaches to the second/ foreign writing instruction, this section presents the definitions and nature of portfolio in the writing class.

As a result of the growth and diversity of the use of portfolio, a range of definitions has also developed (Nunes, 2004; Hashemian & Azadi, 2011). The definitions have generally pointed out to the contents of the portfolio of students. Although the content is greatly dependent on the focus of the course and level of learners (Hashemian & Azadi, 2011), there are general guidelines. Bauer et al. (2007) (as cited by Hashemian & Azadi, 2011) suggest five different groups of materials that may be included in the portfolio of students: 1) Samples that are considered class assignment requirements, 2) processed samples that were previously graded by the teacher, 3) revisions of student work that are graded and then revised, edited, and rewritten, 4) reflections that are associated with the processed samples and these reflections give students opportunities to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and 5) portfolio projects that include work mainly designed for students to put into their portfolios.

The wide use of portfolio in education especially in assessment is partially attributed to the shift in emphasis from the outcome or the product to the learning process. Portfolio especially as a tool of alternative assessment has been utilized to serve this purpose (Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli & Ansari, 2010).

Another major factor behind the popularity of portfolio is the fact that many educational programmes have shifted their focus to the process and the capacity of the learner to self-direct his/her acquisition of knowledge (Nunes, 2004). In their paper Paulson, et al (1991) describe portfolios as offering a quite different approach to assessment from more traditional methods and can give students the opportunity to take risks, develop creative solutions and make judgments

regarding their own learning and performance. In other words, portfolio is a very effective tool in enhancing self-assessment and learner autonomy. The role of self-assessment in promoting learner autonomy has been emphasized to the extent that Hunt, Gow, and Barnes (1989) (as cited by Chen, 2006) argue that without learner self-assessment and evaluation “there cannot be real autonomy” (p. 207). A study conducted by Khodadady and Khodabakhshzade (2012) on the effects of portfolio on self-assessment, has found that portfolio assessment and self-assessment enhance the students' writing ability as well as their autonomy in writing. This has been confirmed in an earlier study by, Martines and Rubio (2009) where the use of portfolio in evaluation has been found beneficial in developing autonomous learning habits. Autonomous learners are believed to be capable of demonstrating active participation in the classroom. However, Nunes (2004) believes that in order to fully respond to the portfolios challenges of the current pedagogical thinking, the development of portfolios must follow two underpinning principles. The first tenet is that it should be dialogic, and facilitate on-going interaction between teacher and students. It has to be continually in the making and document work in progress. The second tenet of portfolio development is that it should document the reflective thought of the learner.

Along the same lines emphasizing the importance for students to write reflections, Zubizarreta (2009) describes how portfolios contribute to student learning through self-reflection and can be tools for improving student learning. He points out that, “deep reflection – not a learning log – is at the very heart of the learning portfolio”. Learners' reflection on their cognition process is proved as a vital component of education (McCombs 1987; Wolf and Reardon 1996, both cited in Nunes, 2004).

Another major benefit for the use of portfolios that results from self-reflection is the increase of motivation levels in students with low interest or low level skills in English (Axton, 2012). In his study on the role of portfolio in students' motivation, Axton (2012) ascertains that portfolio enhances self-reflection and therefore leads to an increase in students' levels of motivation be it extrinsic or intrinsic.

2.3 Previous studies

While there is a large body of research on portfolios, most of it is theoretical in nature, illustrating the reasons behind and benefits associated with the use of portfolios (Caner, 2011). In literature, similar to our study, there is a number of studies that have been conducted to examine the attitudes, views, or perceptions of language students. However, very few of them have been carried out in EFL settings (Caner, 2010) and they mostly report quantitative data from questionnaires (Cimer, 2011). Therefore, this study seems to be largely important since it provides both qualitative as well as quantitative evidence by documenting the benefits of portfolio use through the views of the student participants.

As indicated above studies probing language learners' views or beliefs are scarce. Lam (2012) conducted a small-scale classroom investigation that involved 16 EFL pre-university students in Hong Kong with the data collection mostly concerned with student perceptions about their experiences with two portfolio systems either working portfolio or showcase portfolio. Findings indicated that students from the showcase portfolio group were less enthusiastic about the effectiveness of portfolio assessment (PA), and queried whether it could promote autonomy in writing, while the working portfolio group was more receptive to the experience, and considered that a feedback-rich environment in the working portfolio system could facilitate writing improvement. The paper concluded with a discussion of how PA can be used to promote self-regulation in the learning of writing.

Cimer (2011) used data collected from students' reflections in a university in Turkey to report on how students perceived their experience of preparing portfolios and the effects of the portfolio process on their learning. The students' initial perception is that compiling a portfolio would be a burden and time-consuming but later they found it a useful learning experience. The study revealed that using portfolio combined with self-reflections and immediate feedback through weekly tests encourages students to study regularly, increases retention and makes learning more enjoyable.

Caner (2010) found generally positive attitudes towards portfolio assessment among EFL prep class students doing a writing course in Anadolu University in Turkey. Although participants found portfolio a supportive instrument, they also believed that it had loaded them with extra duties while compiling it. Consequently, slightly over half of the subjects did not prefer to be evaluated by portfolios, and most of them preferred to be assessed by traditional paper and pencil tests. In response to this, instructors were advised to provide extra time for the students' portfolio preparation processes.

Martinez and Rubio (2009) conducted two studies at two universities in Spain to explore students' opinions of portfolio use. Learners found the use of portfolio very beneficial mainly because it led to effort empowerment and daily basis work. They also recognized learning efficacy and competency development as strong characteristics of portfolio evaluation.

Apple and Shimo (2004) investigated the benefits of using portfolio assessment compared to traditional testing by probing the perceptions of students in two Japanese universities. They found that learners strongly believed portfolio construction helped them improve their compositional and expressive writing ability as they received ample feedback over an extended period of time. The majority of students found it enjoyable and it encouraged learner autonomy and provided them with cooperative learning opportunities. Still few expressed their frustration over the length of time it required in creation and assessment. The study concluded by emphasizing that the benefits of portfolio clearly outweigh the negative aspects.

To sum up, studies above have indicated positive attitudes towards the use of portfolio. The reported benefits include improving writing, self-regulation, increasing retention and encouraging learner autonomy. However, the studies have

advised that the use of portfolio should be also accompanied with immediate feedback, self-reflections, and sufficient preparation time. This study, therefore, attempts to find out if using portfolio in teaching report writing would produce similar or different results in the Yemeni EFL context. Hence, this is the first study of its kind to study the views of computer science students about the use of portfolio in teaching-report writing in the Yemeni context.

3. Methodology

This study is conducted in a private university in Yemen (Al-Ahgaff University) during the second semester of the academic year 2012/ 2013. The program offers all subject-matter courses in the English language and students attend four English courses before doing the technical report writing course. The major objective of the technical report writing course is to “qualify students in writing properly for their study particularly reports which are needed in the last year” (English Language Unit 2004: 6). During the course, students are introduced to types of reports and various sections of reports such as acknowledgement, introduction and conclusion. The course dedicates a section for oral presentation, as well. By the end of the course, each student is required to write one report of 1000-1200 words. The course outline specifies four techniques for assessment including: 10% mid-term test, 20% a written report, 10% for portfolio and 50% for the final exam. There is also 10% which is dedicated for the oral presentation.

3.1 Participants

The participants are 17 male students who were attending a report writing course as a requirement for completing a BSc in Computer Science. The students studied four English courses prior to attending the current course. Two of these courses were proficiency courses which focussed on language skills, whereas the other two focused on English language for computer science. The latter two courses intended to familiarise the students with the English language required in the field of computer and IT. The students are doing all the courses in their area of study in English and all of the assessment forms (e.g. tests, exams) are conducted in English. Furthermore, most of their instructors come from non-Arabic speaking backgrounds, where English is the only means with whom they communicate. These students seem to have positive attitude towards English as they encounter it in most of their study courses in addition to the English language ones.

3.2 Data collection

The data of this study were collected over a period of 14 weeks. For collecting the data three techniques were utilised namely, individual written reflections, two group discussions and a short questionnaire.

Individual reflections: participants are asked to reflect upon their use of portfolio once a month. This was done three times throughout the course. The students were encouraged to write about the good or bad things they get about their experience with portfolio. They were also asked to write about their learning of writing focusing on their feeling about their performance, the areas they feel improved, the areas in which they still have problems.

Group discussions: two class group discussions were conducted, one in the middle of the course (week 6), and another one towards the end of the writing course (week 14). Both discussions were dedicated to discuss participants' views on the use of portfolio in teaching the writing course. The second one included also questions related to the data gained from the questionnaire. The two discussions were tape-recorded and the participants were informed about that in advance.

Questionnaire: In addition to the discussions and the reflections, a brief questionnaire was specially designed for this study as well. The questionnaire contained areas concerning writing in general and technical report writing in particular. Most of the items were taken from the course contents and from previous studies such as (Lam, 2013; Caner 2010; Fahim & Jalili, 2013; Martinez-Lirola, & Rubio, 2009; Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli, & Ansari, 2010) The questionnaire was administered to the student participants in the tenth week of the semester. The data gathered from the questionnaire were then analysed by counting the percentages of each item.

3.3 Procedures

Throughout a four-month's semester, 3rd year students attending a writing course in a local university in Yemen were instructed to keep a portfolio as a requirement for passing the course. Since the beginning, the students were instructed to maintain a file in which all documents used in the course should be preserved. These include different drafts of assignments, reflections, test papers, and answer sheets. For every assignment given, students are asked to write multiple drafts every draft in one separate sheet. The drafts should be shown to at least two colleagues before they are shown to the instructor to comment on them. All drafts with the comments should be placed in the portfolio. The students were also informed that the portfolio would be assigned 10% of the course overall grade. The evaluation included the number of drafts and improvements made in the drafts based on the comments given, the regularity in writing reflections, and the completion of all assignments and tasks given throughout the course.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data obtained from the two group discussions, the researchers listened carefully to the recordings for various times to get familiar with the main themes and ensure accurate emerging topics can be picked up. Data from the reflections were also compared to the initial themes obtained from the discussion. The first issues appeared were having both positive as well as negative views towards portfolio. The analysis was then continued by grouping the main themes in both opposing directions. Six topics were figured out as positive views whereas two topics were categorised under negative. The data were also then re-examined after conducting the questionnaire in order to find out useful quotations that could be used to support the obtained quantitative data.

With respect to the questionnaire, the responses were analysed by counting responses in every item and then calculating the percentages accordingly. Data obtained from the questionnaire were then triangulated with qualitative data from the interviews and discussions. This is to increase the likelihood that the conclusions and interpretations made in the study are credible and valid (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the data obtained for this study. This is divided into two main sections based on the two research questions. The first is concerned with students' overall views regarding the use of portfolio in writing, whereas the second section is concerned with the participants' views with regard to the use of portfolio in the teaching of report writing.

4.1 Students' overall views on using portfolio in teaching writing

The first objective of this study is to find out students' views on teaching writing using portfolio. Qualitative data obtained from the class discussions and student reflections showed basically positive attitudes towards portfolio use in teaching writing. Generally speaking, the participants found portfolio an impressive means in the teaching and learning of writing. The themes can be categorised into positive and negative groups. The main positive ones are the following:

- Improving the learning of writing: for the participants, portfolio is useful to develop the learning of writing in general.
- Making writing learning more fun: this means that using portfolio has made their learning more interesting.
- Monitoring ones' writing: this means learners feel portfolio has helped in developing autonomy which indicates more dependence on the learner himself rather than the instructor or classmates.
- Making writing a long-term process: as portfolio involves checking and revising one's written work over time, time span for learning is expanding.
- Encouraging more creative learning: participants feel that portfolio could encourage more creative learning. This perhaps is due to the long term span of writing in which tension is no more available.
- Developing organization and thinking: because learners have more time to look at their work, this might have enabled them to think more on their writing and to organize it in better ways.

On the other hand, the data uncovered negative themes towards portfolio. These can be summarised as follows:

- Learning takes more time: They feel that using portfolio required more time for the process of teaching and learning of writing. This seemed a disadvantage for them as it entailed more effort, as can be seen in the following point.
- Too much writing: the use of portfolio made students write more than they used to do and that made them feel it has become more demanding.

The summary above uncovers general positive attitudes towards the use of portfolio in teaching writing. This matches with the findings of previous studies in EFL writing including Ozturk & Cecen (2007). However, some of the findings seem to reflect the students' worries of having such a new technique. Students feel that writing has become more demanding and required more time, which seemed to be opposite to what they were used to do in other writing classes. It seems that students have been given more responsibility in maintaining issues relating to the completion of the course which is not common in this study environment. Indeed, this matches with the findings obtained by Martinez-lirola & Rubio (2009) and Cimer (2011) who reported that students who use portfolio for the first time find it demands more hard effort. The final finding also meets with what was found out by Caner (2010) who reported that using portfolio requires more time.

To sum up, the findings discussed above show that the learning and teaching of writing was clearly affected by the use of portfolio in the eyes of the participants and that its usefulness transcended to various issues in the learning process. On the other hand, some of these findings seem to reflect the very nature of language teaching in this environment. The idea of writing being too much appears to coincide with what has previously been found out by Assaggaf et al (2012) regarding the confined practice of writing tasks in this particular learning context.

4.2 Students' views on using portfolio in teaching report writing

The above section presented participants' general perspectives pertaining to the use of portfolio in teaching writing. This section, however, highlights participants' views on using portfolio in teaching report writing in particular. These are based on quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire. The findings are further supported with qualitative data gathered from the group discussions and reflections. The major findings are grouped into six sections presented below.

4.2.1 Basic elements of writing: Data obtained showed that using portfolio in teaching writing has helped students develop writing sentences and paragraphs. As can be seen on Table 1 below, 82% of the participants reported that portfolio could help them write better sentences, whereas 76% were in favour of the idea that portfolio could help them write better paragraphs. Data from the reflections and discussions, moreover, uncovered similar results. One excerpt obtained reads "*of course my sentences are better now...*". Another excerpt is "*My paragraphs and sentences became better.. far better than before*". The data here match with the questionnaire items in favour of positive views of using portfolio in developing sentences and paragraphs.

Table 1. Writing sentences and paragraphs

Questionnaire item	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
Portfolio helped me write better sentences.	6%	12%	82%
Portfolio helped me write better paragraphs.	12%	12%	76%

4.2.2 Grammar and accuracy in technical writing: Data obtained showed that using portfolio in teaching technical report writing has helped students develop grammar and accuracy in writing. 70% of the respondents were in agreement that the use of portfolio helped them write grammatically correct sentences; while a majority of 82% reported it could help them revise and review their previous work as can be seen on Table 2 below.

Table 2. Grammar and accuracy

Questionnaire item	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
Portfolio helped me write grammatically correct sentences.	18%	12%	70%
Portfolio helped me revise and review my previous work.	6%	12%	82%

Data from the discussion, furthermore, showed similar results. The students confirmed that the use of this technique helped them in writing accurately. One of the excerpts obtained states: *'Yes, this made me improve and revise my grammar'*. Another one is *'I feel more satisfied about my grammar and sentences now because I have more time to revise my written work. I have more time to check it again and again'*.

4.2.3 Feedback: The participants found that using portfolio had helped them get better feedback in what they wrote in the technical report writing both from the course instructor as well as from their classmates. The questionnaire showed that 64% of the participants believe that they had more feedback from the instructor and 82% obtained feedback from their classmates, as shown in table 3 below. Data showed some difference in the feedback from the instructor and the classmates with better result for the latter. This might be attributed to the fact that the classmates are closer to one another from the instructor in some particular situations (Zamel, 1982). This type of experience is important in some settings to help "develop in students the crucial ability of re-viewing their writing with the eyes of another" (Zamel, 1982: 206).

Table 3. Feedback

Questionnaire item	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
Portfolio helped me get more feedback from my instructor.	12%	24%	64%
Portfolio helped me get more feedback from my classmates.	6%	12%	82%

Data from the class sessions showed similar findings. An excerpt stated *'I got much feedback this time compared to the previous occasions... I mean there are many times when I got comments from my classmates as well as the instructor'*. Another student added *'... this is true we could get more comments, which gave us clearer picture about how to write properly'*.

4.2.4 Audience: With reference to audience, quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire showed rather negative response toward this issue. As can be seen below (Table 4), the participants reported a disagreement with regard to these items. This indicates that the participants believe that the use of portfolio could not help them give more consideration to the audiences.

Table 4. Audience

Questionnaire item	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
Portfolio helped me consider readers (audience) of my writing.	35%	23%	42%
Portfolio helped me consider other readers of my writing (classmates, friends, other instructors... etc.).	42%	24%	34%

In response to this result one of the participants stated *'we didn't feel we should show more attention to the teacher and other readers... the most important thing was to be able to show improvement rather than to please your readers'*. This

perhaps is one of the things that lacks in this writing environment. As writing is considered a task to be done for the class rather than something to enjoy and share with others (Assaggaf et al, 2012).

4.2.5 Writing Reflections: the data shown in Table 5 below, uncover that the participants writing reported unfavourable response towards this item. Even though 47% reported that they found portfolio helpful in writing reflections, the majority go for the other two fields of disagree and not sure.

Table 5. Writing reflections.

Questionnaire item	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
Portfolio helped me write reflections (my views) on my writing.	24%	29%	47%

Qualitative data, however, provided better understanding of this result. One participant explained '*it is the first time we are asked to do such a thing. I mean write about what we feel about our study*'. Being a traditional context, writing reflections seemed unfamiliar to the participants and it seems that it could not be completely understood by the participants. This perhaps means that more explanation and catering on new methods and techniques such as portfolio needs to be given more attention when implemented in the writing courses.

4.2.6 Report writing elements: Data from the questionnaire showed inconstant findings with regard to writing technical reports. Even though writing introductions gained 53% and writing full reports gained 65%, the other two items received lesser percentages, as can be seen in Table 6 below. This perhaps indicates another lack in the implementation of portfolio in the current writing course.

Table 6. Writing technical reports.

Questionnaire item	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
Portfolio helped me improve writing an introduction.	19%	28%	53%
Portfolio helped me improve writing a conclusion.	18%	40%	42%
Portfolio helped me improve writing results and discussion.	23%	35%	42%
Portfolio helped me improve produce a full report.	13%	22%	65%

In their response to this result, some participants refer that to the difficulties they encountered in doing the relevant tasks required in the course. It seems that these participants were not satisfied with their gain in these issues and that resulted in unclear picture with regard to using portfolio.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The purpose of this study is to find out students' views on the effects of using portfolio in teaching report writing. The study used both qualitative and quantitative data to answer the main research questions. The findings showed that there is a clearly positive view towards portfolio among the student participants. It has been found also that portfolio was helpful in a number of aspects including: improving learning of writing, making writing fun, monitoring one's writing, and making writing a long term process. The findings showed also that portfolio was also believed to be a burden when participants referred to it as taking more time and it required too much writing.

With regard to report writing, the findings uncovered that portfolio was found useful in a number of areas in participants' learning including: basics of writing, accuracy, feedback and report writing elements.

All in all, the findings of the present study coincide with previous research in that portfolio helps improve student learning. It is important however that this technique be well implemented. Some of the data in this study showed that the participants were not well aware of how to deal with the portfolio and this was attributed to the way it was implemented. The first thing to do is to ensure that the course instructors are made aware enough on how to use this technique. As Cimer (2011: 161-162) puts it "the success of any reform in education depends on teachers' understanding, acceptance and application of the new requirements". Hence, only well-informed, highly- trained teachers can bring out positive changes in any educational setting they are stationed in through providing learners with guidance and feedback on their work.

5.1 Recommendations

In conclusion a few recommendations can be suggested concerning the use of portfolio in a report writing class in an EFL setting. As some of the findings of this study showed, it is highly important that the learners should know more about portfolio keeping and how to compose and deal with portfolios. Learners should be given specific guidelines on what to include in the portfolio and how to write reflections. Indeed, writing reflections should receive more attention as

it is not common in such traditional EFL settings. This should be done by providing more detailed guiding principles with closer follow-up from the instructor. As this study showed positive results in using portfolio in teaching writing, portfolio should also be used in all other English language classes in order to help develop their learning of English and writing in particular. When portfolio is frequently implemented in different courses, self-assessment would perhaps become possible and the learning environment would break away from the traditional teaching methods of writing.

A final recommendation is pertaining to future research. The findings and the analysis of findings left some untouched areas of research regarding portfolio in particularly concerning feedback, reflection and report writing. It might be worthwhile therefore to explore further these aspects to enrich our knowledge about the benefit of portfolio in EFL writing classes. Furthermore, as this paper confined itself solely to the views of the male student participants –as no female students attended the current course, further research might be conducted to explore the views and perceptions of female students as well. Moreover, other stakeholders in the EFL teaching and learning environments such as course instructors need to be involved in any further investigations to extend our knowledge which should accordingly help improve the teaching and learning of writing in the EFL settings.

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