Teachers' View on The Use of Portfolio Assessment in Secondary Schools in Indonesia

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Abstract

Having been undergoing several changes in a decade, the concept of students' evaluation system in Indonesia has significantly transformed. In this regard, portfolio assessment has been taken into account as an alternative way to measure students' development based on the process and result of learning. However, lack of familiarity with this kind of assessment, followed by strong influence of traditional and standardized testing, may prevent teachers from having best insight about portfolio assessment. Therefore, this current study was carried out to investigate teachers' understanding in implementing the portfolio and the contents of the portfolio complied. The framework of qualitative research was employed in this study. The data were collected from four respondents by means of documents and interviews. The result of the study obviously indicated that the contents of students' portfolio comprised of wide ranges of topics in different genres. Furthermore, teachers' understanding on the implementation of portfolio as a means of evaluating students' learning was highly good. In spite of that, it was highlighted that students' involvement in determining the topic and the allocated time for product revision were absent. Therefore, professional development program has to be carried out to enhance teachers' capabilities in implementing effective portfolio based assessment and overcoming the present problems.

Keywords: portfolio, alternative assessment, evaluation

Introduction

Assessment has been an integral part of language teaching. It provides teachers and educational professionals an insight into students' achievement, ability, and their level of study; whether or not they have achieved the learning goals. Brindle (2001) asserts that assessment, as a variety of ways of collecting information on a learners' language ability or achievement, can be used for various purposes: (1) selection: e.g. to determine whether learners have sufficient language proficiency to be able to undertake tertiary study; (2) certification: e.g. to provide people with a statement of their language ability for employment purposes; (3) accountability: e.g. to provide educational funding authorities with evidence that intended learning outcomes have been achieved and to justify expenditure; (4) diagnosis: e.g. to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses; (5) instructional decision-making: e.g. to decide what material to present next or what to revise; and (6) motivation: e.g. to encourage learners to study harder.

The developments in Indonesia's education have been marked with the change in curriculum, which affects the systems of teaching-learning process and also assessments. Current language teaching emphasizes no more of traditional way enlightening learners solely by transmitting knowledge, but focus more on what students will need to succeed in the real world (Huang, 2012). Based on the exposure from deputy minister of education and culture of the republic of Indonesia for education (2014), in terms of assessment, the new curriculum 2013 reinforces the shift from assessment through test to alternative assessment which measures attitudes, skills and knowledge based on the process and results. In this type of assessment, students are evaluated based on what they integrate and produce rather on what they are able to recall and reproduce, which also is used to align the conceptions of teaching and learning that place more emphasis on the learners' progress (Coombe, Purmensky, & Davidson, 2012; Bataineh & Obeiah, 2016).

It is further described that the planning of the assessment should be in accordance with the competences to be achieved, socio-cultural contexts, principles of assessment and the implementation of the assessment in a professional, open, educational, effective, and efficient condition. In addition, assessment's results must be reported in objective, accountable, and informative ways. This kind of assessment is done by teachers in the form of classroom assessments. One of the most popular alternatives in assessment, especially within a framework of communicative language teaching, is portfolio development (Brown, 2004).

Portfolio is a purposeful collection of students' works that demonstrates to students and others of their efforts, progress, and achievement in given areas (Genesee & Upshur 1996: 99, in Brown, 2001:418). It resembles a collection of individual pieces of work including reflection, selection of evidence, process of evaluation and artifact (Chang and Wu, 2012, p.266). Coombe, Purmensky, & Davidson, (2012) believe that portfolios are works being compiled in a way that allows students to provide evidence of self-reflection and to reflect accomplishment to specific instructional goals and objectives. In addition, Brown (2001) states that the content of portfolios may include essay, compositions, poetry, book reports, ark works, video or audiotape recordings of students' oral production, journals, and virtually anything else one wishes to specify. It is a typical instrument of the alternative assessment measures that is intended to

enhance teaching and learning in a learning centered framework (Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005 in Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli, & Ansari, 2010).

Previous studies have indicated that using portfolios in foreign language education have lots of advantages. A portfolio can be a learning tool that promotes students' improvement in academic achievement (Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli, & Ansari, 2010; Vangah, Jafarpour, Mohammadi, 2016; Bataineh & Obeiah, 2016), self-directed learning (Huang, 2012) and achievement motivation that gives students a sense of accomplishment after they complete their work and compile them in the portfolios (Singh & Samad, 2013). Furthermore, tezci & dikici (2006) found portfolio also enables student to develop critical thinking since it is based on the cooperation of the teacher and students in finding solutions to the problems. It can also enhance students' learning responsibilities (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Nunes, 2004 in harmer 2007; Tezci & Dikici, 2006; Sandford & Hsu, 2013). It means that students can become more autonomous, and it can foster student reflection and help them to self-monitor their own learning. In addition, Mokhtaria (2015) summarizes portfolios are useful for involvement of learners, increase of accountability, a common vision of goals, authentic picture of learning, improved teaching/learning and reflection of assessment reform.

Before creating portfolio, there are a number of matters needed to be concerned. Tangdhanakanonda & Wongwanichb (2015) highlight the five common essential steps in making a portfolio, i.e., planning for portfolio assessment, collecting created products, selecting products and reflecting on selected products, revising and evaluating products, as well as utilizing results from portfolio assessment. Therefore, teachers are supposed to pay attention to every single step in attempt to create good portfolio. Aside from that, Brown (2001) proposes some guidelines for using portfolio in a classroom; (1) specify to students what the purpose of the portfolio is (to emphasize accomplishments, to offer tangible material for feedback from teacher, etc.), (2) give clear directions to students on how to get started (many students will never have complied a portfolio before and may be mystified about what to do), (3) give guidelines on acceptable material to include, (4) collect portfolio on pre-announced dates and return them promptly, (5) be clear yourself on the principal purpose of the portfolio and make sure your feedback speaks to that purpose, (6) help students to process your feedback and show them how to respond to your responses.

Furthermore, Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) describe the characteristics of a well-organized portfolio. They assert portfolio should be able to measure the students' progress over different areas and needs to include more than a single sample. A portfolio assessment also requires the students to provide a wide range of topics in different genres to explore their ability. Besides, the context is demanded to be rich. Considering the matter of assessment process, students' experiences are vital factor that need to be discovered. Another characteristic of good portfolio is students get opportunity to revise their works before the final assessment. It also involves students' decision. They have the right to select their own works for making a portfolio. Moreover, student-centered control plays important part as well. It means students take the responsibility to learn the lesson. Reflection should be considered too. Students are expected to able to self-assess their works and reflect on the works little by little as they go on. Aside from that, portfolio needs to reveal the students'

growth in a specific area over a great time and exhibits the progress of every piece of work after the treatment and assessment processes.

Despite its benefit, portfolio assessment also leads to some consequences. Harmer (2007) asserts that firstly, portfolio is time-consuming. Secondly, teachers are also required to get clear training in how to select items from the portfolio and how to give them grades. Thirdly, some students may leave their portfolios until the end of the course when, they expect, their work will be at its best. Above all, when students work on their own away from the classroom, it is not always clear that the work reflects their own efforts or whether, in fact, they have been helped by others. Moreover, parental or community disapproval for such a new and unfamiliar system of assessment and the current status and role of traditional, standardized testing (especially high stakes testing related to promotion and graduation) can be the obstacles as well. (Mokhtaria, 2015). Hence, having good comprehension on how portfolios should be designed, maintained, and connected to objective criteria is a crucial matter.

As one of the primary means of assessment in today's classroom, with the implementation of the curriculum 2013, portfolio holds an essential part to provide the thorough assessment on students' development. However, the reality shows that the teachers' understanding of using portfolio as a tool of assessing students' learning is still needed to be considered. The preliminary study conducted in some schools revealed that even though the schools have implemented the curriculum 2013, yet the portfolio assessment is not highly used. As a consequence, teachers may still have lack of familiarity with this kind of alternative assessment. Furthermore, some teachers are still heavily influenced by traditional and standardized testing. Some teachers even do not have a clear idea about the works of students that can be used as a portfolio like projects.

Regarding to its potential benefits to students and implementation in the current curriculum, this study is trying to answer the following questions: (1) What kinds of portfolio contents are collected by the teachers? (2) To what extent do teachers understand the portfolio assessment implemented? To get more insight into the matters, this study was set as a qualitative study with explorative and descriptive approach. Data were collected from four English teachers experienced in implementing portfolio assessment; two junior high school teachers and two senior high school teachers. Documents gathering was carried out in order to determine the contents of portfolio used. Meanwhile, an open-ended interview was performed to get the information related to each teacher's perception on the use of portfolio in terms of pre-activities (preparation), on progress activities (while students doing the portfolio), and post-activities (evaluation).

Conclusion

From the document interpretation and the transcriptions of interviews, some relevant data have been identified and analyzed. The results of analysis have been organized in terms of the questions that this study is trying to answer. Hence, each data will be presented in accordance with the questions.

Question 1: What kinds of portfolio contents are collected by the teachers?

Based on the interpretation of teachers' documents on students' portfolios collected, it was discovered that the contents of portfolios compiled in both junior and senior high schools comprised of wide ranges of topics in different genres (see table 1).

Document source	Contents of portfolio
Junior high school teachers	- Announcement - Poster - Birthday Invitation - Presentation result - Procedure text - Events of the day & Journal diary (recount text) - Drama project
Senior high school teachers	- Poster - Invitation card - Interview record - Expressing advice - Expressing opinion - Mind mapping the concept of materials - Comic (narrative text)

Table 1. Kinds of portfolio contents in secondary schools

Both junior and senior high school students were asked to make portfolio that includes wide ranges of topics in different genres. According to Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000), since portfolio is used to measure students' progress, more samples are needed. Particular topics were chosen by teachers to be employed in this assessment, including short functional texts (invitation, poster, and announcement); genres of texts (descriptive, procedure, recount and narrative); and transactional and interpersonal communication expressions; (asking and giving opinion). Moreover, most contents of portfolios done involving writing skills of the students, such as the making of poster and invitation by the two levels of secondary schools. This is in line with previous researches conducted by Bataineh & Obeiah (2016); Vangah, Jafarpour, & Mohammadi (2016); Obeiah, & Bataineh (2016); Roohani & Taheri (2015); Nezakatgoo (2011); and Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli & Ansari (2010) that figured out the use of portfolio assessment had great contribution to students' writing improvement. Furthermore, other tasks involving students' writing could be noted from their designing announcement.

Even though portfolio is more effective to develop writing skill, yet, to construct a good portfolio, students need to use other skills as well like reading, speaking and listening. Students' mind mapping activity, drama project, and presentation report were the tasks that demanded them to use all language skills well. Students were supposed to design their mind mapping of the concepts of the lessons that they had learned regarding to the elaboration of the idea of genres of texts in terms of social function, generic structure, and language features. On the other hand, the task of interviewing family members on the topic of asking and giving advice demanded students to explore their speaking skill. The same skill was also emphasized on the drama project activity. Students performed a drama and it was recorded by using

video recorder. Meanwhile, in making report of presentations, the students should listen to their peers' presentations and made sure that they understood the point prior to writing them down as a report. As stated by brown (2001), the content of portfolio may not only consist of essay, composition, book report, but also art work, video or audiotape recording of students' oral production, and virtually anything else one wishes to specify. Besides, this type of assessment could lead students to be more creative and independent. As it is cited in Derakhshan, Rezaei, & Alemi (2011), Aschbacher (1991) enumerates one common characteristic of alternative assessments is requiring problem solving and higher level thinking. Thomas et al., (2005) add that a dynamic ongoing assessment like portfolio may aid in stimulating thinking and promoting students' independence. It is supported by Hashemian & Fadaei (2013) and Mokhtaria (2015) who found that portfolio considerably improved autonomy of learners and inspired them to become active and engaged learners.

Question 2: To what extent do teachers understand the portfolio assessment implemented?

This seeks answers about teachers' idea of the implementation of portfolio assessment in terms of pre-activities, on-progress activities, and post activities.

Through the data gathered from the interviews, it became apparent that in terms of preparation, teachers shared some similar idea such as associating the portfolio with the learning objectives and selecting the materials in accordance with the objectives. One learning objective that the teachers wanted to achieve was students understand the context of language used and produce the correct product of learning. In this regard, Suherdi (2015) believes that English for 21st century requires the students to have exposures to texts in real communicative contexts in which they are used to accomplish communicative purposes. Portfolio can contextualize learning and link experience with personal interpretation (David, Davis, Harden, Howie, Ker, & Pippard, 2001) as portfolio facilitates students' involvement in the process; therefore, they are more likely to find relevance and meaning in their school assignments Sandford & Hsu (2013). Then, the use of portfolio might contribute to develop the intelligences of the students such as linguistic, visual, and so forth. This was the reason why teachers paid more attention on students' readiness before doing the main activity of making portfolio. Most teachers would check on their students' preparation and understanding and provide examples so that students would be able to make portfolio correctly in the upcoming activities.

After knowing the suitable materials, the teachers decided the topics of the portfolio in which students had to work on later. However, it was noted that when it came to topic determination for portfolio, teachers became the center. All topics were selected by teachers only. Whereas, the use of portfolio was supposed to enhance students' autonomous learning and the ability to take responsibility for their own decisions. Therefore, students should be given chance to share opinion. For this reason, Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000), Sharifi, & Hassaskhah (2011), and Czura (2013) claim that in portfolio assessment, incorporating the learner's suggestions and opinions into decision making is vitally important. As a result, they will be able to make appropriate choices when working on their own. Portfolio assessment is intended to enhance teaching and learning in learner centered framework (Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005 in Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli, & Ansari, 2010).

Moreover, it was pointed out that there was a difference in setting the duration of working with the portfolio. Some students had limited time to finish their work because they did it at school. The teachers wanted to ensure students did the work by themselves. Harmer (2007) says when students work on their own away from the classroom, it is not always clear that the work reflects their own efforts or whether, in fact, they have been helped by others. As a consequence, students' real comprehension might not be identified. On the other hand, a number of students were given time to do their portfolio at home so that they could prepare better. Brown (2001) points out that portfolio should be collected on pre-announced dates.

When it comes to on progress activities, all teachers either from junior or senior high schools always provided instructions of what the students were supposed to do and gave guidance to them such as how to decide the theme, how to use certain expressions, and how to select appropriate words. Furthermore, the teachers monitored and kept an eye on students' progress. They had to ensure the students really did the task. In this stage, not only did the teachers had students to consult with them during working on portfolio, but they also tried to encourage the students to enhance their desire to work with other people. It was also discovered that while doing portfolio, the teachers saw some of their students still encountered a number of obstacles that hindered them to design a good portfolio such as being less creative, being not focused on their own works, lack of vocabulary and dealing with the due time.

The finding also revealed some matters that teachers concerned when students did portfolio. The first was providing instruction and giving guidance; such as how to decide the theme, how to use certain expressions, and how to select appropriate words while doing the portfolio. Students should know what they supposed to do. Teacher should give clear directions to students on how to get started because many students will never have compiled a portfolio before and may be mystified about what to do (Brown, 2001). Some examples may be a big help for students. The second was having the students consult with teachers. Teachers monitored students' activities and made sure that the activity went well while encouraging them to do better. This finding showed that portfolio could promote cooperation among learners and teachers. David, Davis, Harden, Howie, Ker, & Pippard (2001) state that portfolio enhances interactions between students and teachers. It can remind students that learning is a two-way process between learner and educator.

However, it was discovered that only small number of students could do it due to the fact that teachers had to deal with big class size. This obstacle was highlighted by wing (2006) as well. He reported that it was not feasible for a teacher who taught in big class to sit down with each pupil to discuss his/her portfolio regularly. For that reason, teachers should find alternative way in order to have the opportunity to have face-to-face interaction with their students. The third was monitoring students' progress. Alternative means of assessments is used to align with the conceptions of teaching and learning that place more emphasis on the learners' progress (Bataineh & Obeiah, 2016). With different statement, David, Davis, Harden, Howie, Ker, & Pippard (2001) believe portfolio for students' assessment does not only measure and reinforce the desired learning outcomes but also enhances the development of strategies, attitudes, skills and cognitive processes which are essential for lifelong learning.

In addition, some other constraints and difficulties in portfolio implementation were identified. A number of obstacles that hindered students to design a good portfolio were being less creative, being not focused on their own works, lack of vocabulary and dealing with the due time. Studies done by Caner (2010) and Huang (2012) figured out that portfolio assessment required students to have extra duties, responsibilities, and skills that they were not familiar with. They might still be influenced by the traditional test. Therefore, students should be informed how to cope with this alternative assessment. The finding was also supported by Tangdhanakanonda & Wongwanichb (2015) that found lack of knowledge of portfolio assessment and poor attention and cooperation of students in creating the portfolios could lead them to be less creative. Furthermore, portfolio would require a great investment of time to complete (Thomas et al., 2005; Sharifi, & Hassaskhah, 2011; and Mokhtaria, 2015). Consequently, some students might find it is difficult to complete the task on time.

For post-activities, the data revealed that teachers reviewed and assessed the students' works based on several elements such as the content, the decoration and the display of portfolio. Language components were also put into consideration like grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. Additionally, students' seriousness and efforts were seen by teachers as well. One benefit of alternative assessment, according to Tsagari (2004 cited in Hashemian & Fadaei, 2013), is it evaluates the process and product of learning. Hashemian & Fadaei (2013) affirm that portfolio provides a broader measure with respect to what the learner can do. However, it was pointed out that all of the students' works was only assessed once. As a consequence, students did not get a chance to revise their works. Actually, one characteristic of good portfolio is students get opportunity to revise their work (Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 2000).

Tangdhanakanonda & Wongwanichb (2015) highlight some essential steps making a portfolio which are selecting products, reflecting on selected products, revising and evaluating products. Teacher should contribute students' involvement in self-assessment and self-reflection to their sense of control over the learning (Ezell & Klein, 2003). Once learners realize the materials compiled into their portfolio serve a meaning for their own learning, they will become more aware that the portfolio assessment offers them a way to monitor their own progress they make in learning.

In summary, the findings showed that the contents of students' portfolio comprised of wide ranges of topics in different genres which were expected to further enhance language learning. Portfolio assessment can help students to demonstrate specific skills within the context in which they were taught so that they may view the importance of using language both in and outside of the language classroom. Meanwhile, teachers' understanding on the implementation of portfolio as a means of evaluating students' learning was highly good. The teachers were able to implement some of the essential steps in using portfolio assessment which are (1) associating the portfolio with the learning objectives (2) setting the duration for portfolio completion, (3) providing instruction and giving guidance, (4) building cooperation among learners and teachers, and (5) having some indicators to evaluate students' portfolio.
There were two crucial matters that teachers should concern more. First, teachers have to incorporate the learner's suggestions and perspectives into decision making like determining the topic of portfolio. Second, students should be provided with the opportunity to revise their work so that they can notice their own progress in learning.

Therefore, it is undeniably important that sufficient professional development program has to be managed for teachers to develop the concepts and the use of portfolios for different purposes. As a result, they can gain the best knowledge for implementing effective portfolio based assessment.

Acknowledgements

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