The Student's Portfolio in English Language Classroom

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Abstract

The student's portfolio involves collecting samples of students' work and experiences which reflect, through the things they do and say, the ways in which they think. The portfolio provides the students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of a topic being studied. The two main types of portfolios are:

1. The process portfolio which documents the stages of learning and provides a progressive record of student knowledge growth.
2. The product portfolio which demonstrates mastery of a learning task or a set of learning objectives and contains only the best work.

Portfolios, thus, can be used as a practical and authentic form of English language student assessment.

The aims of this research are to define the student portfolio, to describe the possible ways of implementing a portfolio project specifically in the English language classroom, to show teachers how to encourage their students create realistic portfolios of what these students know and can do, and to discuss how portfolios can be used as a practical and authentic form of student assessment.

Students' Portfolios in English Language Classroom

What is a Portfolio?

Below are some definitions of portfolio that may be different in wording but similar in meaning.

Paulson et.al (1991:60) state that a portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas of the curriculum. Portfolios should represent a collection of students' best work or best efforts, student-selected samples of work experiences related to outcomes being assessed, and documents recording growth and development toward mastering identified outcomes.

The Portfolio involves collecting samples of students' work and experiences which reflect, through the things they do and say, the ways in which they think.   (Batzle, 1992 as cited in Paulson:63)

"A portfolio is a collection of samples that communicate your interests and give evidence of your talents. You use portfolio to show others what you have accomplished, learned or produced." (Kimeldorf 1994:4)

Venn (2000, pp. 530-1) defines a student portfolio as a systematic collection of student work and related material that depicts a student's

activities, accomplishments, and achievements in one or more school subjects. The goal is to help students assemble portfolios that illustrate their talents, represent their writing capabilities, and tell their stories of school achievement.

Coombe, et al. (2007: 79) claim that "portfolios reflect accomplishment relative to specific instructional goals or objectives."

The researcher defines student portfolios as collections of student's work that can be used as an alternative assessment approach in the classroom.

Purposes of Portfolios

The portfolio provides the students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of a topic. Paulson et.al. (1991:63) state that teachers can use portfolios for a variety of specific purposes, including:

- Encouraging self-directed learning.
- Enlarging the view of what is learned.
- Fostering learning about learning.
- Demonstrating progress toward identified outcomes.
- Creating an intersection for instruction and assessment.
- Providing a way for students to value themselves as learners.
- Offering opportunities for peer-supported growth.

The teachers who pay attention to the process of learning as well as to the products of that learning in the portfolio can assess the students' abilities, skills and knowledge to accurately evaluate whether or not their teaching is preparing the students for the real world. (Valencia, 1990: 338-40)

Regarding assessment purposes, Venn (2000: 538) lists the advantages of portfolio as follows:

A. On the part of the students, portfolios can:

- promote their self-evaluation, reflection, and critical thinking.
- give them the opportunity to have extensive input into the learning process.
- provide opportunities for them to discuss learning goals and the progress toward those goals in structured and unstructured conferences with their teachers.

B. On the part of the teachers, portfolios can be useful for:

- measuring performance based on genuine samples of student work.
- providing flexibility in measuring how students accomplish their learning goals.
- enabling them to share with their students the responsibility for setting learning goals and for evaluating progress toward meeting those goals.
- facilitating cooperative learning activities, including peer evaluation and tutoring, cooperative learning groups, and peer conferencing.
- providing a process for structuring learning in stages.

- enabling measurement of multiple dimensions of student progress by including different types of data and materials.

Harmer (2001:340) identifies another purpose when he says that "portfolios can be used as a way of encouraging students to take pride in their work; by encouraging them to keep examples of what they have written, we are encouraging them to write it well and with care."

The Characteristics of Effective Portfolios

The major research and literature on portfolios reinforce the following characteristics:

- It is continuous and ongoing opportunities for monitoring students' progress toward achieving essential outcomes. In other words, portfolios provide both formative (i.e., ongoing) and summative (i.e., culminating) assessment.
- It is multidimensional, i.e., reflecting a variety of artifacts and processes reflecting various aspects of students' learning process.
- It provides for collaborative reflection, including ways for students to reflect about their own thinking processes and cognitive introspection as they monitor their own comprehension, reflect upon their approaches to problem-solving and decision-making, and observe their emerging understanding of subjects and skills.
- They clearly reflect stated learner outcomes identified in the core or essential curriculum that students are expected to learn.
- They focus upon students' performance-based learning experiences as well as their acquisition of key knowledge, skills and attitudes.

(George 1995:)

Coombe, et al. (2007: 79) believe that portfolios must include student participation in four important areas:
1. the selection of portfolio content,
2. the guidelines for selection
3. the criteria for judging merit, and
4. evidence of student reflection

Types of Portfolios:

The two main types of portfolios are:
1. The process portfolio which documents the stages of learning and provides a progressive record of student growth.
2. The product portfolio which demonstrates mastery of a learning task or a set of learning objectives and contains only the best work.

1. The Process Portfolio

Venn (2000: 533) states that teachers use process portfolios to help students identify learning goals, document progress over time, and demonstrate learning mastery. In general, teachers prefer to use process

portfolios because they are ideal for documenting the stages that students go through as they learn and progress.

This type of student portfolio contains work that shows the student's progression through the course of the school year. Writing samples, for example, might be taken from the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. This can help teachers, and parents with evidence of how the student has progressed.

George (1995) gives detail explanations for this type of portfolio as follows: The process portfolio documents all facets or phases of the learning process. It is particularly useful in documenting students' overall learning process. It can show how students integrate specific knowledge or skills and progress towards both basic and advanced mastery. Additionally, the process portfolio inevitably emphasizes students' reflection upon their learning process, including the use of reflective journals, think logs, and related forms of cognitive processing.

2. The Product Portfolio

The second type of portfolio, i.e. the product portfolio, involves the students' selected examples of their best work. This type of portfolio can be graded in one of two ways. In many cases, these items are graded normally and then placed in the student's portfolio. This portfolio can then be used as evidence of student work for college and scholarship applications among other things.

This documentation portfolio, as it is called, involves a collection of work over time showing growth and improvement reflecting students' learning of identified outcomes. It can include everything from brainstorming activities to drafts to finished products. The collection becomes meaningful when specific items are selected out to focus on particular educational experiences or goals. It can include the best and weakest of student's work.

This type of portfolio is also called the showcase portfolio and it is best used for summative evaluation of students' mastery of key curriculum outcomes. It should include students' very best work, determined through a combination of student and teacher selection. Only completed work should be included. In addition, this type of portfolio is especially compatible with audio-visual artifact development, including photographs, videotapes, and electronic records of students' completed work. The showcase portfolio should also include written analysis and reflections by the student upon the decision-making processes used to determine which works are included.

To conclude, each of the previously explained types of portfolios can serve specific purposes as a classroom assessment program.

How to Develop a Portfolio

There are three phases of portfolio development; organization, collection and reflection.

"1. Organization and Planning - This initial phase of portfolio development entails decision-making on the part of students and teachers. By exploring essential questions at the beginning of the process, students can fully understand the purpose of the portfolio and its status as a means of monitoring and evaluating their own progress. Key questions for the teacher and the student must include:

- How do I select items, materials, etc. to reflect what I am learning in this class?

- How do I organize and present the items, materials, etc. that I have collected?

- How will portfolios be maintained and stored?

2. Collection - This process involves the collection of meaningful artifacts and products reflecting students' educational experiences and goals. Decisions must be made at this phase about the context and contents of the portfolio based upon the intent and purposes identified for it. The selection and collection of artifacts and products should be based upon a variety of factors that can include:

  - Particular subject matter;
  - A learning process; or
  - Special projects, themes, and/or units.

All selections included in the collection should clearly reflect the criteria and standards identified for evaluation.

3. Reflection - Wherever possible, there should be evidence of students' cognitive reflections upon the learning process and their monitoring of their evolving comprehension of key knowledge and skills. These reflections can take the form of learning logs, reflective journals, and other forms of reflections upon their experiences, the thinking processes they have used, and the habits of mind they employed at given points in time and across time periods. In addition, teacher and/or parent reflections upon the products, processes, and thinking articulated in the portfolio should also be included wherever appropriate."

(Burke et.al 1994)

Portfolio Assessment

For thoughtful evaluation to take place, teachers must have multiple scoring strategies to evaluate students' progress. Criteria for a finished portfolio might include the following:

- Thoughtfulness (including evidence of students' monitoring of their own comprehension, cognitive reflection, and productive habits of mind).

- Growth and development in relationship to key curriculum expectancies and indicators.
- Understanding and application of key processes.
- Completeness, correctness, and appropriateness of products and processes presented in the portfolio.
- Diversity of entries (e.g., use of multiple formats to demonstrate achievement of designated performance standards).

It is especially important for teachers and students to work together to prioritize those criteria that will be used as a basis for assessing and evaluating student progress, both formatively (i.e., throughout an instructional time period) and summatively (i.e., as part of a culminating project, activity, or related assessment to determine the extent to which identified curricular expectancies, indicators, and standards have been achieved).

As the school year progresses, students and teacher can work together to identify especially significant or important artifacts and processes to be captured in the portfolio. Additionally, they can work collaboratively to determine grades or scores to be assigned. Rubrics, rules, and scoring keys can be designed for a variety of portfolio components. In addition, letter grades might also be assigned, where appropriate. Finally, some of oral discussion or investigation should be included as part of the summative evaluation process. This component should involve the student, teacher, and if possible, a panel of reviewers in a thoughtful exploration of the portfolio components, students' decision-making and evaluation processes related to artifact selection, and other relevant issues. (ibid)

Authenticity

The value of a portfolio is inherent in its link to authenticity. The use of portfolios in the assessment of EFL students is effective when the principle of authenticity fully embraces the linguistic and social realities of this student. A portfolio is authentic in that its contents go beyond the collection of traditional worksheets, graded assignments and end-of-unit tests to include a variety of items. These items are samples of a student's broad performance – what and how he or she reads, writes, communicates and accomplishes tasks. Loyalty to the linguistic and social realities of EFL students means that the teacher collects portfolio samples that reflect work and experiences from the following contexts: (a) within the classroom *and* "real world" situations; (b) in the form of academic assignments *and* non-academic tasks; and (c) in English *and/or* the native language of the student.

Further, to benefit EFL student assessment, sensitivity displayed in the collection of portfolio samples is accompanied by an honest judgment of

the portfolio based on the broad performances that are displayed, regardless of context or language. Specifically, judgment is focused not just on the acquisition of skills and facts but on (1) modes of thinking expressed in any language or work strategy that aids in the completion of a task, however unconventional these may be, (2) on the diligence exhibited in *all* tasks, and (3) the degree of growth and improvement relevant to set objectives. The teacher who is sensitive to the EFL student knows that what's important in the end is that the student can figure out assignments, compare and contrast virtually anything, grasp underlying meanings and relationships, and make thoughtful, sound decisions.

(Goodman, Goodman & Hood, 1989)

Portfolios Scoring Scheme

Portfolio assessment scoring tools can provide diagnostic information to inform instruction. A conversion table may be used to aggregate scores assigned to each scorable portfolio component. A single score to identify overall proficiency level may also be useful for informing judgments at the classroom level (e.g., to determine the effectiveness of a unit of instruction for the class as a whole).

The teacher can specify tasks that can be assigned to students as part of the portfolio evaluation. In that case, a scoring scheme for each activity should be developed by the teacher himself in accordance with best practices for scoring assessment. To evaluate the portfolio as a whole, another type of scoring tool should be applied.   (Goldberg 2006)

Conclusion

It is concluded that portfolios can be used as a promising assessment strategy.

Portfolios can enhance the assessment process by revealing a range of skills and understandings one students' parts; support instructional goals; reflect change and growth over a period of time; encourage student, teacher, and parent reflection; and provide for continuity in education from one year to the next.

The portfolio is not the easiest type of assessment to implement, but it can be a very effective tool. Portfolios show the cumulative efforts and learning of a particular student over time. They offer valuable data about student improvement and skill mastery. Along with student reflection, that data provides valuable information about how each student learns and what is important to him or her in the learning process.

When starting the portfolio process, remember to keep it simple. Start with a single unit. Determine your goals and purpose for the portfolio. Create a checklist. Explain the process to students and encourage them to take an active role in the development of their portfolios. What you might

discover is a very valuable and meaningful evaluation tool that effectively assesses student learning.

It can be summed up that the most important benefits of using portfolios is the enhancement of critical thinking skills which result from the need for students to:

- develop evaluation criteria,
- use this criteria to evaluate their work, and to
- engage in self-reflection about their progress.

Resources

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ملف نشاط الطالب في درس اللغة الانكليزية

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الكلية التربوية المفتوحة

يتضمن ملف نشاط الطالب تجميع نماذج من خبرات عمل الطالب التي تعكس من خلال الأشياء التي يفعلها ويقولها الطريقة التي يفكر بها. ويمنح ملف النشاط فرصة للطالب لبيان معرفته بالموضوع قيد الدراسة.

هناك نوعان من ملف نشاط الطالب وهي:

1. ملف النشاط المستمر الذي يوثق مراحل التعلم ويوفر سجل تقدمي لنمو الطالب المعرفي.

2. ملف النشاط الناتج الذي يبين بلوغ مهارة التعلم أو أهداف التعلم ويحتوي فقط أفضل الأعمال.

لذا فإنه يمكن استخدام ملف نشاط الطالب كصيغة عملية أصيلة لتقييم الطالب في درس اللغة الانكليزية.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى التعريف بملف نشاط الطالب ويصف الطرق الممكنة لتنفيذ برنامج ملف الطالب في درس اللغة الانكليزية ويعـــرض للمدرسين كيفية تشجيع طلبتهم على إعداد ملف نشاطهم بما يعرفونه وما يستطيعون فعله ويناقش كيف يمكن استخدام ملف النشاط في تقييم تحصيل الطالب.