

行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫成果報告

以學習歷程檔案作為語言學習輔助工具之研究

Using Portfolios as a Language Learning Tool

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一、中文摘要

本研究旨在探討將學習歷程檔案融入英語課程以及幫助學生成為有效和自主的學習者之成效。學習歷程檔案係有目的的蒐集學生作品，以展示其努力、進步、和自我省思。本研究採用問卷調查大一英文課之學生對使用學習歷程檔案之反應。第二學期，學生回答問卷比較學習歷程檔案和傳統紙筆測驗。研究結果發現：大部分學生對使用學習歷程檔案持正面之態度。學習歷程檔案的使用，其優點在於能鼓勵學生對自己的學習採取主動和掌控，並且有助學生省思其學習歷程；其缺點之一為費時耗力。此外，學生大多認同學習歷程檔案為輔助學習及評量進步之有用工具，以及多樣評量對學習有較好的影響和幫助。本研究並對英語教師運用學習歷程檔案於英語課程提供教學建議，以加強學生英語學習和培養學習自主。

關鍵詞：學習歷程檔案、自主學習、英語學習、學習策略、學習策略教學、評量工具。

Abstract

The study intended to investigate the efficacy of integrating portfolios into an EFL course and explore its effect on helping students to become effective and autonomous learners. As a purposeful collection of student work, portfolios show student efforts, progress, and self-reflection. The study used questionnaires to examine students' reactions about the use of portfolios in a freshman English course. Also, students were surveyed about their reactions toward both

traditional pen-and-paper tests and portfolio assessment in the second semester. The results showed that most college students had positive reactions toward using portfolios in English class. Since portfolios could facilitate their taking control of and reflecting on their own learning, they considered portfolios a useful tool for assisting learning and assessing their progress. Besides, most students thought using multiple evaluation methods would be helpful to learning. Finally, practical suggestions on using portfolios in the EFL classroom were offered.

Keywords: Portfolios, Autonomous Learning, English Acquisition, Language Learning Strategies, Learning Strategy Instruction, Evaluation Tools.

2. Background and Purposes

In recent years, many second language teachers and researchers have recognized the importance of helping students to become effective and autonomous learners [1]. But what teachers can do to facilitate their students' learning and develop autonomy? Learning strategy-based (LSB) instruction has been one of the approaches to the objective [1, 2, 3].

It is the objective of this study to explore the use portfolios as a tool to facilitate student learning and develop learner autonomy. As a purposeful collection of student work, portfolios show student efforts, progress, and self-reflection [4, 5, 6]. Since portfolios are believed to be particularly appropriate for assessing language-learning process, portfolios have

been used as an alternative assessment device in writing, other disciplines in language arts, and varied educational programs [7, 8, 9, 10, 11]. On the other hand, as the use of the portfolio may encourage students to take initiative and control of their learning and to reflect on their learning over time [12, 13], the portfolio may be a useful tool for learner training and learning strategy-based (LSB) instruction. Since little research has been done concerning using portfolios with EFL college students in Taiwan, this study intended to investigate the efficacy of integrating portfolios into an EFL course and explore its effect on helping college students to become effective and autonomous learners.

3. The Study

Three research questions are asked in the study: (1) What do college students think about the use of portfolios in their EFL class? (2) What are the benefits or problems of using portfolios as tools to enhance learning in an EFL course? And (3) When comparing portfolios as an assessment tool and the traditional pen-and-paper tests, which one affect or facilitate student learning more in an EFL course?

3.1. Subjects

The subjects of this study are students enrolled in the Freshman English (with Aural/oral Training) course taught by the researcher. In the first semester of 2001, 45 students participated and in the second semester, 36 students were enrolled in the course. Among the 45 students, 13 (29%) majored in law and social sciences and 32 (71%) studied in College of Management. There are 36 female and 9 male students.

3.2. Procedures

Since the portfolio was integrated into the LSB instruction taught by the researcher, the framework for LSB instruction—i.e., diagnosis, preparation, instruction, and evaluation—was incorporated into the course

design and research design [14, 15, 16]. Therefore, the general procedures for the course go as follows: In the beginning of the semester, for diagnosis purpose, English Learning Questionnaire was used to assess students' beliefs and learning strategy use. English proficiency test was given as pretest. Then, the guidelines for preparing portfolios were introduced to students. During the semester, portfolios were integrated into LSB instruction with activities in setting goals, making learning plans, monitoring, understanding learning styles, etc. Mid-semester portfolio sharing was arranged and students were asked to discuss their plans, progress so far, resources to share, and problems and possible solutions. At the end of the semester, English listening and reading test was given as post-test. Portfolio evaluation (including self evaluation, peer evaluation, and instructor's evaluation) and course evaluation were conducted.

To study the effect of implementing portfolios in an EFL course, students' reactions were solicited twice in the first semester: One after the mid-semester portfolio sharing by an open-ended questionnaire and the other after final portfolio presentation by Portfolio Survey One. To compare the impact of portfolio assessment and traditional assessment (pen-and-paper tests) on students' learning, students were evaluated by both language proficiency tests and portfolio assessment in the second semester. Besides, students were surveyed about their reactions toward these different assessment tools (Portfolio Survey Two).

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Students' Reactions about the Use of Portfolios

Students were positive about the use of portfolios in the English class. Take the survey results (Table 1) as example: Many (95%) students felt that the portfolio allowed them to choose what they like to read or listen according to their personal interest. The portfolio also let them plan how to learn English according to their learning styles

(93%). The portfolio made them realize that they can learn anytime and anywhere, not just in the classroom. (91%). More details were listed in Table 1.

4.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Portfolios as a Learning Tool

According to students' answers to the open-ended questions, the advantages of using portfolios included: encouraging the use of metacognitive strategies (e.g., manage and organize learning, monitor and observe one's learning, reflect on one's learning), motivating students to learn actively and multi-dimensionally, being helpful to future independent learning, facilitating interactions among the instructor and students, exhibiting learning process and progress, presenting learning results, providing a sense of achievement, practicing presentation skills, etc.

As for the disadvantages, students' reactions included: "It takes a lot of time", "It is too much trouble, a burden to prepare", "Some students may complete it in a short time and cheat at some samples or fake the records", "Some learning results and methods are hard to present", "Some learning process may not be easily recorded", etc.

Students also reported some problems they encountered, such as problems in time management, learning attitudes (e.g., laziness, procrastination, and indetermination), record keeping, information management, and other computer and access problems.

4.3. Portfolios for Evaluation

When students were asked to compare portfolios as an assessment tool and the traditional pen-and-paper tests, over one half (51%) of the students liked to be evaluated by portfolios, while only 23% preferred to be evaluated by paper-and-pencil tests. It may be due to the fact that portfolios offered them chances for self-evaluation, for over two-thirds (69%) of the students liked to assess their own progress. Many (89%) agreed that the portfolio provided a multi-dimensional perspective about

evaluation. The majority (94%) agreed that multiple evaluations should be used (see Table 2).

Besides, the open-ended questionnaire revealed that portfolios were different from ordinary paper-and-pencil tests in many aspects. First of all, portfolios may present students' learning in wide range while the traditional assessment can only evaluate students in limited areas. Second, students participate in the process of portfolio evaluation while the traditional assessment is teacher-centered and usually conducted in a mechanic way. Third, portfolios take individual differences into consideration while the traditional assessment uses the same test for everyone. Fourth, while the teacher is the only evaluator in the traditional assessment, portfolio evaluation involves everybody in the assessment process, including students, teachers and peers. Fifth, self-evaluation is one of the learning objectives for portfolios, but not for the traditional assessment. Sixth, portfolio evaluation stresses improvement, effort, and achievement while the traditional assessment only focuses on results. Finally, portfolios connect learning, assessment, and instruction whereas the three items—learning, assessment, and instruction—are separated in the traditional assessment. In brief, portfolios were considered a better tool for assisting student learning.

4.4. Caveats and Suggestions

It needs careful planning on integrating portfolios into the class process, the students' work, and the students' assessment. Also, it takes time to prepare for evaluation, which may include assembling the finished portfolios, arranging portfolio presentation and peer evaluation, and completing the final evaluation by the instructor.

To integrate portfolios into English courses, teachers could:

1. Introduce the concepts of autonomous learning to students
2. Develop mini-lessons to help students compile their portfolios

3. Implement more frequent portfolio sharing and checking
4. Allocate more class time for assembling the portfolios
5. Consider other media instead of paper for portfolios

5. Concluding Remarks

In this study, students generally had positive reactions toward using the portfolio in the class for learning and assessment. Over 70% agreed that their experience of learning about portfolios was successful. Fewer than 15% thought that it was not very successful to use portfolios in the course. Only 5% felt the portfolio was not helpful to their learning.

The recent development of Web-based learning provides a promising autonomous learning environment that learning strategy-based instruction may play an important role. Future studies might incorporate LSB instruction with Web-based or on-line language learning with portfolios as an important learning tool. Some of the problems encountered, such as difficulty in record keeping, might turn out to be the advantage of computer-assisted or Web-based learning. To conclude, the portfolio is a good tool that helps raise students' awareness about learning strategies, facilitate their learning process, and enhance their self-directed learning.

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Table 1
Frequencies of Response (in %), Means and Standard Deviations for the
Portfolio Survey One Items

Item Description	1 ^a	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
1. It requires a clear organizing concept to compile a portfolio.	0 ^b	2.3	7.0	60.	30.2	4.19	0.66
2. The portfolio sharing activities offer me chances to learn good English learning methods from other classmates.	0	0	0	2.3	97.7	4.98	0.15
3. It takes me a lot of time to compile the portfolio.	0	2.3	9.3	58.1	30.2	4.16	0.69
4. I feel the appearance of the portfolio (including its cover and art design) is important.	4.7	9.3	30.2	46.5	9.3	3.47	0.96
5. I will reflect on and evaluate my learning in each aspect when compiling the portfolio.	2.3	2.3	14.0	55.8	25.6	4.00	0.85
6. During the portfolio sharing activities, I can share useful English learning resources with my classmates.	2.3	0	14.0	60.5	23.3	4.02	0.77
7. I have a clear concept about how to compile a portfolio.	2.3	2.3	58.1	25.6	11.6	3.42	0.82
8. The portfolio helps me organize and arrange my English learning.	2.3	7.0	27.9	48.8	14.0	3.65	0.90
9. I have completed most of the learning goals I set up in my portfolio.	4.7	20.9	44.2	30.2	0	3.00	0.85
10. The portfolio increases the burden of my study.	2.3	11.6	41.9	37.2	7.0	3.35	0.87
11. The portfolio allows me to choose what I like to read or listen according to my personal interest.	0	0	4.7	53.5	41.9	4.37	0.58
12. The portfolio increases my willingness to learn actively.	2.3	2.3	39.5	34.9	20.9	3.70	0.91
13. I feel the content of the portfolio (including its organization and details) is important.	4.7	2.3	11.6	39.5	41.9	4.12	1.03
14. Portfolio sharing can increase classmates' cooperative learning and mutual growth in English proficiency.	2.3	2.3	9.3	48.8	37.2	4.16	0.87
15. The goal I originally set up in the portfolio was too difficult and I can't reach it.	2.3	20.9	39.5	27.9	9.3	3.21	0.97
16. The portfolio allows me to choose how to learn English according to my learning style.	2.3	0	4.7	62.8	30.2	4.19	0.73
17. It requires a good computer skills and artistic talent to prepare a portfolio.	4.7	11.6	48.8	23.3	11.6	3.26	0.98
18. The portfolio makes me understand my strengths and weaknesses in English.	2.3	4.7	11.6	69.8	11.6	3.84	0.78
19. I think reflection and self-evaluation are the most important part of the portfolio.	2.3	7.0	14.0	46.5	30.2	3.95	0.97
20. The handout's introduction to the portfolio is not clear enough.	16.3	39.5	34.9	9.3	0	2.37	0.87
21. The portfolio sharing activities are helpful to my understanding about the portfolio.	2.3	2.3	2.3	69.8	23.3	4.09	0.75
22. The portfolio will be of great help to my future independent learning.	2.3	7.0	27.9	48.8	14.0	3.65	0.90
23. I feel some practices (like listening or speaking) cannot be easily presented in the portfolio.	0	4.7	11.6	60.5	23.3	4.02	0.74
24. Looking at previous students' portfolio samples gives me a better idea about portfolios.	2.3	4.7	37.2	37.2	18.6	3.65	0.92

25. I will add appropriate explanation to the samples or records included in the portfolio.	2.3	9.3	20.9	51.2	16.3	3.70	0.94
26. I feel the portfolio can exhibit my learning results.	4.7	4.7	30.2	51.2	9.3	3.56	0.91
27. The portfolio makes me realize that we can learn anytime and anywhere, not just in the classroom.	0	0	9.3	55.8	34.9	4.26	0.62
28. The portfolio can show my efforts in learning English outside of the classroom.	0	2.3	16.3	51.2	30.2	4.09	0.75
29. I still don't understand why we need to compile a portfolio.	32.6	48.9	7.0	9.3	2.3	2.00	1.00
30. When compiling the portfolio, I have a chance to reflect on my English learning of this semester.	2.3	2.3	7.0	62.8	25.6	4.07	0.80
31. I feel the portfolio is not helpful to my learning.	18.6	60.5	16.3	2.3	2.3	2.09	0.81
32. The portfolio helps me to keep the habit of listening to, reading, or writing English regularly.	2.3	18.6	44.2	25.6	9.3	3.21	0.94

Note:

^a 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree.

^b The Percentage has been rounded.

Table 2
Frequencies of Response (in %), Means and Standard Deviations for the
Second Portfolio Survey Items

Item Description	1 ^a	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
1. The portfolio helps me organize learning in this course.	0 ^b	0	14.3	68.6	17.1	4.03	0.57
2. The portfolio is a good tool to show my learning process.	2.9	0	14.3	71.4	11.4	3.89	0.72
3. The portfolio presents my learning results in this course.	0	5.7	11.4	74.3	8.6	3.86	0.65
4. The portfolio helps me to reflect on my learning in this course.	0	0	8.6	68.6	22.9	4.14	0.55
5. The portfolio increases the interaction between students and the instructor.	0	8.6	34.3	40.0	17.1	3.66	0.87
6. The portfolio is a good tool to help students learning.	0	2.9	28.6	60.0	8.6	3.74	0.66
7. The portfolio provides a multi-dimensional perspective about learning.	0	2.9	5.7	65.7	25.7	4.14	0.65
8. The portfolio helps my learning in future courses.	0	11.4	42.9	37.1	8.6	3.43	0.81
9. The portfolio is a good tool to evaluate students' performance.	5.7	2.9	34.3	40.0	17.1	3.60	1.01
10. The portfolio provides a multi-dimensional perspective about evaluation.	0	2.9	8.6	68.6	20.0	4.06	0.64
11. The portfolio helps my future independent learning.	0	5.7	17.1	60.0	17.1	3.89	0.76
12. I will use portfolios in my future learning.	2.9	0	45.7	42.9	8.6	3.54	0.78
13. My experience of learning about the portfolio in this course is successful.	0	2.9	22.9	60.0	11.4	3.82	0.67
14. It is successful to use portfolios for teaching and evaluation in this course.	0	14.3	45.7	37.1	2.9	3.29	0.75
15. I like to assess my own progress.	0	8.6	22.9	57.1	11.4	3.71	0.79
16. I like the teacher to assess my progress for me.	0	11.4	45.7	40.0	2.9	3.34	0.73
17. I prefer to be evaluated by portfolios.	0	8.6	40.0	48.6	2.9	3.46	0.70
18. I prefer to be evaluated by paper-and-pencil tests.	5.7	17.1	54.3	22.9	0	2.94	0.80
19. I think we should use multiple evaluation methods	0	0	5.7	60.0	34.3	4.29	0.57

Note:

^a 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree.

^b The Percentage has been rounded.

