

International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



Enhancing Writing Performance of Iranian EFL Learners through Portfolio-Based Instruction

[PP: 142-150]

Vahideh Akbari

Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University
Iran

Mahboubeh Ghofrani

Tehran Central Branch, Islamic Azad University
Iran

ABSTRACT

In order to illuminate the effectiveness of alternative assessment in second language (L2) writing, the purpose of this study was set to investigate the impact of portfolio-based instruction on L2 writing performance of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. In so doing, a sample of 46 Iranian EFL learners who were the students of two intact classes in an Iranian language center participated in the present study. The two classes were randomly assigned to an experimental group (N = 22) and a control group (N = 24). The experimental group was taught through portfolio-based writing instruction while the control group received the traditional writing instruction. The data were collected through two timed-writing tasks given as the pre-test (before the treatment) and post-test (after the treatment) of the study. The results indicated that the students of the experimental group outperformed those of control group in L2 writing performance, suggesting that portfolio-based writing instruction significantly contributed to enhancing the writing performance of the participants. The findings of the study offer some practical implications for L2 writing teachers and learners.

Keywords: *Portfolio Assessment, Alternative Assessment, Writing Performance, Second Language*

ARTICLE INFO	The paper received on	Reviewed on	Accepted after revisions on
	21/08/2019	17/09/2019	12/10/2019

Suggested citation:

Akbari, V. & Ghofrani, M. (2019). Enhancing Writing Performance of Iranian EFL Learners through Portfolio-Based Instruction. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*. 7(3). 142-150.

1. Introduction

Regarded as an influential second language (L2) skill, writing plays a vital role in foreign language education because it is attached much significance not only in communication but also in language learning. Raimes (1983) views writing as 'a reinforcement tool for grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary that students have learned; as a tool for hypotheses testing as it provides students with opportunities to go beyond what they have just learned to say and as a tool for enhancing thinking skills as it helps students express their ideas in the target language.' Writing has received more particular attention especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings where language learners are not normally endowed with much opportunity to use the language outside the formal class environment or to communicate in the target language (Reichelt, 2001). Moreover, research into L2 writing instruction has indicated that traditional techniques to writing pedagogy have fell short of the expectations and have

failed to satisfy the needs of learners and teachers in various L2 and EFL contexts (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

In line with some radical changes in different aspects of applied linguistics, language testing has also experienced a paradigm shift from a psychometric approach to a more learning-oriented, edumetric approach (Gipps, 1994). This paradigm shift emphasizes further involvement of the learner in the assessment process which ultimately contributes to further learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Subsumed under this assessment paradigm, different varieties of alternative assessment such as self-assessment, peer-assessment, portfolio assessment and journal keeping have been focus of much research attention in applied linguistics (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Alternative assessment procedures such as self- and peer-assessment and portfolio assessment have been employed by educators in order to be used instead of the traditional test-oriented evaluation systems (Belanoff & Dickson, 1991). A portfolio is conceptualized as a purposeful collection of

learners' work indicating their learning process, strengths, and weaknesses (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). More simply said, portfolio requires that learners retain a record of their scientific work in a folder to be evaluated and commented on by teachers and peers (Brown, 2004).

As a sub-category of alternative assessment, portfolio is conceptualized as "a purposeful collection of students' works that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress, and achievement in given areas" (Genesee & Upshur, 1996, p. 99). Also, it is worth noting that portfolios are not viewed just a collection of materials created by students but they can be considered as thorough information about learners and can give feedback on learners' performance (Rao, 2006). Additionally, as stated by Jones and Shelton (2011), portfolios can be "a medium for reflection" (p. 21). In other words, portfolios have the potentials to urge students to self-assess and reflect on their learning process and witness their own developmental process, a process which significantly contributes to students' autonomous learning (Lam, 2018). Furthermore, portfolios are likely to enhance critical thinking as learners who are engaged in reflective writing gain more agency and can self-regulate and make decisions on how they would be able to improve their own language learning processes (Djoub, 2017).

As far as the effect of portfolio assessment on L2 writing skill is concerned, numerous scholars have considered portfolio an effective medium for aiding language learners in producing higher quality writing tasks (Lam, 2016). Additionally, with regard to writing instruction approaches, portfolio assessment is generally considered as an effective substitute for product approach (Belanoff & Dickson, 1991). In the broad sense of the word, portfolios, used for L2 writing instruction, refer to folders or websites (i.e. electronic portfolios) that contain pieces of evidence for student learning which traces their development in writing learning process as a matter of heightened self-reflection (Genesee & Upshur 1996). Portfolio-based writing instruction was originally employed in first language college-level writing classes, mainly for placement and certification purposes (Lam, 2017). Nevertheless, over the past few years, a kind of general assessment reform movement has given rise to much attention showered on the learning potential of writing portfolios (Jones, 2012). One area of much interest has been the use

of portfolios in improving assessment for learning; in other words, to give feedback which encourages rather than discourages classroom-level learning (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2012). Portfolio-based writing instruction is considered as an effective pedagogic procedure positively affecting learners' gains in L2 writing (Lam, 2013, 2015). According to Condon and Hamp-Lyons (1994), "portfolio has simply been accepted on faith, on writing specialists' feeling that the portfolio is better" (p. 277).

In spite of the reported beneficial effects of portfolio assessment for L2 learning in general and L2 writing in particular, further empirical studies are needed in order to shed more light on how portfolio assessment may influence writing performance in different EFL contexts (Hamp-Lyons, 2006, 2007). Although there is a bulk of empirical studies documenting the effectiveness of portfolio-based instruction in improving writing performance in first language contexts (e.g., Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Hirvela & Pierson, 2000; Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005; Weigle, 2002), some studies have verified the positive effects of the use of portfolios in EFL writing instruction (Farahian & Avarzamani, 2018; Lam, 2013; Meihami, Husseini, & Sahragard, 2018; Moradan & Hedayati, 2012; Nezakatgoo, 2011; Seifoori, 2016; Taki & Heidari, 2011; among others). But since overwhelming majority of such studies were quantitative in nature and may lack enough generalizability for most EFL contexts, further replication studies should be carried out in order to gain more insight into the effectiveness of portfolios in improving EFL writing performance (Porte, & Richards, 2012, p.284). As a result, in order to shed more light on the effectiveness of portfolio-based writing instruction in fostering L2 writing performance, the objective of this research was set to explore the impact of the use of portfolios in a writing course on writing performance of Iranian EFL students.

2. Literature Review

As previously discussed, the use of portfolios in EFL writing courses has been focus of attention by numerous researchers. For instance, Nezakatgoo (2011) investigated the effect of portfolio assessment of EFL learners' writing skill. The participants of the study were 40 college students enrolling in a composition course. The participants were randomly assigned into the experimental and control groups in a quasi-experimental research. The



homogeneity of the participants was evaluated through Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT). The participants of portfolio-based group were instructed by portfolio-based instructional procedures for a period of 16 weeks, whereas the control group students were instructed traditionally. The findings of the study indicated that that learners of the experimental group outperformed in the writing performance as measured by scores in final examination. The author finally concluded that portfolio-based writing can be employed as an alternative which can be incorporated into regular EFL writing classrooms. In another study, Moradan and Hedayati (2012) investigated the effects of portfolios and conferencing procedures on Iranian EFL learners' writing competence. To accomplish this study, a number of 92 Iranian EFL intermediate learners were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group. The learners of the first experimental group were required to submit portfolios of their four written paragraphs during the course and after every paragraph they were asked to rate their paragraphs and fill out a self-assessment rubric. The students in the second experimental group were required to participate in four whole classes and two individual conferences after writing each paragraph. The students of the control group were taught traditionally by just receiving their scored written tasks without getting any oral and written feedback by the instructor. The findings of the study revealed that use of portfolios and conferencing significantly contributed to enhancing the writing skill of the participants.

In another study, Farahian and Avarzamani (2018) examined the effect of use of portfolios on EFL writers' metacognition and their writing skill. In so doing, 69 undergraduate TEFL university students were randomly assigned to an experimental group and a control group. The participants in both groups were given a writing test, a Metacognitive Writing Questionnaire, and a students' attitude questionnaire as pre- and post-tests. For the treatment of the study, the experimental group students were provided with particular guidelines and reflection sheets. The findings revealed that the use of portfolios significantly contributed to enhancing both the metacognition and writing performance of EFL learners. With regard to the learners' attitudes toward writing assessment, it was

revealed that experimental group students had a positive attitude of formative assessment and peer-assessment. They finally concluded that portfolios could be used not only for improving assessment quality but also for enhancing self-reflection in writing. Similarly, Taki and Heidari (2011) explored the impact of portfolio-based writing assessment on EFL students' performance. In so doing, a number of young Iranian EFL learners were recruited as the study participants who were randomly divided into an experimental group (n=20) and a control group (n=20). As for the treatment of the study, the experimental group were required to write on five pre-determined topics from their textbook. Then their writings were rated with respect to organization, content, voice, fluency, word choice, and mechanics of writing by two scorers. Afterwards, they were provided with another chance to revise and correct their written tasks. In the contrary, the students of the control group were required to write only once and their essays were rated only by their own instructor. The students were also required to fill out a questionnaire to evaluate their reflection and self-evaluation. findings of the study revealed that portfolio-based writing assessment positively affected writing performance of the participants. Moreover, portfolio-based writing improved learners' self-assessment.

Also, Lam (2013) carried out a study to examine the effects two portfolio systems on two groups of Hong Kong EFL pre-university learners' perceptions of writing ability, text improvement, and feedback in an academic writing course. The research design of the study was case study and the data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, observations, and analysis of text revisions. Results of the study revealed that participants from the showcase portfolio group were less interested in the effectiveness of portfolio assessment, and questioned whether it can increase writing autonomy, whereas the working portfolio group students were more positive about the experience, and maintained that use of feedback in the working portfolio system could enhance writing performance. Employing a quasi-experimental design, Seifoori (2016) investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on the accuracy and complexity of postgraduate TEFL students' writing. The study hypothesis was that involving students

in the assessment process of their writings can make them become more attentive to formal and textual characteristics and thereby enhancing their writing. The participants of the study were 40 TEFL postgraduate students who were taking the “Advanced Writing Course” at an Iranian university. The participants were randomly assigned to the control and experimental groups after their homogeneity was ensured by a Preliminary English Test and a writing exam. To accomplish the objectives of the study, both groups were taught according to process-oriented instruction using the identical teaching materials. The participants also received interactive feedback, peer-editing, and teacher’s feedback on their writing tasks. Additionally, the experimental group was engaged in regular portfolio assessment of their writing. The findings revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in writing post-test and were able to produce more accurate and complex texts.

As a recent study carried out in Iranian context, Fathi and Khodabakhsh (2019) investigated the impact of self-assessment and peer-assessment, as alternative assessment types, on writing performance of Iranian EFL learners. A sample of 46 English major learners who were the students of two intact classes acted as the participants of this study. The two classes were randomly assigned to a self-assessment group who were taught to self-assess their writings and a peer-assessment group who were trained to assess the writings of their peers. Their study lasted for a period of one university semester. The data were collected by two timed-writing essays given as the pre-test and post-test of the intervention. The results of this study indicated that both self-assessment and peer-assessment were conducive in enhancing the writing skills of the EFL learners. In another study, Obeiah and Bataineh (2016) investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on Jordanian EFL learners’ global writing performance as well as their performance on the components of focus, development, organization, conventions and word choice. The study was carried out using a quasi-experimental in which an experimental group (N=20) and a control group (N=20) from tenth grade classes at the public schools for girls participated in the study. For the purpose of this study, the experimental group students were taught on how to create ideas, structure, draft, and revise their written tasks according to Hamp-Lyons and Condon’s

(2000) model whereas the control group students were taught traditionally. The results indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of their global writing ability as well as in their performance on the writing sub-skills of focus, development, organization, conventions and word choice. Likewise, Meihami, Hussein, and Sahragard (2018) investigated the impact of giving corrective feedback via portfolio-based writing instruction on the global and writing performance along with its components. In so doing, 44 intermediate Iranian EFL learners took part in an L2 writing program as the participants of the study. They were randomly divided into the experimental group (N = 20) who received the corrective feedback on their writing via the portfolio-based writing, and the control group (N = 24) who were taught traditionally through receiving paper-and-pen corrective feedback on their writing. The findings of the study revealed that the experimental group substantially performed better than the control group both in global and componential writing performance. The reason for this outperformance was attributed to the characteristics that portfolio-based writing offers to the L2 writing classroom such as increasing the motivation of the L2 learners to write, fostering their autonomy, reflection, and consciousness about their own writing process.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

To fulfill the purpose of this research, a number of 46 Iranian EFL learners participated in the present study. In fact, the participants were students of two intact classes in an Iranian language center. They were both male and female students whose age varied from 19 to 24 with the mean age of 22.13. The two classes were randomly assigned to an experimental group (N = 22) and a control group (N = 24). The experimental group was taught through portfolio-based writing instruction while the control group received the traditional writing instruction. The purpose of the educational course was to improve students’ writing competencies in essay writing. The course lasted for 18 sessions. The participants were of intermediate level of language proficiency. To check the homogeneity of the two classes in terms of global language proficiency “Oxford Placement Test” (OPT) (Allan, 2004) was administered to the



participants of the control and experimental groups.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Language Proficiency Test

Since general language proficiency of the participants affects their writing performance, first the participants should be homogenized in terms of global English proficiency. As a result, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was given to both groups in order to check the homogeneity of the students in terms of their general English proficiency. OPT is argued to be the proper test to determine the English proficiency level of any number of learners at all levels (Allan, 2004). OPT consists of a 6 rating scale; testees whose score fall between 0-17 are labeled as basic (A1), and testees whose scores fall between 18-29 are viewed as elementary students (A2). Those whose scores lie between 30 and 39 are in the lower intermediate group (B1). Those with the scores of 40-47, are considered as upper intermediate (B2) and the students with the scores 48-54, and 54-60 are labeled as advanced (C1) and very sophisticated (C2) levels respectively. The internal consistency of OPT as measured by Cronbach's alpha turned out to be 0.84 in this study.

3.2.2 Timed-Writing Tasks

The dependent variable of the study was writing performance. To assess the writing performance of the participants before and after the treatment, two 40-minute writing essays were given to the participants of both groups. In so doing, two general topics were given for each administration.

Topic 1: Your school has enough money to purchase either computers for students or books for the library. Which should your school choose to buy - computers or books? Use specific reasons and examples to support your recommendation.

Topic 2: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? A person's childhood years (the time from birth to twelve years of age) are the most important years of a person's life. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

3.3 Procedure

Before beginning the intervention of this study, OPT was given to the students of both classes so as to their homogeneity is ensured. Afterwards, the first essay task (pre-test topic) was given to the participants. The scores of participants on these essays served as the pre-test scores of both groups. The students in both groups were required to

write an essay on that topic within the allotted time. Then for the purpose of the present study, the experimental group students were instructed by receiving regular feedbacks through their portfolios whereas the control group was taught traditionally and received regular corrective feedbacks by the same instructor. The two classes were taught by the same instructor who covered the same materials. The purpose of the course was to make the students become familiar with basic writing competencies they needed for paragraph writing and essay writing. Different types of paragraphs were taught each session and the students were required to do the tasks assigned by the instructor. The students were required to write essays of about 250 words at home as their assignments and then submit their assignments in the following sessions. The teacher reviewed the written essays and gave corrective feedbacks on different aspects like vocabulary, grammar, organization, content, and mechanics. Afterwards, the students were required to correct and revise their essays according to the teachers' corrective feedbacks and resubmit their essays to the teacher. The teacher read the revised essays and provided the final comments on them and students were required to implement the needed changes as requested by the teacher until their essays become totally approved by the teacher. The approved essays of the students were archived by the teacher as their portfolios. Five topics were covered during the whole semester which lasted for 18 sessions. When students submitted a new essay, the teacher added that essay to their portfolios.

The same materials, tasks, and topics were assigned to the control group students. However, these students did not receive successive feedbacks, drafting, redrafting and revisions which were carried out in the experimental group. In other words, the teacher gave corrective feedbacks to students only once and the students were required to revise their written essays just based on those corrective feedbacks. Also, the teacher did not keep portfolios for each student. Therefore, the students of the control group were able to write further essays during the course.

Finally, at the end of the course the students of both control and experimental groups were required to write an essay on topic b within the allocated time. The scores obtained from these written essays were the post-test scores of the participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical approaches were used to analyze the collected data. As for the descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviations were taken into account and regarding inferential statistics, paired-samples *t*-test and ANCOVA were employed in order to statistically identify the effect of portfolio-based writing instruction on the writing performance of the participants.

Additionally, to score the learners' essays, Jacobs et al.'s (1981) writing scale which is an analytical scoring procedure was drawn upon. Based to this scale, a written task or an essay must be rated against a set of five criteria or subcategories such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. This rubric includes a 100-point scheme in which 30 points are dedicated to the content, 25 points to language use (mainly syntax), 20 points to organization, 20 points to vocabulary use, and 5 points to mechanics. To make sure about the inter-rater reliability of the assigned scores to the essays, about 25 percent of the essays for both topics in the pre-test and the post-test were scored by an independent rater who was familiar with this scoring rubric. The assigned scores of the rater as well as those of the researcher were measured by Cohen's Kappa's inter-rater reliability test. The estimated reliability valued was reported to be 0.83.

4. Results

After the data was collected in the form of numerical values, the SPSS software (version 21.0) was employed for the data analysis. As previously discussed, OPT was to given to the participants to check the homogeneity of the learners of the experimental and control groups in terms of general language proficiency which affects their writing performance. In order to analyze the OPT scores; an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted. The purpose of this analysis was to compare the OPT scores for the learners of both the experimental and control groups. As it can be seen in Table 1, the results showed that there was no significant difference in the OPT scores for the experimental group ($M = 32.12$, $SD = 8.46$) and the control group ($M = 32.46$, $SD = 9.01$); $t(44) = -.513$, $p > 0.05$, indicating that the experimental and control groups were not of different English proficiency before starting the course.

Table 1: Results of the OPT for Each Group

Groups	M(SD)	T	Sig.
Experimental	32.12 (8.46)	-.513	.392
Control	32.46 (9.01)		

In the follow-up stage of the analysis, in order to investigate the effectiveness of the portfolio-based writing instruction on the EFL writing performance of the learners, two paired samples *t*-tests were run so as to compare the writing performance scores of the participants in both experimental and control groups on the pre-test and post-test of timed-essay tasks. The results of paired samples *t*-tests showed that there was a statistically significant increase of mean scores on the writing performance tests for the students of both groups. As the results in Table 2 shows, the increase in the writing mean scores of the portfolio group was statistically significant ($t(21) = -21.47$, $p < 0.05$), similarly, the increase in the writing performance mean scores of the traditional group was statistically significant ($t(23) = -8.92$, $p < 0.05$). The results also indicated that the writing mean score of the experimental group was 15.57 ($SD = 4.12$) on the pre-test and increased to 23.92 ($SD = 4.26$) on the post-test, a change that was statistically significant. In the same vein, the writing performance pre-test mean score for the control group increased from 14.81 ($SD = 4.31$) to 19.01 ($SD = 4.46$) on the post-test, an increase that was statistically significant.

Table 2: Paired samples *t*-test for writing performance scores

Groups	Pre-test		Post-test		<i>t</i>	Sig.
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Experimental	15.57	4.12	23.92	4.26	-21.47	0.00
Control	14.81	4.31	19.01	4.46	-8.92	0.00

As the other part of the inferential statistics analysis of the study, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to compare the effects of the two kinds of second language writing instructions employed in the control group and the experimental groups. In the ANCOVA analysis, the independent variable was the type of intervention, portfolio-based instruction or traditional instruction, and the dependent variable was the scores on the writing performance measured by the post-test administered after finishing the treatment. Scores of the participants on the pre-test of the pre-test of writing performance (i.e., timed-essay task) were considered as the covariate in the ANCOVA analysis.

Table 3: ANCOVA results for writing performance scores



Source	Type III		Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	Sum of Squares	df				
Covariate (pre-test)	352.145	1	352.145	38.847	.000	.324
Between-subjects	64.257	1	64.257	8.821	.008	.391
Within-subjects	482.241	43	12.513			

As the requirement of conducting ANOVA, preliminary investigations showed that the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariate were not violated. As it can be seen in Table 3, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups on post-test scores of writing performance, $F(1, 43) = 8.821, p = 0.008$, partial eta squared = 0.391). In other words, the results of ANCOVA revealed that the participants of the experimental group outperformed those of control group on the post-test of writing performance, suggesting that portfolio-based writing instruction was effective in improving writing performance of the students.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of the present study was set to examine the effect of employing portfolios in L2 writing instruction on the writing performance of Iranian EFL learners. The findings of the study revealed that portfolio-based writing instruction contributed to improving writing performance of the participants more than the traditional writing instruction. In other words, the experimental group students who were taught according to portfolio-based instruction outperformed the control group students who were taught traditionally in terms of the post-test of writing performance.

These findings are in line with an accumulated number of previous empirical studies (e.g., Farahian & Avarzamani, 2018; Lam, 2013; Meihami, Husseini, & Sahragard, 2018; Moradan & Hedayati, 2012; Nezakatgoo, 2011; Seifoori, 2016; Taki & Heidari, 2011). These findings might be justified in the light of some characteristics of the use of portfolios in L2 writing. Portfolios are claimed to enhance students' self-assessment competence and sense of autonomy (Nunes, 2004). Additionally, continuous feedback provided by the instructors helps learners to improve the students' understanding of their own learning processes, thereby increasing their writing performance. Also, portfolio-based instruction may encourage learners to take

the responsibility of their own learning and feel more agency towards what they write, a feeling which allows teachers to recognize strengths and weaknesses of the learners and to provide them with corrective feedbacks. Portfolio-based writing instruction fosters students' involvement in both learning and assessment, as a result of which the students learn how to write better quality writings (Arter & Spandel, 1992; Baker, 1993). The experimental group students were engaged in a consecutive process of drafting, redrafting, reflecting their own writings in their portfolios, a process which also gave them more self-confidence to write better. As the students of the experimental group received further feedback, they became more familiar with their own strengths and weaknesses and were provided with more time and opportunity to improve their weaknesses throughout the course. Moreover, portfolio-based writing instruction contributed to fostering of self-reflection, direction, and awareness because of the fact that portfolio assessment is argued to be able to enhance critical thinking and autonomous learning (Yang, 2003).

Also, archiving of the writings of the students via portfolios gave the teacher further information on learners' problems in L2 writing. Therefore, the teacher is likely to have reflected on the weaknesses of the L2 writers and has found ways to help the learner to remedy those weaknesses or to negotiate those problems with the learner. Teacher's awareness of the weaknesses could have made him give corrective feedbacks on those particular problems several times in a stepwise fashion, as a result of which the learner has been able to improve his or her writing performance. Moreover, since portfolios are argued to improve L2 writing by actively engaging learners in both assessment and learning (Genesee & Upshur, 1996), the experimental group students are likely to have improved their EFL writing performance due to their increased involvement in assessment and learning processes.

Overall, it may be concluded that portfolio-based writing instruction may be an appropriate alternative to traditional writing courses existing in EFL contexts. As a result, L2 practitioners may be recommended to employ portfolio-based writing instruction in order to provide their own learners with individualistic corrective feedback on their writing performance as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

Moreover, teachers and students can have beneficial interactions over the writing competencies and students' problems. This might create a friendlier learning environment which motivates L2 writers to write better. Given that writing might be a boring and formidable skill for Iranian EFL learners, incorporation of portfolios in EFL writing courses may increase learners' writing motivation and self-efficacy. However, such implications cannot be implemented unless the teachers themselves are trained on how to use portfolios in their writing courses. As a result, policy makers and teacher education programs should pay more attention to portfolio-based writing instruction as a suitable substitution for traditional product-oriented writing classrooms in Iran.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the present research was purely quantitative and did not employ qualitative data collection procedure to evaluate how portfolio-based writing instruction can enhance writing performance of EFL learners. Further studies should use qualitative or mixed-methods research designs in order to gain deeper insights on the effectiveness of using portfolios for EFL writing courses. Moreover, this study can be repeated with bigger samples of participants with various levels of English proficiency. Additionally, future researchers may investigate the effects of portfolio-based writing instruction on different aspects or components of writing skill including complexity, fluency, and accuracy.

References

- Allen, D. (2004). *Oxford placement test 1*. Oxford: OUP.
- Arter, J. A., & Spandel, V. (1992). Using portfolios of student work in instruction and assessment. *Educational measurement: Issues and practice*, 11(1), 36-44.
- Baker, N. W. (1993). The effect of portfolio-based instruction on composition students' final examination scores, course grades, and attitudes toward writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 155-174.
- Belanoff, P., & Dickson, M. (Eds.). (1991). *Portfolios: Process and product*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability (formerly: Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education)*, 21(1), 5.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. New York, NY: Pearson Education.
- Brown, J. D., & Hudson, T. (1998). The alternatives in language assessment, *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(4), 653-675.
- Condon, W., & Hamp-Lyons, L. (1994). Maintaining a portfolio-based writing assessment: Research that informs program development. In: L. Black, D. A. Daiker, J. Sommers, & G. Stygall (Eds.), *New directions in portfolio assessment: Reflection practice, critical theory, and large-scale scoring* (pp. 277-285). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Djoub, Z. (2017). Enhancing students' critical thinking through portfolios: Portfolio content and process of use. In C. Zhou (Ed.), *Creative problem-solving skill development in higher education* (pp. 235-259). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/AHEPD>
- Farahian, M., & Avarzamani, F. (2018). The impact of portfolio on EFL learners' metacognition and writing performance. *Cogent Education*, 5(1), 1450918.
- Fathi, J., & Khodabakhsh, M. R. (2019). The Role of Self-Assessment and Peer-Assessment in Improving Writing Performance of Iranian EFL Students. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 7(3), 01-10.
- Genesee, F., & Upshur, J. A. (1996). *Classroom-based evaluation in second language education*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Gipps, C. V. (1994). *Beyond testing: Towards a theory of educational assessment*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Grabe, W., & Kaplan, R.B. (1996). *Theory and practice of writing*. London: Longman.
- Jones, J. (2012). Portfolios as "learning companions" for children and a means to support and assess language learning in the primary school. *Education*, 40(4), 401-416.
- Jones, M., & Shelton, M. (2011). *Developing your portfolio enhancing your learning and showing your stuff: A guide for the early childhood student or professional*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Hamp-Lyons, L. (2006). Feedback in portfolio-based writing courses. In: K. Hyland & F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in second language writing contexts and issues* (pp. 140-161). London, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Hamp-Lyons, L. (2007). The impact of testing practices on teaching: Ideologies and alternatives. In: J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.), *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 487-504). Norwell, MA: Springer.



- Hamp-Lyons, L., & Condon, W. (2000). *Assessing the portfolio: Issues for research and theory and practice*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Hirvela, A., & Pierson, H. (2000). Portfolios: Vehicles for authentic self-assessment. *Learner-directed assessment in ESL*, 105-126.
- Hirvela, A., & Sweetland, Y. L. (2005). Two case studies of L2 writers' experiences across learning-directed portfolio contexts. *Assessing Writing*, 10(3), 192-213.
- Jacobs, H. L., Zinkgraf, S. A., Wormuth, D. R., Hartfiel, V. F., & Hughey, J. B. (1981). *Testing ESL composition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Klenowski, V., & Wyatt-Smith, C. (2012). The impact of high stakes testing: The Australia story. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 19(1), 65-79.
- Lam, R. (2013). Two portfolio systems: EFL students' perceptions of writing ability, text improvement, and feedback. *Assessing Writing*, 18(2), 132-153.
- Lam, R. (2015). Convergence and divergence of process and portfolio approaches to L2 writing instruction: Issues and implications. *RELC Journal*, 46(3), 293-308.
- Lam, R. (2016). Taking stock of portfolio assessment scholarship: From research to practice. *Assessing Writing*, 31, 84-97. doi:10.1016/j.asw.2016.08.003
- Lam, R. (2017). Taking stock of portfolio assessment scholarship: From research to practice. *Assessing Writing*, 31, 84-97.
- Lam, R. (2018). Promoting self-reflection in writing: A showcase portfolio approach. In A. Burns & J. Siegel (Eds.), *International perspectives on teaching the four skills in ELT: Listening, speaking, reading, writing* (pp. 219-231). Switzerland: Springer Nature.
- Meihami, H., Hussein, F., & Sahragard, R. (2018). Portfolio-based Writing Instruction as a Venue to Provide Corrective Feedback on EFL Learners' Writing Performance. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies*, 5(3), 136-119.
- Moradan, A., & Hedayati, S. N. (2012). The impact of portfolios and conferencing on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 3(8), 115-141.
- Nezaratgoo, B. (2011). The effects of portfolio assessment on writing of EFL students. *English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 231-241.
- Nunes, A. (2004). Portfolios in the EFL classroom: Disclosing an informed practice. *ELT Journal*, 58(4), 327-335.
- Obeiah, S. F., & Bataineh, R. F. (2016). The effect of portfolio-based assessment on Jordanian EFL learners' writing performance. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 9(1), 32-46.
- Porte, G., & Richards, K. (2012). Focus article: Replication in second language writing research. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 21(3), 284-293.
- Raimes, A., (1983). *Techniques in teaching writing*. New York, NY: OUP.
- Rao, Z. (2006). Helping Chinese EFL students develop learner autonomy through portfolios. *Reflections on English Language Teaching*, 2, 113-122.
- Riechelt, M. (2001). A critical review of foreign language writing research on pedagogical approaches. *Modern Language Journal*, 85, 578-598.
- Seifoori, Z. (2016). The Impact of Portfolio Assessment on the Accuracy and Complexity of TEFL Postgraduate Students' Writing.
- Taki, S., & Heidari, M. (2011). The Effect of Using Portfolio-Based Writing Assessment on Language Learning: The Case of Young Iranian EFL Learners. *English Language Teaching*, 4(3), 192-199.
- Weigle, S. C. (2002). *Assessing writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511732997, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511732997>
- Yang, N. (2003). Integrating portfolio into learning strategy-based instruction for EFL college students. *IRAL*, 41(4), 293-317. DOI: 10.1515/iral.2003.014.