Appendix A

Student's Reading Log

گزارش از داستان:
متن را چگونه ارزیابی می‌کنید؟
دلیل انتخاب این متن چیست؟ و از آن چه یاد گرفتید؟
ایده اصلی متن را بنویسید؟
چند سؤال در مورد متن بسازید.
متن را خلاصه کنید.
چه مشکلی داشتید و میزان پیشرفت شما در خواندن چقدر بود؟

ارزیابی دانش‌آموزان از پیشرفت خواندن خود	R1 YES=1 NO=0	R2 YES=1 NO=0	R3 YES=1 NO=0	R4 YES=1 NO=0	R5 YES=1 NO=0	نمره دانش‌آموز	نمره معلم
بعد از هر خواندن پیشرفت خود را ارزیابی می کنم و نظر خود را در مورد متن و میزان یادگیری بیان می‌کنم							
ایده اصلی متن را می‌نویسم							
سؤالاتی در مورد متن می‌نویسم							
متن را خلاصه می‌کنم							
سعی می‌کنم متن را واضح و با تلفظ صحیح بخوانم و ضبط کنم							

Total Score.....
Teacher's comment.....
20-25 10-19 0-9
Excellent ☺ Good 😐 Needs work☹

Appendix B: Portfolio Assessment Marking Sheet per Lesson

Reading (Total required readings:5)	Yes(1)	No(0)
1. Portfolio includes all the required items.		
2. Portfolio contains student comments and feedback after each task		
3. Student shows creativity in tasks		
4. Student Initiates own reading		
5. Student writes main ideas		
6. Student makes question after reading		
7. Student writes summary of readings		
8. Portfolio is clear and neat.		
Audio Tape in Portfolio (Total required number of audio tapes:5	Yes(1)	No(0)
9. Student reads with a suitable speed		
10. Student reads with correct pronunciation and intonation		

Such an assessment method indicates to the students as well as their teacher how well they are making progress and what they require to do to develop further. Therefore, portfolio assessment makes the students aware of their strengths and weaknesses. When implemented well, portfolios can ensure that the focus and content of assessment are aligned with important learning goals and they have the capability to "strengthen students' learning, enhance the teacher's role, and improve testing processes" (Brown & Hudson, 1998, p. 664).

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that portfolios can be used as alternative assessment tools which complement the classroom instruction. Christiansen and Laplante's study (2004) on pre-service French Immersion teachers indicated that the language portfolio compiling process is a learning experience for both students and teachers.

With respect to the second research question, the study showed the correlation between the scores of portfolio assessment with those of the reading comprehension test. This can be an indication of the fact that portfolio assesses the same instructional objectives as the overall objectives of the course and it shows the close relationship of portfolio assessment result with that of the reading comprehension test.

Conclusion and pedagogical implications of the study

This study attempted to investigate whether portfolio assessment contributes to Iranian sophomore students' reading comprehension performance. Portfolio-based reading instruction and assessment, as depicted by the results of the present study, can be applied to various EFL reading contexts as it positively affects students' reading comprehension ability. Portfolio helped the students to choose what they liked to read according to their personal interests. Self- assessment inherent in portfolio assessment highly influences students' consciousness of their own learning process. Students become more responsible for their own learning and can see their progress towards the objectives set before. Portfolios have the potential to provide teachers and students with a rich source of information about the development and progress of students; the information they contain is taken from actual student work; and portfolio assessment focuses on what students learn and the process of learning rather than just the end product. Portfolios present a practical approach to assembling student work, interpreting evidence of student performance, and assessing student performance relative to instructional objectives (Pierce & O'Malley, 1992). Some researchers have cautioned that certain problems such as politics, logistics, interpretation, reliability, and validity could arise, especially if portfolio is used as an assessment tool on a large scale (Gilman & Andrew 1995; Padilla et al.1996; Barnhardt et al. 1998). To make up for these shortcomings, multiple judges, careful planning, proper training of raters, and triangulation of objective and subjective sources of information are required for successful validation of the procedure to occur (Moya & O'Malley, 1994). If portfolios are implemented clearly and systematically as an alternative means of assessment, they have several advantages over traditional forms of assessment (Pierce and O'Malley, 1992; Brown and Hudson, 1998; Moya and O'Malley, 1994; Barnhardt et al. 1998).

Portfolio assessment can thus be used in educational settings as a method for judging students' capabilities as an integral component of instruction. It is an example of assessment that is well integrated with instruction.

assessment is beneficial to students in that it presents feedback to both the students and the teacher. Through self-assessment which is inherent in portfolio assessment, students become aware of the gradual process of learning and they think about their weaknesses and strengths in reading. Students go through their own work and based on the criteria with which they have been familiarized, choose the content of their reading portfolio and the best piece of work and explain why it is the best. Therefore, learners' reflection on their portfolios makes an important contribution to the assessment process and it demonstrates the involvement of learners in the reading process. These reflections also have the purpose of making the students aware of the areas of difficulty and the teacher aware of the problems needed to work on. This interaction between the teacher and the students makes assessment and instruction closely interrelated.

The results of this study are compatible with some empirical studies. Newman et al. (1995) focused on the development and implementation of portfolio management strategies for their students. Starks-Martin (1996) investigated the studying and reading processes of limited-English-Speaking students in Hmong university using think-aloud protocols, reading journals, and study skills portfolios. Portfolios as a tool for assessing Hmong students' learning strategies helped students assess their own learning and reading processes and practice more effective ways of studying. The 3- year portfolio assessment project (1996-1999) implemented by Barnhardt et al. (1998) in elementary through higher education foreign language classrooms indicated that "when portfolio assessment is incorporated fully into instruction, there exists no time lost on assessment. Assessment is a true learning experience, and not external to the learning process" (p.11). Research implemented by Schwarzer et al. (2002) was a four-month-long preparation process to implement an innovative ESL workplace program (ESLWP) using portfolio. These researchers believe that portfolio assessment empowers students, encourages ESL employees to become critical and self-motivated language learners, and fit best the program needs and interests for showcasing both product and process. The study conducted by Yang (2003) suggested that "portfolios are a good tool that helps raise students' awareness about learning strategies, facilitate their learning process, and enhance their self-directed learning"(p.312). Implementing a culture portfolio project among French students, Allen (2004) concluded that the project made the students aware of their own metacognitive processes of learning, engaged them in critical thinking skills, and equipped the students with tools necessary for life-long learning. The work carried out by Nunes (2004) was a one- year- long EFL programm of portfolio development with 10th grade students in a Portuguese highschool. It resulted in students' self reflection, autonomy, self-monitoring, and metacognitive strategy activation. Marefat (2004) integrated portfolios and technology (e-mail) into a writing class in order to investigate the learners' perceptions of portfolio assessment. She recommends

Through self-assessment which is inherent in portfolio assessment, students become aware of the gradual process of learning and they think about their weaknesses and strengths in reading

assessment procedures. Regarding reading aloud tasks, those who turned in the 5 recordings of speech as required received a perfect score of five points. Evaluation criteria for recording encompassed reading speed, correct pronunciation and intonation. As to the reading skill, each reading passage was evaluated in terms of task completion, content, organization, and wording. The Final portfolios were rated by both the teacher and one trained rater in terms of completeness and assignment fulfillment (whether there were 5 recordings, 5 reading passages, and post-reading tasks), Reading Logs (whether works included self-reflection), and design/structure (whether it was organized and presented neatly).The reliability of the portfolio assessment was confirmed through inter-rater reliability of the two raters' judgments (r=.71). At the end of the experiment, both the experimental and the control group sat the reading comprehension test so that their performance could be compared.

Results

Some statistical analyses were performed on the data to answer the research questions posed in this study. In order to ensure the homogeneity of the two groups in terms of language proficiency prior to experiment, the students' scores on the Nelson test were put in the t-test formula. The result showed the students' homogeneity in terms of GEP (t-observed: .86 < t-critical: 2; $p<.05$; df: 58).

To investigate if there was any significant difference between the experimental and control group with regard to their performance on the final reading test, an independent t-test was run comparing the two means. The result showed that there was a statistically meaningful difference between the means of the two groups; that is, portfolio assessment had an effect on students' performance on the reading comprehension test (t-observed: 2.66 > t-critical: 2; $p<.05$; df: 58).

Another analysis was a correlation–coefficient test employed to calculate the degree of go-togetherness of the portfolio scores and those of the final reading test among the students' of the experimental group. The result of the analysis using Pearson Product Moment correlation revealed that the correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (rxy= .50). This index is indicative of a positive relationship between the experimental group students' portfolio and reading test scores.

Discussion

This study evaluated the effect of portfolio assessment on Iranian sophomore highschool students' performance on reading comprehension. The findings of this study depicted the better performance of the experimental group compared with the control group in terms of reading comprehension performance. As it has been stipulated throughout this study, portfolio

used as a self-assessment tool for monitoring the reading comprehension, questing the students' progress over time, evaluating the reading passage, writing the main ideas of the whole passage, making some questions about the passage, summarizing the whole text, and taping their speech (see Appendix A)

5) Portfolio Assessment Marking Sheet in which the teacher graded the students' portfolio pieces based on the assessment criteria assigned (see Appendix B)

Implementation of a portfolio system

The first step in implementing a portfolio system for the experimental group was preparing portfolios. The procedures followed the portfolio assessment framework proposed by Delett, Barhardt, & Kevorkian (2001, p. 560): planning the assessment purpose, determining the portfolio outcomes, matching classroom tasks to outcomes, establishing criteria for assessment, determining organization, monitoring the portfolio, and evaluating the portfolio. At the very beginning of the course, the teacher communicated the contents of the portfolio clearly to the students to avoid confusion and frustration. The criteria for assessing portfolios were also discussed. The final reading portfolios were expected to exhibit a variety of reading passages, students' involvement in post-reading tasks, self-assessment, and tape recordings. The students were expected to include five reading passages that could be of different genres as their class assignment requirements. Students had to explain why they selected what they selected for their reading portfolio. Students were also asked to record their speech on audiotapes when a unit was finished (five recordings in total). They could also decide the content of their recordings. Low achievers could simply read aloud texts of Dialogue or Reading parts of a lesson. High-achieving students, however, were encouraged to play different roles with varied voice expressions. As a follow-up to the speaking-recording task, students listened to peers' tapes in the class. Then, the students were told that they should assess their own reading progress via Reading Logs. These reflections that were associated with the reading passages gave the students opportunities to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. The students graded their own portfolio pieces based on the assigned criteria by the teacher. Finally, Portfolio Assessment Marking Sheet was used by the instructor to grade the students' portfolio pieces according to the criteria discussed at the beginning of the course. This final work that contained 10 required pieces along with Reading Logs was used as the basis for the students' English course grades.

Given that the portfolio system adopts a teacher/student joint assessment model, grading criteria are always made clear to students before they are involved in the assessment procedures

Given that the portfolio system adopts a teacher/student joint assessment model, grading criteria are always made clear to students before they are involved in the

Portfolios as one kind of performance-based assessment having self assessment as a vital part can demonstrate that students have acquired skills in specific areas such as public speaking, problem solving, and reading. In these skill area portfolios, attention must be paid to establishing relevant criteria, setting acceptable standards of performance, selecting pieces that meet those standards, and assessment tools. Portfolio would provide students with opportunities to determine which reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking for learning strategies were most congruent with their respective areas.

Due to the importance of reading skill development and strategy use and its effect on reading comprehension improvement on the one hand, and the use of portfolio as a responsive assessment in reading, which focuses learners' attention on learning process, on the other hand, this study attempted to investigate the effect of portfolio assessment on highschool students' reading comprehension performance. To this end, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Does portfolio assessment affect Iranian sophomore highschool students' performance on reading comprehension?

2. Is there any relationship between portfolio assessment scores and those of the reading comprehension test?

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 60 female sophomore high school students majoring in mathematics in Kashan. Their age ranged from 16 to 17. Since they had been placed in two different intact classes in advance by their educational program, it was impossible to group them randomly to two classes. Consequently, one class was assigned as the control and the other as the experimental group. Students of the two classes were administered a proficiency test (Nelson 150 B) at the outset of the experiment in order to ascertain their homogeneity in terms of general English proficiency prior to the study. The results of the t-test run on the means showed that the two classes were homogeneous at the beginning of the study.

Instrumentation

The following instruments were used to collect data from the subjects:

1) A general proficiency test (Nelson 150 B) was utilized not only to check the homogeneity of the groups in terms of language proficiency level but also as a criterion against which the reading final test scores were validated. The test consisted of 50 multiple-choice grammar and vocabulary items and the total score of the test was 50 and it enjoyed the reliability index of .70 obtained through Kuder- Richardson (KR-21) formula.

2) A reading comprehension test was developed by the instructor, according to the course objectives. The test had a total of twenty points and it was validated against the standard test of Nelson. The resulting correlation coefficient was .69

3) Reading portfolio assessment

4) Students' Reading Log for each passage

process; 7) helping the development of skills for lifelong learning; 8) gaining meaningful and substantial information; and finally 9) providing a continuous example of a student's work in a context that is relevant and understandable.

Since assessment has the potential to affect the learner behavior in terms of strategy use and motivation (Stefanou & Parkes, 2003), portfolio assessment as a kind of alternative assessment can be used to upgrade learners' autonomy, positive attitude, and responsibility. According to Barnhardt et al. (1998), "as students create their own portfolios, they are actively involved in and reflecting on their own learning. Increased metacognition has a positive impact on a student's self-confidence, facilitates student use of learning strategies, and increases the student's ability to assess and revise work" (p.11).

Assessing reading skill through portfolio

As Grabe (1991) argued, "a description of reading has to account for the notions that fluent reading is rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible, and gradually developing" (p. 378). Such a description must also be reflected in valid performance-based reading assessment (O'Malley and Valdez Pierce, 1996).

Moreover, addressing the concept of postmodernism and postmodern principles of assessment, Harrison (2004) describes some of the ways through which responsive assessment in reading might be put into action. He states that reading assessment should be in line with the following guidelines: draw the attention from global to local and from serving national policy to serving curriculum practices; increase emphasis on teacher assessment, self-assessment, and peer-assessment; negotiate syllabus with participants; take into account the authenticity of tasks that form the basis of reading assessment; take greater account of a readers' role and response; and acknowledge a diminution of the authority of the author and of the text. Based on these six theories underlying reading assessment in postmodernism, Harrison (2004) views portfolio-based assessment as one alternative to the traditional reading assessment methods with the hope that this assessment method could enhance reading skills and motivation.

Most of the research in the field of learning strategy instruction has also focused on reading strategies as a subcategory of learning strategies which is of utmost importance (Carrell, 1998). The use of appropriate language learning strategies often results in improved proficiency or achievement overall or in specific skill areas (Oxford et al., 1993). The strategies typical of the higher level students appeared to be more sophisticated and more interactive (Griffiths, 2003). The research on comprehension, metacognition, and comprehension monitoring also describes good readers as those who are able to set goals for their reading and gauge progress towards these goals while reading (Afflerbach, 1998).This independence in reading is not accomplished unless self-assessment is at the center of instruction.

Abstract

The present study attempted to investigate the effect of portfolio assessment on improving reading comprehension ability of sophomore high school students. A further concern of this study was to address the probable correlation between the scores of a reading portfolio assessment and those of a reading test. The subjects participated in this study were 60 Iranian female high school students. The experimental group was exposed to portfolio assessment while the control group received the regular (traditional) reading instruction. Data were obtained through 1) reading portfolio assessment and 2) a reading comprehension test. Data were analyzed using independent t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The results of data analysis indicated that portfolio improved the students' reading comprehension performance. The conclusion was that portfolio-based reading instruction and assessment as one alternative in assessment can contribute to progress of the students in terms of reading comprehension ability and it can be used as a promising testing and teaching tool in English language classes.

Key Words: alternative assessment, portfolio, reading skill

Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process. Nowadays an increase can be observed in the use of instructional and assessment practices that are "holistic, student centered, performance based, process oriented, integrated, and multidimensional" (Gottlieb, 1995, p.12). This can be accounted for by the limitations of the traditional forms of assessment. Traditional standardized objective achievement tests, consisting primarily of multiple choice and matching items, have been generally criticized as inappropriate, invalid measures of students' academic competencies (O'Malley and Valdez Pierce, 1996). Traditional assessment procedures, according to Moya and O'Malley (1994), fail to demonstrate the whole picture of student capabilities because their focus is on products without considering the processes of creating such products. However, the so-called alternative assessment attempts to capture vital information about learners' competence as well as their thinking skills. One of the most effective types of alternative assessment is portfolio assessment. The use of portfolio in the classroom has generated a great deal of interest among educators. It is increasingly cited as a viable alternative to standardized testing (Wiggins, 1989b; Valencia, 1990a; Barnhardt et al., 1998; Wolf, 1996; Mokhtari et al. 1996; Macdonald, 1997). Portfolio assessment provides the multiple sources of evidence regarding the students' learning and learning processes. Strengths of portfolio assessment, as stated by Gilman and Richard (1995, p. 20), are as follows: 1) evaluation of both product and process; 2) integration of learning and assessment; 3) assessment not limited to a single score; 4) providing the teachers with more information on a student's progress; 5) encouraging students to take charge of their own learning; 6) strengthening the students' feeling that they are a part of the assessment

Assessment of reading: portfolio or reading comprehension test?

Fatemeh Nikui Nezhad
MA in TEFL
email: fnikui@yahoo.com

چکیده

هدف تحقیق حاضر، بررسی تأثیر سنجش مهارت خواندن از طریق پوشه کار بر افزایش توانایی درک مطلب متون در میان زبان‌آموزان دوره دبیرستان در ایران است. علاوه بر آن، تحقیق حاضردرپی بررسی میزان ارتباط بین سنجش از طریق پوشه کار و آزمون خواندن است. بر این اساس، تعداد ۶۰ دانش‌آموز دورهٔ متوسطه در دو گروه آزمایش و کنترل در این تحقیق شرکت کردند. برای گروه آزمایشی سنجش از طریق پوشه کار اجرا شد، در حالی‌که در مورد گروه کنترل همان شیوه‌های رایج ارزش‌یابی معلم محور مورد استفاده قرار گرفت. داده‌های این تحقیق از سنجش از طریق پوشه کار و یک آزمون خواندن به‌دست آمد. نتایج تحلیل آماری یافته‌های تحقیق حاکی از این بود که سنجش از طریق پوشه کار توانایی درک مطلب خواندن را افزایش می‌دهد. نتایج تحقیق بر این نکات تأکید می‌کند که سنجش از طریق پوشه کار رویکردی زبان‌آموز محور دارد. در این نوع سنجش، زبان‌آموزان به نقاط قوت و ضعف خویش در مهارت خواندن آگاهی پیدا می‌کنند و بر فرایند یادگیری و ارزیابی از خود تسلط می‌یابند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: سنجش جایگزینی، پوشه کار، مهارت خواندن