

The impact of portfolios and conferencing on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill

Dr.Abbas Moradan*

Associate Professor at Semnan University

Seyede Nasibeh Hedayati**

M.A student in TEFL at Semnan University

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of portfolios and conferencing techniques on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill. The experiment involved Iranian intermediate students that were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group. The participants of the first experimental group were asked to provide portfolios of their 4 paragraphs during the course and after each paragraph they were supposed to assess themselves and answer a self-assessment checklist (they were supposed to write four paragraphs during the course). The participants in the second experimental group were asked to take part in four whole class and two individual conferences after writing each paragraph. The participants of control group based on the traditional approach just received their scored writings without any oral and written feedback by the teacher. The result of the study showed that there was significant difference between performance of the two experimental groups and that of the control group on the post test. No significant difference was found between the performance of the two experimental groups after implementing portfolios and conferencing techniques.

Key Terms: alternative assessment, portfolios and conferencing.

* Email: amoradan@yahoo.com

- تاریخ وصول: 1391/3/18، تأیید نهایی: 1391/4/20

** Email: Nasibeh.hedayati@yahoo.com

Introduction

Over the past several years, there has been a great interest in using alternative assessment techniques (Goldestein and Conrad, 1990; Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994; Hirvela and Sweetland, 2005; Lynch and Shaw, 2005). This movement tries to have, more democratic, and task-based methods of evaluation in testing a learner's language proficiency (Brown and Hudson 1998; Aschbacher 1991; Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters 1992; Huerta-Macías 1995). Alternative assessment techniques, evaluating both process and product of learning (Belanoff and Dickson, 1991; Genesee and Hamayan, 1994; Hamayan, 1995), providing useful, informative information (Clapham, 2000; Alderson and Banerjee, 2001), motivating learners by involving them in evaluating process (Broadfoot, 1986; Worf et al., 1991; Gardner, 1992; Wiggins, 1993), and Promoting autonomous and self-directed learning (Brindly, 2001), establish a strong connection between assessment, teaching and learning which is in sharp contrast with traditional methods of testing. As McNamara (2000) points out: "This approach stresses the need for assessment to be integrated with the goals of the curriculum and to have a constructive relationship with teaching and learning". It means considering teaching, learning and assessment as an integrated and interdependent chain of event (Lee, 2007).

The procedures used within this paradigm include checklists, journals, logs, videotapes and audiotapes, self-evaluation, teacher observations, portfolios, conferences, diaries, self-assessments and peer-assessments (Brown and Hudson 1998). These procedures have been called "Alternatives in Assessment" (Brown, 2004) as opposed to traditional assessment techniques such as multiple choice, cloze test, dictation, etc.

Table (1) introduces the main differences between the two approaches (Brown, 2004, p.13).

Table1. Traditional and alternative assessment

TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT	ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT
One shot, standardized exams	Continuous long- term assessment
Timed, multiple- choice format	Untimed, free- response format
Decontextualized test items	Contextualized communicative tasks
Scores suffice for feedback	Individualized feedback and washback
Norm- referenced scores	Criterion- referenced scores
Focus on the "right" answer	Open- ended, creative answers
Summative	Formative
Oriented to product	Oriented process
Non- interactive performance	Interactive performance
Fosters extrinsic motivation	Fosters intrinsic motivation

There have been numerous approaches in the history of teaching writing; product approach, process approach, English for academic purposes (Silva, 1990). They have come and gone and in spite of these changes writing is still a difficult task for learners and teachers and researchers are still dissatisfied with these approaches.

Nowadays alternative assessments such as portfolios, conferencing, peer assessment and self-assessment are used as an alternative to put an end to one shot traditional assessment. The main problem of traditional methods was that they just focused on writing as a product, while alternative assessments emphasize both product and process. That's why when portfolios introduced it gained prominence among teachers (Burch, 2000; Hirvela and Sweetland, 2005).

Advantages of portfolios exist in a large number in literature (e.g. Brown, 2004; Burch, 2000; Genesee and Upsure, 1996; Nezakatgoo, 2005, Song and August, 2002). Brown (2004) categorized potential benefits of portfolios as:

- Foster intrinsic motivation, responsibility, and ownership,
- Promote student-teacher interaction with teacher as facilitator,
- Individualize learning and celebrate the uniqueness of each student,
- Provide tangible evidence of a student's work,

- Facilitate critical thinking self-assessment, and revision process,
- Offer opportunities for collaborative work with peers, and
- Permit assessment of multiple dimensions of language learning (p257).

Portfolio can include a range of materials like essays, reports, audio or video, homework, self and peer assessment (Brown, 2004). In this study, the students' portfolios include self-assessment.

Conferencing as another methods of alternative assessment typically involves students discussions of their weaknesses and strengths with the teacher (Genesee and Upsure, 19996).Genesee and Upsure claim that conferences are different from other forms of assessment in that "they focus directly on learning process and strategies" (p.110)

The advantages of conferencing have been emphasized in literature (Genesee and Upsure, 1996; Brown, 2004; Besharati, 2004; Firroz zarah, 2006; Heidari, 2009). Brown and Hudson (1998) state that in total, the advantages of conferences are that teachers can use them to:

- Foster student reflection on their own learning process;
- Help students develop better self images;
- Elicit language performances on particular tasks, skills or other language points;
- Inform, observe, mold and gather information about students (p.663).

Elahinia (2004) in a research examined the assessment of writing through portfolios and achievement test. Her study consists of two groups, one experimental group which are assessed through portfolios and one control group that are assessed based on traditional achievement tests. She not only assured the advantage of portfolio but also came to this conclusion that portfolio can change students negative attitude toward writing

To investigate the value of portfolios as a tool for students' preparation of micro-level skills for their final examinations, Nezakatgoo (2005) made a comparison between portfolios based and

non-portfolios based writing classroom. The result of the study revealed a significant difference between the two groups. The use of portfolios in his class helped improve students' final examination score and their mastering of the mechanics.

Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli, & Nejad Ansari (2010) examined the impact of portfolio assessment as a process-oriented assessment on Iranian EFL students' writing ability. There was a comparison between two groups; one experimental group that received portfolio as a treatment and a control group that was taught writing based on traditional approach. The findings suggested that portfolios assessment empowers students learning of writing. They provided both quantitative and qualitative data.

Pezeshki (2010) made a comparative study of e-portfolio, portfolio and conventional writing classes. In her experiment there are two experimental and one control groups. She concluded that there is no significant difference among these methods considering their effect on Iranian students writing.

To investigate the effect of portfolio assessment on writing, Sharifi, & Hassaskhah (2011) tried a time series design. In the first half of the semester a traditional –based teaching and in the second half a portfolio-based teaching was used. There were 5 pre tests and five post tests. They come to this conclusion that there is a close relationship between teaching and testing and portfolio has a positive effect on students writing ability.

In a research Besharati (2004) has considered the relationship between Iranian students' listening comprehension and alternatives in assessment (conferencing and self- assessment). During a semester he investigated the influence of self-assessment and conferencing on students listening comprehension skill. There were one experimental group and one control group. At the end she asserts the positive effect of alternatives in assessment.

In a similar study, Firooz Zareh (2006) has investigated the relationship between Iranian students' reading comprehension and alternative assessments (conferencing and self- assessment). Here again there were one experimental and one control group. According to his study alternative assessment had a positive effect on students reading comprehension.

In another investigation Zarghami (2011) has examined the impact of student generated test and conferencing on Iranian students' grammar acquisition. Based on the results obtained from two experimental groups and one control group, she assured the inclusion of alternative assessment procedures in assessment and instruction.

While the new movement promises more humanistic and rewarding methods of testing and teaching and thus has a lot to offer, most teachers are not quite familiar with the new concepts and practices within the emerging paradigm. To enlighten the views of interested teachers, it can be a good to analyze the effect of portfolios and conferencing, on writing improvement of students which usually EFL students are weak at and to compare the results of their final exam with those of students who have been taught in a traditional class.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study were 92 male, Iranian, intermediate EFL students, majoring different courses (IT, Compute, Engineering), in Engineering Faculty of Kurdistan University. They were freshmen with an average age of 22. The participants were members of three classes taking a course named General English. These classes were randomly assigned to three conditions; two experimental groups each

of which consist of 30 students and one control group consist of 32 students.

Instrumentation

The data required for this study was collected via a Nelson test, a topic-based paragraph writing as pre test and post test.

Nelson English language test

For checking the homogeneity of the three groups, first a Nelson English language test of 300D series was piloted on a group of ten students relatively at the same proficiency level as participants; however, it was found to be considerably beyond their level. Therefore, a Nelson English language test 300A was administered to three groups, after being piloted on another group of ten students at the same level of proficiency as the participants in the study. The test consisted of 50 multiple-choice items, including 37 structures, 7 lexical and 5 pronunciation questions, to each of which one point was assigned. The total score of the test was 50 and the subjects had 40 minutes to answer it.

Next for obtaining reliability of the scores of Nelson Test 300 A, the Kuder-Richardson (KR-21) formula was used. The reliability index concluded in this way was .73.

Topic-based Paragraph Writings as pre test and post test

About 50 TOFEL argumentative (agree or disagree) writing topics were taken from the Internet by the researcher. The researcher and the teacher decided on argumentative writing. University students as future authors of articles need to learn to write their own idea and support it. Argumentative seemed more suitable for these university students than either narrative or descriptive.

One of the topics was chosen by the researcher and the teacher to be used as post test and pre test. Four more topics were chosen to be

given to the students during the course to write about. The researcher and the teacher tried to choose topics that are related and close to the topic of their book: Vocabulary Development 3: Cause and Effect.

In order to check the reliability of the post test and the pre test, inter rater reliability was used based on the judgments of two raters, the teacher and the researcher.

Procedure

In order to collect appropriate data for this study, the following steps were taken:

In the first session of the treatment, the Nelson English Test 300 A was given to the three groups (two experimental and one control group). In addition a topic was given to them as the pre test and they were told to write a paragraph of at least 150 words. They were given 40 minutes for the Nelson Test and 30 minutes for the topic based paragraph writing. During paragraph writing, they were allowed to use dictionary or to ask the teacher questions if they did not know a word.

Two raters, the researcher and the teacher scored the paragraphs based on Jacobs et al.'s writing scale (1981, cited in Campos, 2010) (Appendix A). Some of the papers were chosen randomly from among the papers and were scored by the two raters. A correlation coefficient was then calculated between the scores given by each rater to each student. Because the correlation coefficient for the two rater was high (.80) (Hyland, 2003), the researcher decided that the rest of the papers on the four topics during the experiment be only scored by the teacher, since it wasn't practical to have a second rater.

During the treatment the students were assigned four topics to write a paragraph of at least 150 words for each. Each of three groups went through different treatments which will be explained bellow. After the treatment, students were given the same topic that was used as the pre test which functioned as post test.

Experimental Group 1: portfolios

As mentioned before in this study portfolios include self-assessment. Next session after the pre test the teacher explained to the students how they were going to collect all the four writings in a folder during the course, she also explained the self assessment check list (Appendix B) and told them how they were going to check themselves and score their own paragraph. In order to prepare such a check list that was used as a treatment for group 1, the researcher discussed it with five co workers. Based on their experiences in different classes they come to a final check list that exists in Appendix B. This check list that was provided based on discussions between the researcher and five coworkers and Bailey and Powell's book (1987) (it should be mentioned that one part of this book is about paragraph writing and it is one of the main books that is used in Iran in teaching writing) consists of 10 questions based on what the teacher expects the students to learn about paragraph writing. Each question has one score, students check their own paragraph based on the question and give themselves one or zero. The total score is 10. It should be mentioned that

It was mentioned that the topics were related to the students' book, so after teaching the ordinary material of the book the teacher gave the chosen topic to the students and they were asked to write about it at home and bring it to the class next session. They were asked to write the paragraph in 30 minutes and manage their time. Next session students were given self assessment check list to check their paragraph. Then the checklists were collected and scored by the teacher and given back to the students next session. They were also given a folder to write their name on it and keep their writings and checklists there and hand them in to the teacher last session. The treatment in this group went on like this for the whole semester until the students had written on all the four topics.

Experimental Group 2: Conferencing

In this group a conference check list (Appendix C), which was a set of questions to be asked was used as the specific treatment. This check list like the previous one is the result of discussions between the researcher and five coworkers. It can be considered as a kind of treatment in that the students gave the teacher feedback on their strengths and weaknesses in writing a paragraph and the teacher provided them with necessary feedback about their problems and helped them to overcome their weaknesses. The students participate in four whole class conferences after writing each paragraph and two individual conferences between the teacher and one of the students. The teacher scheduled time during the semester in a way that all of the students have participated in to two individual conferences till the end of the semester.

The checklist included two sets of questions:

a) Some examples of the questions and answers between the teacher and students in first conference:

Teacher: What do you think about your writing ability?

Student1: It is awful, I don't like writing.

Student2: I have even have problem with writing a paragraph in my mother tongue.

Teacher: Do you think you are a successful writer?

Student: I think I can be a successful writer if I try.

Teacher: Who is a successful writer?

Student 1: A good writer is a person who reads a lot.

Student 2: A successful writer has self confidence.

b) Example of the questions and answers between the teacher and students in conferences after writing each paragraph:

Teacher: What is the main idea you want to talk about?

Student1: Um, m... I want to talk about both sides of the topic. I both agree and disagree.

Teacher: do you believe it is a good idea to write about both of them in one paragraph?

Student2: we can write about each on of them in a separate paragraph.

Student3: for each of them one paragraph.

Teacher: Do you think you have been successful in convincing the reader?

Student1 reads his paragraph and hesitates.

Student2: as a reader I am not convinced.

Teacher to student1: What will you do to improve your paragraph?

Student1: I can give an example. Something that has happened to me.

Teacher: What is your weakness?

Student1: I always had problem with different tenses?

Teacher: it is great that you check your writing, try to do some grammar exercises. You can ask some one else to read it and check your grammar. It is a good idea to buy newspaper, read articles and underline verbs and determine their specific tenses.

On the whole the participants of this study performed six conferences. All the conferences conducted orally and the teacher gave students enough time to speak about their problems and she tried to provide students with appropriate feedback.

Control Group: Traditional Approach

The third group was the control group. The teacher assigned the students a topic to write about at home. Teacher scored the writings and gave the papers back to the students. This is the method usually

used in institutes, schools and universities in Iran as observed by the researcher.

After the first lesson of the book was taught to the students the teacher told them they are going to have paragraph writing and explained about topic sentence, supporting sentence, coherence and unity. Then she gave them a topic to write at least 150 words about it at home. The teacher told them that try to write it in 30 minutes. Next session students gave the teacher their writings. The teacher collected them, scored them at home and gave the scored papers back to the students. It should be mentioned that the teacher do not gave any feedback to the students except the score and some comments on grammatical and spelling errors. The students in this group wrote on all four topics and received scores for their writings during the semester.

Results

In order to investigate the impact of portfolios and conferencing on writing skill of the participants through the performance of the control group and experimental groups, the participants were required to take the same test twice as the pre test and post test of the study. Descriptive study of the pre test is presented in table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the pre test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	30	7.70	1.44	7.16	8.24	6	10
2	30	7.30	1.14	6.87	7.83	6	9
3	32	7.19	1.06	6.81	7.57	6	9

The mean score of the three groups of the participants were almost the same. This was true considering standard deviations. A one way

ANOVA was conducted to see if there was any statistically difference between the three groups. Table 2 shows the result.

Table 2 ANOVA for the pre test scores

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.43	2	2.21	1.48	.233
Within Groups	133.47	89	1.50		

The F-ratio was 1.48 and P-value > 0.05 based on them it was concluded that there was no significant difference in terms of the three groups' performances on the pre test at the beginning of the study. As it was approved based on the results obtained in Nelson English Test, it can be concluded that the three groups of the participants were homogenous. These findings reemphasizes the result of Nelson English Test.

After one semester of treatment a post test was administered. The descriptive statistics of the post test is presented in the table 3.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics of the post test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	30	16.37	3.15	15.19	17.55	15	19
2	30	16.43	1.07	16.03	16.83	15	18
3	32	12.97	1.17	12.54	13.39	12	16

The means of the three groups are different. It is true regarding the standard variation. The statistical procedure of one way ANOVA was performed on the post test scores (table 4) to see if there is any statistical difference.

Table 4 ANOVA for the post test scores

	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	245.7	2	122.8	29.93	.000
Within Groups	365.3	89	4.10		

An F-ratio of $29.93 > 3.0718$ (at α level of .05) revealed that the first and second null hypotheses of the study were rejected due to a significant difference observed among three groups. This can be possibly attributed to the effectiveness of the treatments. In order to make sure about the relationship between portfolios and writing and conferencing and writing a paired sample test between the pre test and post test of all three groups was utilized. The results of paired sample test are presented in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics of paired sample test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1 pre test	30	16.97	1.29
Post test	30	7.70	1.44
2 pre test	30	16.43	1.07
Post test	30	7.30	1.14
3 pre test	32	12.97	1.17
Post test	32	7.19	1.06

In this paired sample test the pre test and post test of each group are compared. We want to know whether there is a difference between the pre test and posttest of each group, whether the students have changed during the semester and the treatments had any effect on them or not. As it can be seen in all three groups there is an increase in the means.

Table 6 paired sample test

	Paired differences		95% Confidence Interval of the difference		T	df	Sig.
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper			
1pretest-posttest	9.26	.45	9.09	9.43	112.8	29	.000
2pretest-posttest	9.13	.43	8.97	9.29	115.2	29	.000
3pretest-posttest	5.78	.55	5.58	5.98	59.17	31	.000

As it is displayed in table 6 there is a significant difference between the pre test and post test of all three groups based on the t values. These significant differences in two experimental groups are higher than control group, and the experimental groups are very close to each other. So it can be concluded that the treatments even the traditional approach effect students' writing skill.

In order to find the location of the difference post-hoc scheffe test were performed. The result of post-hoc scheffe test is presented in table 7.

Table 7 Post-hoc Scheffe Test. Multiple comparisons of the post test scores.

	Mean Difference	sig	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Exp1 Con	3.398*	.000	2.12	4.68
Exp2 Con	3.465*	.000	2.18	4.75
Exp2 Exp1	.067	.992	-1.24	1.37

*the mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The obtained result revealed that there was a significant difference between the performance of first experimental group and control group and there was also significant difference between second experimental group and control group. Base on the results obtained in

post –hoc scheffe test (table 7) there is no significant difference between the performances of the experimental groups.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study tried to examine the impact of portfolios and conferencing on the writing of Iranian EFL learners. Considering the fact that not enough research has been done to compare the impact of alternative assessment techniques especially conferencing on writing skill in Iran as an EFL context, the researcher felt the need for further research. When we integrate teaching, learning and assessment, our assessment tool becomes a kind of learning tool that helps our students to learn and improve their writing skill.

Comparing the post test of the three groups revealed a significant difference between the performance of the two experimental groups and that of the control group. No significant difference was found between the performance of the two experimental groups after implementing portfolios and conferencing techniques

In the experimental groups students receive feedback from their teachers while in the control group students just receive a score that do not help them to improve their own writing, it is not enough to help them to know about their weaknesses and strengths. We can say that the result of this study is because of the feedback that is provided. During portfolios and conferencing, we involve our students. They assess themselves, reflect, monitor and communicate their own progress. Students take the responsibility of their own learning. At the same time this engagement in this process of improvement and decision making motivate students to learn and try to improve their capabilities as reflected in the results. The students in the experimental groups of this study are encouraged to become independent that is one of the important aims of teaching and assessment. By involving in the process of assessment they practice independence.

Using alternative assessment techniques can provide useful information about the process of learning. This diagnostic information besides feedbacks to the learner helps to remove the gap between what has been taught and what has been learned.

Teachers should be responsible of changing and improving students' capabilities and their own teaching practices and be aware of interrelationship between assessment, teaching and learning. In an effective formative assessment we have a process of assessment, diagnosis and feedback that involves students. In this way students become independent, responsible and creative.

As a summary the results of this study reemphasize the impact of alternative assessment techniques on Iranian EFL learners' writing skill. Alternative assessment methods by giving feedback, involving students in the process of learning and assessment motivate them to improve their writing skill. The better performance of the two experimental groups provides support for the alternative assessment methods.

Limitations

The students in this study were all in the intermediate level of proficiency which limits the generalizability of the result only to this proficiency level. Also the time span for the research is limited to only one term of university, about three months which may affect the external validity or generalizability of the result. Because of the few number of students in each group the external validity or generalizability of the research may be affected. Also because of the inability of the researcher to randomly select the participants of the study the results are limited in the extent of their generalizability as is also apparent in the choice of the design of the study (a quasi-experimental design). The students in the three groups were asked to write on each of the topics for about 30 minutes at home, so the researcher did not have any control over time limitation. This can also

limit generalizations that can be drawn from this research. This study is limited to paragraph writing specifically argumentative writing.

Suggestions for further research

The researcher has suggestions that can lead to further investigation: In the present study all the participants were male, and sex and age were not considered. Another study considering these two variables gives further insight in this area. All the participants were at intermediate level of language proficiency. Other levels of study or the impact of learners in this process can be considered. Other researches can be done to compare the effect of other alternative assessment techniques on writing skill. Studying the effect of alternative assessment techniques on other skills reading, listening and speaking is suggested. Investigating the impact of alternative assessment methods on learners' motivation and autonomy is recommended. It would be interesting to consider the effect of alternative assessment method on writing proficiency of IELTS and TOFEL examiners. Further researches can be done to investigate the impact of alternative assessment techniques in institutes and schools.

References

- Alderson, J., & Banerjee, J. (2001). Language testing and assessment. *Language Teaching* , 34, 213-236.
- Aljaafreh, A., & Lantolf, J. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and second language learning in the zone of proximal development. *The Modern Language Journal* , 78(4), 465-483.
- Aschbacher, P. (1991). Performance assessment: State activity, interest, and concerns. *Applied Measurement in Education* , 4(4), 275-288.
- Bailey, E., Powell, P. (1987). *The practical writer with readings*. NY: Holt Rinehart and Winston INC.
- Belanoff, D., & Dickson, M. (1991). *Portfolios: Process and Product*. Portsmouth: NM:Boyton/Cook.
- Besharati, C. (2004). The impact of alternative assessment techniques on Iranian students' achievements in listening comprehension skill. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Al-Zahra University, Tehran, Iran.
- Brindly, G. (2001). Outcomes-based assessment in practice: Some examples and emerging insights. *Language Testing* , 18,393-407.
- Broadfoot, P. (1986). *Profiles and records of achievement*. London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Brown, J., & Hudson, T. (1998). The alternatives in language assessment. *TESOL Quarterly* , 32, 653-675.
- Brown, D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practice*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Burch, C. (2000). Inside the portfolio experience: The students' perspective. In K.B. Yancey (Ed.). *Issues and Trends in Postsecondary English Studies* , 148-164. Urbana-Illinois : National Council of Teachers of English.
- Campos, J. (2010). Choosing a good scale to evaluate students' writing. Retrieved March 10, 2012 from

- http://www.panamatesol.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/espinoza-writing_scales.32384039.pdf
- Clapham, C. (2000). Assessment and Testing. Paper presented at the Annual Review of Applied Linguistics , 20, 147-161.
- Elahinia, H. (2004). Assessment of writing through portfolio and achievement test. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Training Teacher University, Tehran, Iran.
- Firooz Zareh, A.R. (2006). The effectiveness of alternative assessment and traditional methods of testing on Iranian EFL adult learners' reading comprehency. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Allame Tabatab'i University, Tehran, Iran.
- Gardnev, H. (1992). Assessment in context: The alternative to stansardized testing. In R. Gifford and M. O'Connor (Eds.), *Changing assessment: Alternative view of aptitude, achievement, and instruction*, 93-120. M.A.: USA: Klumer Academic Press.
- Genesee, F., & Hamayan, E. (1994). *Classroom-based assessment in educational second language children*. Cabridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Genesee, F., & Upsur, J. (1996). *Classroom-based evaluation in second language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldstein, L., & S. Conrad. (1990). Student input and negotiation of meaning in ESL writing conferences. *TESOL Quarterly*, 24, 3, pp. 443-460.
- Ghoorchaei, B., Tavakoli, M., & Nejad Ansari, D. (2010). The impact of portfolios assessment on Iranian EFL students' essay writing: A process- oriented approach. *Journal of Language Studies*. 10, 35-51.
- Hamayan, E. (1995). Approches to alternative assessment. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* , 15, 212-226.
- Heidari, F. (2009). Alternative assessment procedures in Iran EFL writing classes: The washback effect and students' attitudes.

- Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Allame Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.
- Herman, J., Aschbacher, P., and Winters, I. (1992). *A practical guide to alternative assessment*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Hirvela, A., & Sweetland, Y. (2005). Two case studies of L2 writers' experiences across learning-directed portfolio contexts. *Assessing Writing*, 10, 192-213.
- Huerta-Macias, A. (1995). Alternative assessment: Responses to commonly asked questions. *TESOL Quarterly*, 4, 8-10.
- Lee, I. (2007). Assessment for learning: Integrating assessment, teaching and learning in ESL/EFL writing classroom. *The Canadian Modern Review*. 64, 119-214.
- Lynch, B., & Shaw, P. (2005). Portfolios, power and ethics. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39, 263-297.
- McNamara, T. (2000). *Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nezakatgoo, B. (2005). The effects of writing and portfolio on final examination scores and mastering mechanics of writing of EFL students. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Allame Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.
- Pezeshki, M. (2010). Comparative study of E portfolio, portfolio and conventional writing classes. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Allame Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.
- Sharifi, A., & Hassaskhah, J. (2011). The role of portfolios assessment and reflection on process writing. Retrieved April 3 from <http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/PDF/March-2011.pdf>
- Silva, T. (1990). Second language composition instruction: Developments, issues and directions in ESL. In T. Silva and P. Matsuda (Eds.), *Landmark essays on ESL writing*, 191-208. NJ: Hermagoras Press Song and August, 2002
- Wiggins, G. (1993). *Assessing student performance*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Wolf, D., Bixby, J., Glenn, J., & Gradner, H. (1991). To use their minds well: Investigating new forms of student assessment. *Review of Rsearch Education*. 17, 31-74.

Zarghami, Z. (2011). Assessment for learning: the impact of student generated tests and comprehension conferencing on Iranian students grammar acquisition. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Allame Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.



Appendixes

Appendix A
Jacobs et al.'s ESL Composition Profile

COMPOSITION PROFILE			
student	Date	topic	
score	level	Criteria	comments
CONTENT	4	Excellent to very good: knowledgeable. Substantive. Thorough development of thesis. Relevant to assigned topic	
	3	Good to average: some knowledge of subject. Adequate range. Limited development of thesis. Mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail	
	2	Fair to poor: limited some knowledge of subject. Little substance. Inadequate development of topic.	
	1	Very poor: does not show knowledge of subject. Non-substantive. Not pertinent. Or not enough to evaluate	
Organization	4	Excellent to very good: fluent expression. Ideas clearly stated/ supported. Succinct. Well-organized. Logical sequencing. cohesive	
	3	Good to average: somewhat choppy. Loosely organized but main ideas stand out. Limited support. Logical but incomplete sequencing.	
	2	Fair to poor: on fluent. Ideas confused or disconnected. Lacks logical sequencing and development	
	1	Very poor: does not communicate. No organization. Or not enough to evaluate	
Vocabulary	4	Excellent to very good: sophisticated range. Effective word/ idiom choice and usage. Word form mastery. Appropriate register	
	3	Good to average: adequate range. Occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured	

	2	Fair to poor: limited range. Frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage. Meaning confused or obscured	
	1	Very poor: essentially translation. Little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form. Or not enough to evaluate.	
Language Use	4	Excellent to very good: effective complex constructions. Few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions.	
	3	Good to average: effective but simple constructions. Minor problems in complex constructions. Several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning never obscured.	
	2	Fair to poor: major problems in simple/complex constructions. Frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions. Meaning confused or obscured.	
	1	Very poor: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules. Dominated by errors. Does not communicate. Or not enough to evaluate.	
Mechanics	4	Excellent to very good: demonstrates mastery of conventions. Few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing.	
	3	Good to average: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, but meaning not obscured	
	2	Fair to poor: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing. Poor handwriting. Meaning confused or obscured	
	1	Very poor: no mastery of conventions. Dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing. Handwriting illegible. Or not enough to evaluate.	

Appendix B**Self assessment checklist****Student's name:****Writing topic:**

	Yes(1)	No(0)
1-Does your paragraph have a topic sentence?		
2-Does your topic sentence state the main idea of the paragraph?		
3-Is your support specific enough to be convincing?		
4-Do all your items of support clearly support the topic sentence?		
5-Do you explain your support fully so the relation to the topic sentence is clear (coherence)?		
6-Do you have transitions at the critical locations (coherence)?		
7-Does everything mentioned in the paragraph is related to your main idea?		
8-Have you checked the punctuation of the sentences?		
9-Have you checked the spelling of the words you are unsure of?		
10-Have you checked the grammaticality of the sentences?		

Total score: 7-10**Excellent****4-6****Ok****0-3****Need work****Student comment:****Teacher comment:**

Appendix C

Conferencing Checklist

Directions:

Ask the following questions in a comfortable, face to face setting. The teacher should assure students that he/she is only interested in their thoughts strengths and weaknesses in order to help them on writing. The teacher can ask students to elaborate their answers by asking questions such as:

- Can you tell me more about it?
- What else do you suggest?

Ask following questions at the very first conference:

- What do you think about your writing ability?
- Do you think you are a successful writer?
- Who is a successful writer?
- What do you do if you have problem in writing?
- What strategies do you use to improve your writing?

Ask the following question when each paragraph is written:

- What is your strength?
- What is your weakness?
- Do you think you have been a successful writer?
- What will you do to improve your paragraph?

Topic sentence

- What is the main idea you want to talk about?
- Is your main idea mentioned in the topic sentence?

Support

- Do you think you have been successful in convincing the reader?
- Are your supports convincing enough?

Coherence

- Are your supports related to the topic sentence (main idea)?

- Do you have transitions in critical places?

Unity

- Does everything related in the paragraph is related to your main idea?

Grammar, Spelling, Pronunciation?

- Does a successful write pay attention to them?
- Have you paid attention to them?

