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Title

**The EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Assessing students' writing
Portfolios at the University of Mohamed Kheider in Biskra**

The case of English language teachers of Written Expression

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Sciences of the
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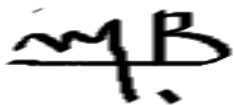
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Declaration

I am **BENCHEIKH Imane**, a master two student at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. I declare that the research work that is studied and presented in this thesis which is entitled "**The EFL teachers' attitudes on assessing students' writing portfolios in the University of Mohamed Kheider in Biskra, the case of EFL teachers of written expression module**" is my own original work that was under the supervision of **Dr. SAIHI Hanane** at Biskra University. This study has never been presented or submitted for other educational institutions, each information and knowledge have extracted from valuable sources which are mentioned in the research work's references list.

Miss, **BENCHEIKH Imane**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'MB' with a stylized flourish above the 'M' and a period at the end.

Dedication

In the Name of ALLAH the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

*I would like to dedicate my work to my parents, who have kept my spirit up and been patient with me while I was doing this research work; my father, "**NOUREDDINE**," and my mother, "**NOURA**."*

*To **KHALED**, my dear brother.*

*To my beloved sisters, to **NOURELHOUDA**, **RADJA**, **ATIKA**,
WISSEM, **AYA**, and **ZEINEB**.*

*I also dedicate this work to my uncle **RIDA** for encouraging me and
to all my family.*

*To my family-in-law, to **GHARIB** family.*

Thank you to all of you for being my dear family.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express gratitude to Allah for helping me in achieving this work.

*I would like to express my special thanks to my supervisor, **Doctor Hanane SAIHI**, for his help and patience.*

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Abstract

The Portfolio assessment is one of the most prominent assessments known among researchers and professors in the educational community. The present research is intended to determine the knowledge and attitudes of EFL teachers concerning the use of Portfolio Assessment to assess students' writing at the University of Mohamed Kheider in Biskra. It fully intends to investigate whether this alternative assessment is useful to improve students' performance in writing and practice. To this end, this research conducted a semi-structured interview with teachers of the written expression module. The results of the qualitative analysis indicated that EFL teachers see portfolios as an effective means of addressing students' progress, strengths, and weaknesses. Most teachers identify practical problems with portfolio use, including a large number of students and time management.

List of abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

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General introduction

Nowadays, writing is playing an important role in second and foreign language education. Because it transforms knowledge and learning, assessment of the student's writing skills is necessary to improve his writing performance. Assessment is a critical component of instructional progress that has an impact on EFL students. Students are given tests and other assessment tools to track their progress and provide feedback. There are numerous types of assessments used by classroom teachers. However, one of the challenges for EFL teachers is choosing and implementing appropriate assessment techniques. However, traditional assessment techniques make it difficult to evaluate writing. As a result, new assessment methods have been developed to demonstrate what students learn and what they can do with their knowledge. These new methods of evaluation are known as "authentic" or "alternative" measures. Among all the procedures of alternative assessment, the portfolio has become a popular technique currently.

The portfolios have been used for many years by architects, painters, photographers, and artists in showing their works. However, portfolios are linked primarily in an educational sense. A portfolio assessment is one of the most prominent assessments known among researchers and professors in the educational community. According to Arter and Spandel (1991), the portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits to the student or others, her efforts or achievement in one or more areas. Collins (1992) identifies a portfolio as "a container of collected evidence with a purpose. Evidence is documentation that can be used by one person or group of persons to infer another person's knowledge, skill, and/or disposition". It is a method for continuously gathering information or evidence of work done and progress made by each student to evaluate their English language writing. Many researchers have taken this method into consideration, which may confirm the positive side of

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its use. However, it may be the opposite because it depends on the extent to which the teacher sees it.

1. Statement of the problem

Writing is the major area of study for all EFL students. Accordingly, it is important to use an effective method for evaluating and guiding the students, and this is what the portfolio assessment would be. The portfolio is described as a systematic and purposeful collection of evidence that reflects the performance of students. There are indeed EFL teachers who have different positions on this type of assessment because the type of assessment varies according to the teacher's teaching style. This confirms that there is a negative and a positive side to the use of this type of assessment that affects teaching and learning. Through what was discussed previously, this qualitative study will address the attitudes of EFL teachers of the written expression module in the University of Mohamed Khider of Biskra on students' portfolio assessment.

2. Significance of the study

Several studies revealed that using portfolios can improve learning and teaching. This study highlights the importance of portfolio keeping as an effective tool of teaching and learning among writing students. results of this study will be very beneficial for instructors of writing.

3. Research questions

The researcher strives to answer the following research question:

What are the different attitudes of EFL teachers in the English department at the University of Mohamed Kheider of Biskra on students' portfolio assessment?

4. Aims of the study

This study is meant to highlight the portfolio assessment method as an assessment tool that may be useful to improve student performance in writing and achieve significant positive results, in addition, to know the extent to which this method is used at the University of Mohammed Kheider Biskra.

5. Research methods

a. Sample

As a sample, the researcher chose to work with the teachers of the written expression module of Mohamed Kheider of Biskra because this research topic concerns the written side. Therefore, this sample is useful for this study.

b. Data collection tools and analysis

Given the nature of the study as qualitative and its aims, and gather more information about this study, the researcher will conduct interviews with seven teachers of the written expression module to find out their attitudes and is it considered effective or just an evaluation idea that has not yet been tasted.

6. Structure of the study

The research structure will consist of two chapters, the first chapter will be devoted to the theoretical part, in which there will be a literature review which contains of two sections; the first section is an overview to writing skill, while the second section is about writing portfolio assessment. The second chapter will be about the analysis of different data gathered from interviews.

Chapter one Literature review

I. Introduction

This work aims to reveal the different attitudes of EFL teachers about portfolios as a tool for assessing students' writing; but before doing so, there must be a sort of literature review that summarizes all the important issues related to the three fields ; writing, assessment, and portfolio assessment method.

This chapter gives some of the theoretical studies concerning the means and types of writing. It provides definitions concerning assessment and portfolio as an assessment tool. In addition to the main advantages and disadvantages of the portfolio assessment method.

I.1. Writing as a skill

Writing enters all aspects of our lives; it is a necessary component of education, livelihood, and functional basics in our society. Writing skill is one of the important skills that have to be mastered by students because writing helps them think critically and deeply to build good writing.

I.1.1. Definition of writing

Writing is considered the most significant skill for learners of all levels in the educational system, particularly; in learning a language like English, as it has a complexity of spelling, pronunciation, sentence structure, and contextual meaning. Writing is the process of transforming one's ideas, concepts, or information into graphic symbols of a language by using correct words and sentence patterns.

According to Nunan (2003), "...writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader" (p. 88). It indicates that writing measures the extent to which students

control the language and its arts, which in turn includes maintaining the completeness of the sentence elements, the clarity of ideas, addition to their arrangement, and logical sequence.

In writing skills, students must master the writing components before they write down what they want to be express, and they must be aware of the effect of using these components to produce their writing. Accordingly, Hegarty (2000) says, “writing involves remembering the sequence of sounds, the shapes of letters, vocabulary, grammatical structure, and punctuation”. (p. 5). Similarly, Brown (2000) asserts, “there are six categories that are often the basis for the evaluation of students writing. They are Content, Organization, Discourse, Syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics” (p. 356-357). Moreover, Jacobs, as cited in Weigle (2002) states, “there are five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics” (p. 114).

To illustrate some of the key factors involved in writing, the figure below represents a kind of summary. This overview has emerged from Flognfeldt (2016):

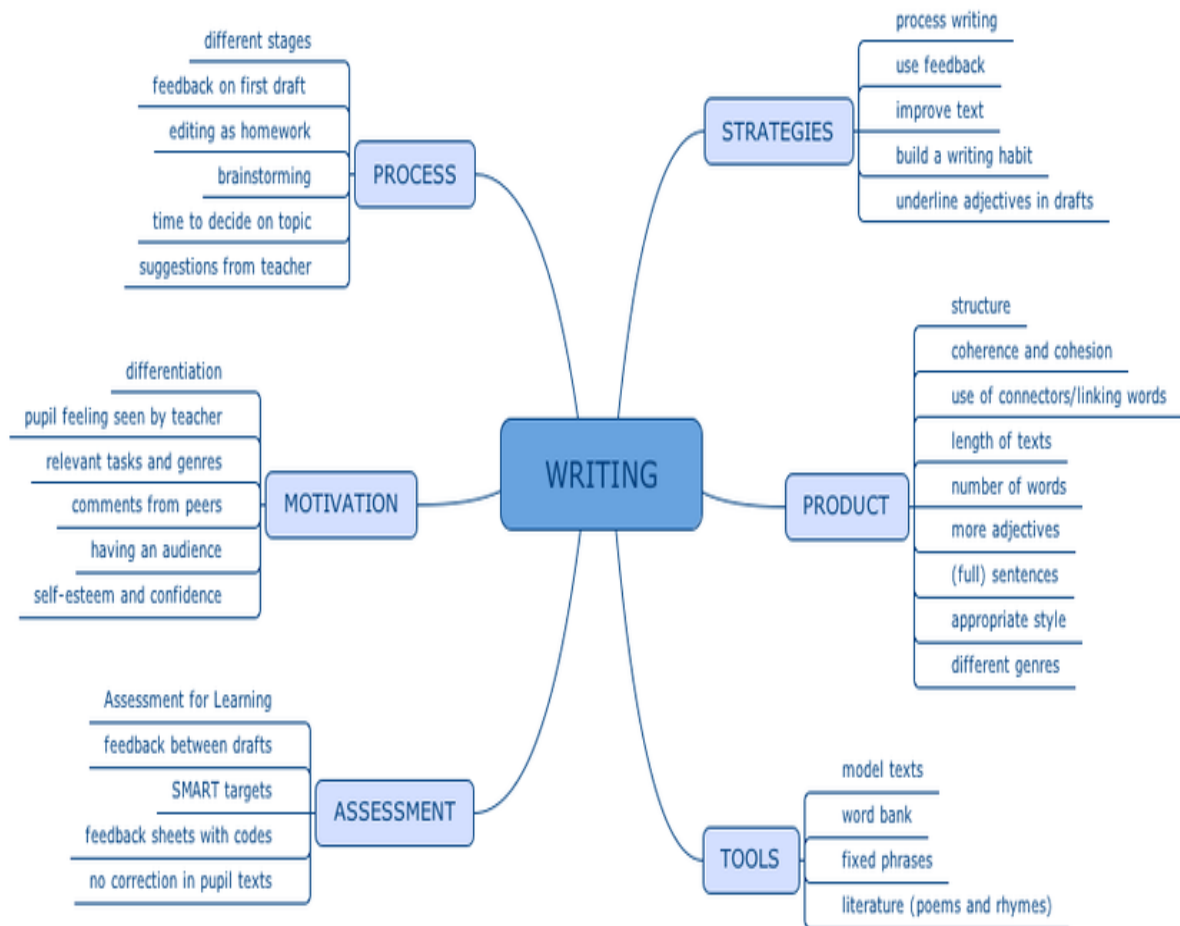


Figure 1: Concept map of the professional theme of writing (Flognfeldt, 2016)

This concept map, created based on teacher reports about their work with writing development, can be used with student teachers as an analytical and reflective tool. Motivation (how to get started), stages in the writing process (pre-writing), strategies (brainstorming ideas and possibly useful vocabulary), and tools (a list of suggestions) are all interconnected. These core elements can be used as analytical categories to try to understand the teachers' priorities and learning outcomes in terms of students' writing development, which is critical to conveying the message effectively and accurately.

I.1.2. Types of writing

Writing is the use of written language to construct a text to transmit language. If the students keep focused on their purpose, their writing will be at its finest. Through writing, students can share ideas, arouse feelings, and persuade or convince the readers. There are only four main types of writing: expository, descriptive, persuasive, and narrative.

I.1.2.1. Expository writing

Expository writing is one of the most common types of writing. Mosenthal (1985) described expository-type as “a process of partial, descriptive, and operational specification”. It is a way of writing to explain how to do something, to describe or simplify something to provide information about an idea, event, person, place, or thing. The focus of the author is transmitted to the reader by giving facts, figures, examples, and information about a topic, provided that the explanation is in logical order and sequence. Some of the most common examples of expository writing include scientific reports, academic essays, and magazine articles. The purpose is merely to inform and provide information.

I.1.2.2. Descriptive writing

Descriptive writing is that domain of writing that develops images through the use of precise sensory words and phrases and devices such as metaphor and the sounds of words. (Tara McCarthy, 1998). It is a literary device that gives a clear and concise description of everything; it includes places, people, objects, or events. The author may use metaphors or other literary devices to describe his impressions via the five senses (what they hear, see, smell, taste, or touch), but the author is not attempting to persuade the audience of anything or explain the scene; he is just describing things as they are. It can be found in fiction, poetry, journal writing, and advertising.

I.1.2.3. Persuasive writing

Persuasion is a way of convincing people to believe something or agree with a point of view. Persuasive writing is a form of writing in which the writer uses arguments to convince the reader. The author will convey particular ideas by using evidence to persuade the reader to agree with him or her, and this will sway the reader toward the author's point of view. According to the UBC writing center's "writers' workshop", persuasive writing is writing that sets out to influence or change an audience's thoughts or actions. It is often used in advertising as well as in opinion and editorial pieces, reviews, and job applications.

I.1.2.4. Narrative writing

Narrative writing is a storyteller on paper; it can be either fact or fiction. While fiction is based on imaginative events or stories that did not happen, such as short stories, novels, narrative poems, and songs, nonfiction is based on real facts such as biography, journalism, transcript poetry, and historiography. Gallick-Jackson and Sheryl A (1997) define narrative writing as "relating a sequence of events which occurs over some time. Both what happens and the order in which the events occur are communicated to the reader". A narrative structure usually includes characters, setting, conflict, climax, and resolution. Narration is one of the four rhetorical modes of discourse. More narrowly defined, it is the fiction-writing mode in which the narrator communicates directly to the reader.

I. 2. Assessment of writing

Assessment of student writing is a key instructional activity, and teachers engage in it every day in a variety of informal and formal ways. At various points in the assessment process, teachers take on different roles such as motivator, collaborator, critic, evaluator, etc., and give different types of responses.

I. 2.1. Definition of assessment

In its most basic form, assessment is a process that involves activities that teachers use to help students learn. The activities involve educators gathering information about prior knowledge before instruction and determining a student's understanding of a topic using various techniques to gauge students' progress. Lambert and Lines (2000) explain that assessment is the process of gathering, interpreting, recording, and using information about pupils' responses to educational tasks. Furthermore, Erwin (1991) defines assessment as the systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. It is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using the information to increase students' learning and development. As the researchers mentioned, assessment offers a systematic way to collect, analyze, and interpret evidence to determine how well students' learning meets expectations, and to use the information collected to tell students about improvement in their learning.

Broadly speaking, assessment is seen as a task that includes all activities that teachers and students undertake to get information that can be used diagnostically to alter both teaching and learning (Black & William, 1998).

Assessment is essential to student learning. Well-designed assessment has numerous benefits aside from the obvious one of providing a measure of students' progress, as it can be a means to engage students with their learning. Assessment for education is the perfect guide for students and teachers. While Assessment for Learning focuses on the opportunities to develop students' ability to evaluate themselves, to make judgments about their own performance and improve upon it, based on the preceding description, one may infer that assessment is related to education and the learning process to improve the quality of teaching and the accomplishment of students. The assessment process is an integral part of the students' education.

I. 2.2. Methods of assessment

Assessment is something of an umbrella term, encompassing a range of methods and techniques. However, two types of assessments take place at various times and in different ways to achieve many goals. These are formative and summative assessments.

I.2.2.1. Formative assessment

Formative assessment is defined by McManus (2008) as a process in which teachers and students provide feedback during instruction to organize the learning and teaching process to increase student achievement. Formative assessments inform teachers about whether the students have learned and they have an indicator qualification for how the teachers should plan their next lessons (Wuest & Fiset, 2012). Formative assessment is a continuous, responsive process comprised of practices, methods, and tools that are selected to support all students in achieving challenging learning goals. It is a collaborative learning process happening "with" students, not "to" students, to capture levels of knowledge and skill along the learning journey so teachers and students can make small, immediate, impactful decisions to support well-being, learning-goal achievement, and self-efficacy.

From the above definition, one can conclude that formative assessment does not form part of the student's final grade or mark. It is usually used continuously while learning is taking place to improve instruction and provide student feedback. Formative assessment serves as a gauge so students know where they need improvement.

I.2.2.2. Summative assessment

Ouakrime (2000) claims assessment is "the measurement of the extent to which a learner has been able to achieve the perceived aims or objectives of a given language teaching program". In other words, summative assessment is the type with which most people are familiar. It is a form of appraisal that occurs at the end of an instructional period, at the

end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Summative assessment at the district and classroom levels is an accountability measure that is generally used as part of the grading process. Furthermore, summative assessment is referred to as "final testing" since it is thought to be the last judgment concerning a learner's success or failure.

Moreover, Benjamin (2013) clarifies the difference between formative and summative assessment as follows in the table below:

| Formative assessment | Summative assessment |
|---|--|
| The student is aware of the questions throughout the assessment process | Questions on a test are surprises to the Student |
| Timing is flexible | Students must perform within time limits |
| The teacher's feedback is commentary and/or letter or number grade | The teacher's feedback is a letter or number Grade |
| Evaluation is used to guide future Learning | Evaluation is used to rank and sort Students |
| Considers the student's zone of proximal Development | Does not consider the student as an individual learner |
| Test or task may be flexible | Test or task is not flexible |
| The student is involved in self-assessment | Assessment by teacher or outside agency only |
| Sets reachable targets for future learning | No direct follow-up; when it is over, it is over |
| Results are not used as a report card Grade | Results figure into the report card grade |

Table 1: Formative and summative assessment compared (Benjamin, 2013)

As a result, any type of assessment is utilized to determine whether and how students are learning and the success of teaching techniques are used by instructors to enhance students' learning.

I.3. Writing portfolio assessment

To know about the development of learners' ability and capability in writing, English teachers should administer a certain assessment. There are three kinds of authentic

assessments, one of which is portfolio assessment. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) argue that the "greatest theoretical and practical strength of a portfolio, used as an assessment instrument, is the way it reveals and informs teaching and learning" (p.4). The writing portfolio assessment has attracted a considerable amount of interest in colleges and universities because it links teaching, learning, and assessment within the discipline and across disciplines in the college curriculum.

I.3.1. Definition of portfolio

There have been several definitions of "student portfolio" over the years, but writers Leon Paulson et al. (1991) offer us a concise definition: "A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student reflection" (p. 60).

Collins (1992) identifies a portfolio as "a container of collected evidence with a purpose. Evidence is documentation that can be used by one person or group of persons to infer another person's knowledge, skill, and/or disposition". On the other hand, Birgin (2003) defines a portfolio as "the assessment of some data about students' skills in one or more areas in a certain period, regular collection of his studies and performances according to predetermined criteria".

When the definitions above are used, a portfolio is not simply a collection of random student works to be filled carelessly. Portfolio collections must be purposeful, systematic, adhere to the established assessment criteria, and take a reasonable amount of time. Thus, a portfolio shows a student's work from the beginning of the term to the end. It is a collection of students' work that demonstrates their effort, progress, and accomplishment in their learning, as well as their comments on the portfolio contents produced.

I.3.2. The meaning of writing portfolio assessment

Within the communicative context of language training, writing is given specific consideration. Without a doubt, writing is the most challenging skill for EFL students to acquire. Johns (1991) claims that it is more difficult to assess ESL students' writing abilities in timed writing assessments. Hamp-Lyons & Condon (2000) argue that "portfolios provide a broader measure of what students can do, and because they replace the timed writing context, which has long been claimed to be particularly discriminatory against non-native writers" (p. 61).

Thus, using a portfolio assessment was found to be more suitable than the timed writing assessment. According to Douglas (2000), portfolio assessment is particularly applicable to foreign-language assessment. Standardized tests, note O'Malley and Chamot (1990), provide foreign-language teachers with an incomplete picture of student needs and learning.

In other words, writing is a process, one that is continual and frequently recursive. Even accomplished and confident authors sometimes struggle in new writing circumstances since they are complicated and dynamic. The writing portfolio assessments have piqued the interest of composition practitioners and members of the educational measurement community more than ever in the previous ten years. Writing portfolio assessment, in particular, links teaching, learning, and evaluation inside and across disciplines in the college curriculum. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) argue that the "greatest theoretical and practical strength of a portfolio, used as an assessment instrument, is the way it reveals and informs teaching and learning." Writing portfolios account for these well-documented characteristics of writing. Assessing students' writing portfolios offers them an opportunity to show how they had like to see their work, share with them their evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses, and describe where they have come from and where they see themselves headed as writers.

I.3.3. Types of portfolios and their purposes

There are two types of portfolios: what Courts and McInerney refer to as "nonselective" and "selective" portfolios, and what Yancey defines as "working" and "final" portfolios; each has appropriate applications depending on the sort of assessment the teacher has in mind.

I.3.3.1. Nonselective or Working Portfolios

As Courts and McInerney (1993) define the nonselective portfolio:

In this kind of portfolio, all of the student's work in a given course would be collected, chronologically dated, and clearly labeled in terms of its relationship to a given assignment. In short, all of the concrete evidence the students can collect to indicate their involvement in a course would be a part of these portfolios (accompanied, of course, by written explanations of the importance of an item included in the portfolio).

Yancey (1992) defines a "working portfolio" as an archive of a student's work which is characterized more by "saturation than selection" This style of the portfolio is more casual than the nonselective portfolio mentioned above; it may include incomplete works. Yancey argues that the working portfolio is particularly suited to formative assessment.

Courts and McInerney (1993) list several advantages to the nonselective portfolio:

- The teacher has access to all of the student's work and therefore has a relatively complete sense of the student's general progress.
- Students have an opportunity to look at and reflect on everything that they have been doing.
- For programmatic assessment, the nonselective portfolio provides an overview of the types and amount of writing required in a particular course.

- Students could use the portfolio to their advantage in “selling” their prospective employer or graduate school on the types and quality of writing they have been doing. However, there are also disadvantages to using the nonselective portfolio approach:
- The sheer bulk of the portfolio may be overwhelming.
- The “complete picture” may be no picture at all because everything in the portfolio becomes equal and indeterminate.
- This kind of portfolio may place a heavy demand on the teacher’s time and energy.

As a result, while portfolios can be graded holistically to rapidly measure overall performance, they should be carefully reviewed to identify the specific issues that a student is experiencing. A nonselective portfolio might not be the best option for this form of assessment.

I.3.3.2. Selective Portfolios

The selective portfolio allows the student or professor to select representative works to include in the portfolio. To make appropriate portfolio selections, both students and faculty must be clear about the portfolio's goals. Among the purposes listed by Courts and McInerney for their selective portfolio system are the following:

- To provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their performance in a given course or on a given assignment in an attempt to increase their metacognitive awareness both in the moment and over time.
- To empower individual students by encouraging them to choose for themselves what is or is not important in their performance on given assignments and courses.
- To provide a concrete basis for open, learner-centered discussion between advisor and learner.

To Yancey (1992), the completed or final portfolio is usually “more formal, more clearly defined, and more focused. The completed portfolio is no longer an archive, but a

presentation, a performance.” This type of portfolio frequently includes reader-responder aids such as a table of contents, a grade justification in which the student argues for a particular grade based on the accomplishments reflected in the portfolio, a writer's reflection, or a writer's profile.

I.3.4. Principles of a systematic assessment of writing

For writing assessment to be effective, the fundamentals of general assessment must be addressed, obviously with careful attention to the nature and complexities of the writing skill itself.

I.3.4.1. Validity of writing assessment

When assessing EFL writing, questions have been raised about the extent to which validity can be achieved. Many assessment scholars associate this with whether writing ability is evaluated directly or indirectly. Brown (2004) clarifies that indirect (or objective) assessment requires that test-takers do some writing-related activity (e.g. answering questions about grammar, usage, and punctuation in multiple-choice tests). By testing writing performance directly, Elliot et al (1990) argue that validity will not pose problems. When using indirect evaluation methods, many writing instructors violate the validity principle. They base their assessment of students' writing ability on the results of a test on a micro-skill, such as spelling or grammar, even though such results are far from the only predictors of writing ability. This raises the question of whether or not writing performance is being assessed.

The structuring of assessment tasks is another common practice in EFL classes where validity is threatened. Hyland (2003) identifies some threats to validity in writing assessments, such as requiring students to write in a genre they have not been exposed to, allowing insufficient time for planning and developing a topic, or requiring learners to demonstrate specialist knowledge that they do not possess. In this form of assessment,

instructors are not clear about what they are measuring as the topics differ in terms of ease and rhetorical features (Williams, 2003). The most common type of ill-structured assignment is one involving optional essay topics (e.g. descriptive, narrative, expository or argumentative papers).

I.3.4.2. Reliability of writing assessment

The reliability principle is the second determining factor in methodical EFL writing assessment. In general, reliability refers to the consistency and precision of test results. If the result varies when the test is given a second time, it is not considered reliable. Several writers suggest that it is better to design a primarily valid test, and then search for ways of making it reliable, rather than creating a reliable test and attempting to make it valid (Johnson, 2001). The importance of developing consistent tests is emphasized, as this is critical in making correct deductions and judgments.

In the context of assessing writing, Cohen (2001) distinguishes three factors that might influence the reliability of assessment: test factors (related to the test itself and rating), situational factors (related to the conditions of test administration), and individual factors (Related to the state of the test takers). Figure 4 expounds on these factors.

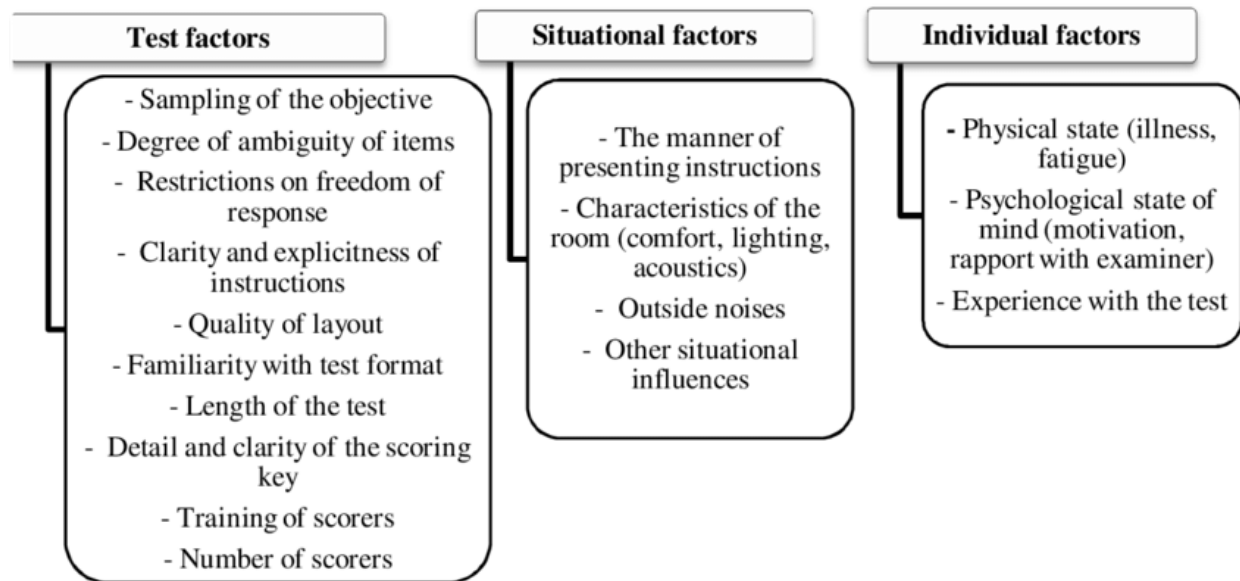


Figure 2 : Threats to reliability (Cohen, 2001)

Classroom tests provide teachers with essential information used to make decisions about instruction and student grades. The test environment must be consistent by ensuring that all participants have the same amount of time to take the test and have a similar environment. For example, if some participants are taking the test in a hurry in a public and noisy place and others are taking it at leisure in their office, this could impact reliability. The reliability of assessment can also be influenced by a person's psychological or physical state at the time of testing. For example, differing levels of anxiety, fatigue, or motivation may affect the applicant's test results. While differences in the testing environment, such as room temperature, lighting, noise, or even the test administrator, can influence an individual's test performance.

According to Weigle (2002), reliability must be integrated into the assessment process by establishing standardized procedures with well-defined modes of operation for test construction, supervision, and scoring, which would reduce bias in the event of practical problems. To enhance reliability in EFL writing assessment, East (2008) argues that examiners have to devise cautiously worded and satisfactorily rubrics. Overall, training raters in scoring and determining the extent to which raters agree on rated scores are also critical.

I.3.4.3. Practicality of writing assessment

According to Crusan (2010), practicality refers to the realistic considerations regarding test administration and execution. The available resources are key determinants of practicality in assessment. Eliot et al (1990) see that effective assessment has to judiciously balance between the requirements of validity and reliability on the one hand and the restraints of circumstances on the other. Nation (2009) argues that practicality is a chief concern in the assessment of writing, especially in contexts where teachers are non-native speakers of English because marking requires elevated levels of language proficiency. Furthermore, if feedback is required, writing an assessment would become extremely time-consuming and laborious. Specialists advocate the use of other supplementary methods, such as peer assessment and self-assessment, to achieve practicality in assessing EFL writing.

I.3.4.4. Authenticity of writing assessment

Authenticity differs from the previous principles in some ways. It is a method of evaluating tests in terms of their representation of target language usage (TLU). Bachman and Palmer (1996) define it as the extent of correlation between the traits of test tasks and those of the target language use. Brown (2004) sees that by ensuring the authenticity of language tests, one would present natural, non-contrived language which matches real-world language.

If writing tests are authentic, the type of writing students will produce would simulate the one they encounter in the factual world, at least in terms of genres and communicative purposes (e.g. writing a letter of complaint, producing a touristic brochure, etc). Weigle (2002) observes that in FL learning contexts, where the target language is scarcely used outside the classroom, it might be thorny to hit upon a writing task that presents an authentic writing situation. When tests are authentic, their results can be generalized beyond test performance to true language use in non-test domains. As a result, in such situations, test developers may give authenticity less weight than other principles.

I.3.5. Benefits of using portfolio assessment Method

A portfolio can present a wide perspective of a learning process for students and enables continuous feedback for them (Adams, 1998). Since it provides visual and dynamic proof of students' interests, skills, strong sides, successes, and development in a certain period, a portfolio which is a systematic collection of the student's studies helps assess students as a whole (Baki & Birgin, 2004). A portfolio is a strong device that helps students to gain important abilities such as self-assessment, critical thinking, and monitoring one's learning (Asturias, 1994; Micklo, 1997).

Mullin (1998) stresses that a portfolio provides teachers to have a new perspective on education. For instance, the portfolio can answer these questions: what kind of troubles do students have? Which activities are more effective or ineffective? What subjects are understood and not understood? How efficient is the teaching process?. On the other hand, portfolio assessment has many advantages compared with standardized testing. It is shown in the following Table (De Fina, 1992, p. 39).

| Portfolio assessment | Standardized testing |
|--|---|
| Occurs in the child's natural environment | Is an unnatural event |
| Provides an opportunity for the student to demonstrate his/her strengths as well as weaknesses | Provides a summary of child's failures on certain tasks |
| Gives hands-on information to the teacher on the spot | Provides little diagnostic information |
| Allows the child, parent, teacher, and staff to evaluate the child's strengths and weakness | Provides ranking information |
| Is ongoing, providing multiple opportunities for observation and assessment | Is a one-time "snapshot" of a student's abilities on a particular task |
| Assess realistic and meaningful daily literacy tasks | Assess artificial tasks, which may not be meaningful to the child |
| Invites the child to be reflective about his/her work and knowledge | Asks child to provide a singular desired response |
| Invites the parents to be reflective about their work and knowledge | Provide parents with essentially meaningless and often frightening numerical data |
| Encourage teacher-student conferencing | Forces teacher-administration conferencing |
| Informs instruction and curriculum; places the child at the center of the process | Reinforces the idea that the curriculum is the center of the educational process |

Table 2 : Comparing portfolio assessment with standardized testing (De Fina, 1992)

Comprehensive views of students' performances in contexts, encourages students to become independent and self-directed learners and improves communication between teacher, student, and parents. It can provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their weaknesses and strengths, as well as for teachers to direct their instruction. It can also encourage students to take ownership of their learning and improve student-teacher communication. Furthermore, portfolio assessment has the potential to show students' learning process and learning product over time. As a result, the portfolio provides detailed information to teachers, parents, and students about their progress in the learning process.

I.3.6. The disadvantages of portfolio assessment method

Although the use of portfolios has some advantages and benefits in education, it also has some disadvantages and burdens. The downside of a student portfolio is its low reliability of scoring. To overcome this downside it is important to use structured rubrics in the tests of the learners' assignments. Furthermore, a good student portfolio comes with considerable effort and commitment from all individuals involved. Concerning grading a student portfolio, this can be challenging since every learner is going to be different. A solid rubric can help a teacher evaluate the content of a student portfolio. However, there is plenty of room for subjectivity when comparing one student portfolio to another, thus making it difficult to assign grades equally. Another negative is time while using a student portfolio as an assessment tool, can be a long time commitment for the teacher as well as the learner, in regards to; the construction of individual portfolios, learners' having enough time to work on their assignments, grading of each student portfolio, and the time restriction of fitting these assignments into the class schedule (Koretz et al. 1994).

Portfolios can become more reliable when specific, clear, and measurable criteria for each item are used. If the portfolio's purpose and assessment criteria are unclear, the portfolio may become a disorderly collection of works that do not accurately reflect students' growth

or achievement. It is suggested that you use checklists, rubrics, and digital portfolio forms to reduce the time for assessment (Birgin, 2006; De Fina, 1992; Lustig, 1996). This fact is critical when it comes to the use of a portfolio to deal with a portfolio's potential limitations or disadvantages.

Conclusion

The ability to write is regarded as a difficult skill to achieve for EFL learners. Therefore, the teacher cannot ensure a student's writing performance improvement without involving him in the assessment because assessment is an essential component of effective learning. This is why the researcher in this chapter concentrated on portfolio assessment in an EFL context. In addition, the portfolio assessment, like any other type of assessment, has its pros and cons. The latter makes EFL teachers differ in their attitudes towards it.

As in any investigation, the review of literature is always supported by an account of the situation. This will be the task of the next chapter.

Chapter two

Results and discussions

II. Introduction

The second chapter will analyze and interpret the current research work represented in this study. This chapter is concerned with knowing the different attitudes of the English language teachers at the University of Biskra regarding the use of portfolio assessment as a tool for evaluating student writing. The purpose behind conducting this research is not only to detect the attitudes but also to highlight the portfolio assessment method as an assessment tool that may be useful in improving student writing performance as well as to learn how widely this method is used at Mohamed Kheider University in Biskra. The study relies on a qualitative method. This chapter is discussing the opinions of teachers of the written expression module at Mohamed Kheider University in Biskra.

II .1. Research methodology

II .1.1. Research design

Qualitative research aims to understand the meanings that people attribute to their work, their behaviors or beliefs, or their attitudes. In this study, the qualitative approach is used. The latter helps collect the various attitudes and opinions of EFL teachers on assessing student writing through portfolios. The design for this study is descriptive. It is considered a suitable method to describe attitudes towards portfolio assessment as an assessment tool of writing and to know the extent to which portfolio assessment is used at the University of Mohamed Kheider Biskra.

The methodology of data collection is a crucial part of any research, and many different forms of data collection exist in qualitative research. Qualitative research methods do not only collect the data but also help researchers understand the processes behind the observed results by considering the thoughts and expressions of the participants. In this study, the researcher used the interview as a data collection tool, which was designed for English language teachers at Mohamed Kheider Biskra University. It allows the researcher to gain access to rich data about the experiences of participants regarding the content of the study.

II .1.2. Data collection tools

The study used a semi-structured interview dedicated to English language teachers at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. The interview focuses on the experiences of the respondent, i.e., his or her attitudes regarding the use of portfolios to assess a student's writing.

II .1.3. Sample of the study

This research is being carried out in English department at Biskra University. EFL teachers were chosen as the study's target population. The sample comprises 7 teachers who are teaching written expression module.

II .2. Interview Description

An interview is designed to collect a richer source of information from a small number of people about attributes, behaviors, feelings, knowledge, or attitudes. In the present study, the researcher used a teacher's interview, which helps to explain, understand, and explore the research subject's attitude. This latter provided the researcher with the different attitudes of EFL teachers towards portfolio assessment. The researcher asked about 10 questions to the teachers, aiming to know the different opinions and trends about the use of portfolio

assessment in the Faculty of English of the University of Biskra, by getting to know their views on the pros and cons of portfolio assessment and the extent to which it is used by teachers at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. The researcher conducted an online interview with seven teachers. The teacher's interview contained semi-structured questions that were prepared in advance.

II .2.1. Interviewees

The researcher set up the interview via Google with seven teachers who have had varying lengths of careers in teaching writing, ranging from three to ten years, except one teacher who has never taught writing before. To analyze them, all the answers were collected and memorized from the Google site.

II .2.2. Interview's Objective

The main goal of the interview is to collect information from the teacher's teaching experiences about portfolio assessment to assess students' writing, detecting its advantages and disadvantages in the learning process, its effectiveness in improving a student's writing performance, and the extent to which writing portfolio assessment is used among English language teachers at the University of Mohamed Kheider in Biskra.

II .2.3. Interview's Manuscript and analysis

The researcher has conducted a semi-structured interview with seven English teachers at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. Each teacher has a different educational career path than others. The data collected from the interview will be interpreted as the following:

Question 1: How many years have you been teaching the written expression module?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1 | for 8 years |
| 2 | for 7 years |
| 3 | for 3 years |
| 4 | for 5 years |
| 5 | for 7 years |
| 6 | for 10 years |
| 7 | I did never teach it |

Table 3 : First question's answer

The analysis: The researcher started the interview by asking a question about the duration of teaching the written expression module to each teacher to know the extent of their experience in this field. There is a difference in the duration of teaching for the teachers involved in the interview. The least experienced was for three years, while the fifth interviewee taught writing for five years. The second and fifth interviewees shared the same duration of teaching writing, which was for seven years. The highest duration was for the sixth interviewee, who taught writing for 10 consecutive years, while the seventh interviewee had never taught a written expression module before. The difference in teaching duration between teachers leads to a difference in teaching methods, especially in assessment.

Question 2: What kinds of difficulties do you encounter when teaching writing skills?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | Lack of practice on students' part and lack of ICT tools. |
| 2 | Selecting the appropriate topics for writing Evaluate students' written products regularly and provide constant feedback. A shortage of time for practice. |
| 3 | Students' engagement and the demanding nature of the subject. |
| 4 | The problem is that students don't read enough written materials. Therefore, the poor vocabulary. |
| 5 | Students' lack of motivation to write. |
| 6 | It is difficult to follow all learners when writing because of time constraints and large classes. |
| 7 | None |

Table 4 : Second question's answer

The analysis: Writing is a complex activity. Understanding this complexity is the key to effective teaching of writing. While the teachers may face some obstacles during the teaching process, the teachers faced the most prominent difficulties that usually face any teacher teaching writing skills. The difficulties differed, but the majority of their answers were similar. The challenges that are faced by the EFL teachers at Mohamed Kheider Biskra University to teach writing skills are lack of practice and motivation to write, while one of the teachers emphasized that the latter may be caused by a lack of reading, which leads to a lack of vocabulary acquisition that helps the student to practice writing skills, and also among the difficulties agreed upon by some of the teachers is the short period granted to a class. In addition to the huge numbers of students in one class, this may hinder the learning process to the fullest. While others explain that one of the difficulties and obstacles facing the teacher of writing skills is choosing the appropriate topic for writing. Finally, there was only one different answer to the other answers, which is evaluation. In the teacher's view, evaluating the student's continuous writing is the biggest problem he faced during the education period.

It is normal for teachers to differ in the difficulties they face during the teaching process, and this is due to the difference in the ways they teach and the level of learners in writing.

Question 3: How do you assess your student's writing?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | in writing |
| 2 | Home assignments and classroom tests (exams)/individual and pair practices |
| 3 | Continuous assessment and feedback |
| 4 | I usually use summative and formative assessments. |
| 5 | Rubrics, self-assessment |
| 6 | Through paragraph and essay writing. |
| 7 | In exams in all subjects, writing has to be evaluated. |

Table 5 : Third question's answer

The analysis: According to the teachers, there are several ways to assess writing. The formulas of the answers differed, but they almost agreed on one idea. The most common method is formative assessment, i.e., while students are developing their writing. In addition to the summative assessment, i.e., after students complete an assignment. Formative assessment does not result in a grade; summative assessment usually does. As with any good assessment, the purpose should drive the procedure.

Question 4: Did you use portfolios to assess your students during your teaching career?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|---------|
| 1 | No |
| 2 | Yes |
| 3 | No |
| 4 | No |
| 5 | Yes |
| 6 | Yes |
| 7 | No |

Table 6 : Fourth question's answer

The analysis: The teachers' responses differed on the extent to which the portfolio was used to assess the writing of their students. Most of the answers were to deny its use. While only three teachers had used portfolio assessment before.

Question 5: In your opinion, is the use of portfolio assessment effective enough to improve a student's writing performance? Why?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | Good at Continuous Assessment. |
| 2 | Yes, it is. It tracks students' progress and allows the teacher to provide feedback and support. It also helps students to assess their writing skills and make improvements. |
| 3 | It can be. I haven't tried it regularly. |
| 4 | Indeed, a portfolio helps teachers track students' progress and helps them prepare for remedial tasks. |
| 5 | Yes, it is because it helps students develop their assignments. |
| 6 | Yes, it does. It is a collection of learners' writing. It is an effective means to improve one's writing skills. |
| 7 | Yes. |

Table 7 : Fifth question's answer

The analysis: The teachers agreed on the idea that portfolio assessment is an effective tool for improving students' writing performance. Each one gives a specific reason for his answer.

The researcher summarized these reasons into one point, which is: that portfolio assessment has the potential to demonstrate students' learning processes and learning products over time.

Question 6: To what extent is writing portfolio assessment used among English language teachers at the University of Mohamed Kheider Biskra?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | rarely |
| 2 | It is not often used due to many factors: lack of time, effort, and students' inconsistent work. |
| 3 | no idea |
| 4 | I think using portfolio assessment is a new technique in our department, but it seems like a really important step forward to diversify assessment techniques. |
| 5 | Unfortunately, it is not used. |
| 6 | Not all teachers use it. |
| 7 | It helps in giving a better image of students' writing levels. |

Table 8 : Sixth question's answer

The analysis: There was a greater agreement on this question. The teachers emphasized that portfolio assessment is rarely used at the University of Mohamed Khider in Biskra for some reasons, as mentioned by one of the teachers, which are the lack of time, the consumption of effort, and inconsistent student anxiety. All of them regret not utilizing the portfolio to assess the student's writing, and this is because of its great effectiveness in improving the student's performance.

Question 7: Through your experience in teaching writing, what are the most important advantages that portfolio assessment can achieve for EFL students?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | A continuous and consistent way of teaching |
| 2 | Making improvements and tracking the writing progress also guarantee a fair evaluation of student's writings. |
| 3 | It can help with continuous assessment, but only if the number of students is limited. |
| 4 | I can say that portfolio assessments offer a rich source of information about student learning and paint a full picture of what students know and can do. |
| 5 | To achieve autonomy |
| 6 | Through this tool, learners can measure their progress throughout their learning process and become autonomous. |
| 7 | Portraying students' flaws. |

Table 9 : seventh question's answer

The analysis: In this question, each teacher mentioned different advantages because of the difference in teaching experience, which are summarized as follows: First of all, portfolio assessment helps students examine their progress and develop a positive self-concept as learners. Additionally, it includes a selection of items that are representative of curriculum outcomes and what the student knows and can do. Finally, it includes self-assessments and continuous reflection that describe the student as both a learner and an individual.

Question 8: Do you think that using the portfolio to assess the student's writing might negatively affect the learning process? Justify your answer.

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | No? It is useful. |
| 2 | No, it does not. The appropriate and consistent use of portfolios in writing is always rewarding. |
| 3 | It might be if it is overused or given priority over other subjects. |
| 4 | I don't think portfolio assessment can cause any problems regarding students' learning process as it is only a mere history of their writing production. |
| 5 | No, it affects positively because. |
| 6 | No, they will benefit from its use. |
| 7 | No. |

Table 10 : Eighth question's answer

The analysis: Teachers usually choose assessment tools that are the most effective and least negative for the teaching and learning process. The researcher asked this question to find out if the portfolio evaluation might have a negative impact on the student and the professor. The professors' answer was unified, and everyone denied the existence of any negative aspect of the portfolio in evaluating the student's writings but rather emphasized its positive effects.

Question 9: Does using the portfolio to assess a student's writing give an accurate assessment of their performance in writing? Why or why not?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | Relatively yes, as the teacher examines the graded performance of his students' progress. |
| 2 | Yes, it does. By using the portfolios, teachers can follow students' progression in writing and their weaknesses. So, they make an adequate assessment. |
| 3 | Yes, but teachers and students must be fully aware of the process. |
| 4 | Sure, with portfolio assessment, teachers, will have a clear idea about the level of their students. |
| 5 | Yes, learners become aware of their weaknesses and strengths. |
| 6 | Yes, it will give an accurate assessment, provided it is well-used. |
| 7 | It is true |

Table 11 : Ninth question's answer

The analysis: All of the teachers asserted that portfolio assessment gives an accurate assessment of students' writing performance. They supported their answers with some arguments through which they showed that the portfolio is a continuous assessment tool that helps to know the student's level and identify his strengths and weaknesses.

Question 10: How satisfied are you with assessing the student's writing through the portfolio?

| Interviewees | Answers |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | Acceptably |
| 2 | I don't often use it with my students; therefore, I can't measure my satisfaction. |
| 3 | Not applicable. |
| 4 | Actually, I didn't use it before although I liked the idea of using it. |
| 5 | A portfolio is an effective strategy for writing an assessment. |
| 6 | I am very satisfied. A portfolio is personal and provides an exact image of learners' progress and willingness to be effective writers. |
| 7 | No answer. |

Table 12 : Tenth question's answer

The analysis: The answers to this question were different between teachers. Four professors out of seven were completely satisfied with using the portfolio as an assessment tool approved by the professor during the teaching process, while the others were unable to provide their opinion because they had not used the portfolio assessment before.

II.3. Discussion of the results

The present research work raised the question, "What are the different attitudes of EFL teachers in the English department at Mohamed Kheider University in Biskra in students' writing portfolio assessment?" The interview, which was conducted with English teachers, agreed that EFL teachers have a favorable position toward assessing students' writing by using portfolios. The analysis of the results supports that the application of portfolio assessment increases students' motivation for writing in the English language. It has been demonstrated that the process of creating a portfolio assessment is also a learning tool that promotes students' academic achievement, achievement motivation, and self-confidence.

More importantly, the EFL teachers in this study believed that portfolios encourage students to become more active. In summary, a portfolio is a collection of student writings

that allows for assessment by demonstrating effort and accomplishment concerning specific instructional goals. The research findings are also in congruity with the study of Elahinia (2004), who investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on Iranian EFL learners' writing achievement. She found that portfolio assessment had a significant positive effect on the writing performance of the subjects.

Portfolio assessment, according to this study, has some advantages for EFL students. Portfolios will benefit and aid EFL students in monitoring their learning. Furthermore, keeping a portfolio has several advantages for overcoming writing anxiety. Although the portfolio is an excellent tool for considering process and developing writing skills, it is rarely used by EFL teachers at the University of Biskra.

The current study's findings also point to some flaws in portfolio assessment, particularly in how time-consuming it is for most students and instructors. Furthermore, portfolio studies require time. The English teachers in this study also admit that the weaknesses of implementing portfolio assessment are that portfolio assessment requires some criteria (related to the scoring rubric), a class consists of many students, whereas a portfolio requires only a few students, and portfolio assessment takes a long time to complete.

Conclusion

The second chapter focused on the fieldwork analysis of the study's research problem, which was EFL teachers' attitude toward using portfolios to assess students' writing. According to the nature and type of the study, the researcher used a qualitative design; the data collection technique chosen was a semi-structured teacher's interview, which was directed at the written expression teachers at Mohamed Kheider University in Biskra.

Finally, the findings were discussed and interpreted in order to bring the study to a close. The effectiveness of using the portfolio in assessment to improve the writing performance of students

Recommendation

The current research work includes some suggestions for using portfolios in the university to assess students' writing.

- Portfolio assessment enables evaluators to see the student as an individual, each with their own set of characteristics, needs, and strengths.
- Portfolio assessment should be used precisely in university education to monitor students' progress during the learning process and to provide necessary assistance based on their performance.
- Portfolio assessment covers a wide range of knowledge.
- Organizing and evaluating the contents can be time-consuming for teachers or program staff.
- If goals and criteria are unclear, the portfolio may appear to be a random collection of artifacts with no discernible patterns of growth or achievement.
- Portfolio assessment allows students to reflect on their actual performance, show their weak and strong domains, and track their progress throughout the learning process.
- Algerian universities should reduce the number of students in the classes so that the teachers can easily evaluate the students.
- Developing individualized criteria for teachers can be challenging or unfamiliar at first.
- Portfolio assessment provides an opportunity to address the shortcomings of traditional assessment.
- The department of English language has to make writing one of the most important subjects that gives the teacher enough time to teach it and evaluate students.

General conclusion

Using an effective method for evaluating and guiding students' writing is the primary focus of all EFL teachers. Focusing on writing as a process, portfolio assessment appears as a method of assessing writing to lead students to continue to develop their skills and overcome their problems in writing. According to this research, which indicates perceptions towards portfolios, an overwhelming majority of teachers suggest positive attitudes. This research found that portfolios are an effective assessment tool for teaching and learning the English language as well as an effective way to improve writing skills. The study portfolio assessment can improve students' ability to write English during the learning process.

A portfolio assessment is basically a promising tool to assess students' learning in order to get a valid and authentic picture of students' learning and achievements. This alternative way of evaluating students' writing plays a great role in enhancing the written production of students. Despite this, it has not yet been used at Mohamed Kheider University in Biskra on a regular and permanent basis as an effective assessment tool. EFL teachers feel one of the significant obstacles to implementing portfolios is a lack of adequate time and a large number of students in classes.

Once portfolio assessment is well established in our department, future research will focus on the importance of time management in implementing portfolios. It should also tackle the issue of the internet to make it more practical as students and teachers could exchange essays with each other in order to overcome the problem of a large number of students.

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Appendences

Appendix : Teacher's Interview

Interview:

Collins (1992) identifies a portfolio as “*a container of collected evidence with a purpose. Evidence is documentations that can be used one person or group of persons to infer another person's knowledge, skill, and/or disposition*”

Writing is the primary focus of all EFL students' studies. It is important to use an effective method for evaluating and guiding the students' writing performance. The Portfolio assessment is one of the most prominent assessments known among researchers and professors in the educational community. Many teachers have taken this method into consideration, which may confirm the positive side of its use. However, it may be the opposite because it depends on the extent to which the teacher sees it.

The following interview is conducted to collect data about the attitudes of English language teachers about using portfolio assessment to assess students' writing.

Title: The EFL teachers' attitudes on assessing students' writing portfolios in the University of Mohamed Kheider in Biskra.

The questions:

- 1/ How many years have you been teaching the written expression module?
- 2/ What kind of difficulties do you encounter when teaching writing skills?
- 3/ How do you assess your student's writing?
- 4/ Did you use portfolios to assess your students during your teaching career?

- 5/ In your opinion, is the use of portfolio assessment effective enough for improving a student's writing performance? Why?
- 6/ To what extent writing portfolio assessment is used among English language teachers at the University of Mohamed Kheider Biskra?
- 7/ Through your experience in teaching writing, what are the most important advantages that portfolio assessment can achieve for EFL students?
- 8/ Do you think that using the portfolio to assess the student's writing might negatively affect the learning process? Justify your answer.
- 9/ Does using the portfolio to assess a student's writing give an accurate assessment of their performance in writing? Why or why not?
- 10/ How satisfied are you with assessing the student's writing through the portfolio?

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
COLLABORATION**

المخلص

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تحديد معرفة ومواقف معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية فيما يتعلق باستخدام تقييم الحافظة لتقييم كتابات الطلاب في جامعة محمد خضر في بسكرة. يعتمزم التحقيق بشكل كامل في ما إذا كان هذا التقييم البديل مفيداً لتحسين أداء الطلاب في الكتابة والممارسة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية لدينا. ولهذه الغاية، أجرى هذا البحث مقابلة شبه منظمة مع معلمي وحدة التعبير الكتابي. أشارت نتائج التحليل النوعي إلى أن معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يرون الحافظات على أنها وسيلة فعالة لمعالجة تقدم الطلاب ونقاط القوة والضعف لدى الطلاب. يحدد معظم المعلمين المشكلات العملية المتعلقة باستخدام الحافظة، بما في ذلك العدد الكبير للطلاب وإدارة الوقت.