PASAA
Volume 40
April 2007

Student Impressions of Portfolio Assessment: A Thai Case Study

Somchoen Honsa, Jr.
Pongrat Ratanapinyowong
Salee Kiewkarnka
Anchalee Sattayatham
Faculty of Arts, Mahidol University

Abstract

This paper reports on a case study into a pilot introduction of portfolio assessment and what student impressions and suggestions regarding this alternative form of assessment were among a group of students studying the Introductory English II course in the faculties of Dentistry and Pharmaceutical Science, Mahidol University. Questionnaires used revealed: (1) the most popular learning style was in a whole class with a teacher; (2) most students thought speaking skills were most important but that many also thought listening skills were most important; (3) watching UBC programs with worksheets was ranked the most popular listening activity by the largest group of students but overall there was more high level support for watching videos with exercises in the language lab; (4) speaking with a native speaker was clearly the most popular speaking activity; (5) reading self-selected books was overwhelmingly the most popular reading activity; and (6) that writing a journal/diary was the most agreeable writing activity. Interviews with students also showed that there was a wide range of opinions on just what should be

included in portfolios. One of many suggestions on what to include was to supplement journal/diary writing with communication with pen-friends via e-mail. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the pilot introduction of portfolio assessment led to more student-centered activities and allowed students more input into which materials they used to practice their English and stress that student-selected materials seem to be more enjoyable for students than materials selected by teachers for students.

Background

Students at Mahidol University are health-science-oriented. English materials prepared for them mainly focus on reading skills. Consequently, the teaching and learning process in English classes is very "teacher-centered" and is not very interesting for several reasons. First, reading materials are usually prepared by teachers in advance. The drawback is students have no involvement or freedom of choice in choosing the materials that appeal to them and are appropriate to their age and interests. The second reason is that reading is emphasized at the expense of other skills, including listening, writing, and speaking. As a result, a group of teachers at the Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Science, Mahidol University set up a Language Clinic to help students overcome their shortcomings in English. Materials and activities were provided to accommodate students' needs in English, especially supplementary skills. Self-access reading and writing materials were provided. Students underwent diagnostic tests to check where their weaknesses lie and were able to seek assistance on their own for writing and basic grammar. For reading, graded series of classic literature, science fiction, and popular novels, such as *Harry Potter*, were also provided, for intermediate, high-intermediate and advanced levels. There were also English videos and CD-ROMS as well as UBC programs (UBC is the local provider of international cable/satellite TV service-programs) available for students to practice listening. The last skill training provided for students was speaking. A native speaker was assigned to conduct two one-hour speaking sessions each week. About twenty students could attend

these two speaking sessions each Wednesday afternoon at the Language Clinic.

After a two-year trial of the Language Clinic, it was found that UBC programs were popular with some students. But the other activities were not. Speaking sessions were filled quickly at the beginning when they were first introduced, but their popularity declined gradually for many reasons. The most important reason was that these activities were not part of any English course. There was no reward or assessment involved. Because students had many other academic activities that yielded academic rewards which affected their grade, they gradually lost interest in coming to the Language Clinic to practice their English skills. Another reason that prevented students from coming to speaking sessions was students' extra-curricular activities, which were usually scheduled on Wednesday afternoons when students did not have any classes. Consequently, few students came to the Language Clinic. Thus, another approach, the implementation of portfolios, had to be introduced, with the expectation that portfolios would encourage students' macro skill practice in the Language Clinic.

Various activities which covered all macro skills were selected and included in the portfolio, which yielded 25% of the Introductory University English grade for students from the Faculties of Dentistry, Pharmaceutical Science, Veterinary Science and Medical Technology. These portfolios were collections of students' work from classroom activities, such as oral reports; students' personal work, such as journal writing; activities derived from the Language Clinic activities, such as book reviews or reviews of UBC programs; and video and CD-ROM worksheets from the language and computer laboratories. To a certain extent, the introduction of portfolios led to more student-centered activities in which students had more freedom and involvement in choosing their own programs to view or books to review. It was definitely more enjoyable for them to read books and do activities they chose themselves according to their own interests.

Literature Review

A portfolio can be defined simply as a "collection of student work" (Hamp-Lyons 1996:152) which generates a more student-centered approach (Cram 1995:271). It can also be seen as a collection of snapshots which illustrate the development of students' learning processes, as defined by O'Malley and Pierce (1996:14). The drive to popularize portfolio assessment derived from questioning the use of traditional ways of testing students' language ability, which cannot test students' ability to "really use" the language, together with a revolt against more traditional teaching and learning processes, which tend to be more teacher-centered rather than student-centered.

Portfolios encourage student involvement in the learning process. Indeed, the portfolio system furnishes students with opportunities to develop self-assurance, ownership, and critical thinking, as claimed by Genesee & Upshur (1996), Brown (2004), Brown & Hudson (1998), and Weigle (2002). The students' sense of ownership will enhance their motivation and participation in the learning process (Payne: 1997:289). Research evidence also suggests that portfolios are a potent device to gauge students' effort, achievement, improvement, and ability to self-evaluate (e.g. Chen. 1999, 2000; Far & Tone, 1994; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Hsieh et al., 2000; Newman & Smolen, 1993; Smolen et al. 1995). Hamp-Lyons (1994) labels portfolios an excellent pedagogical tool interweaving assessment with instruction; they provide the chance to integrate more forms of evaluation into teaching, so that evaluation will become "a less threatening and more supportive activity" (p. 54) for learners.

Crockett (1998:4) defines the portfolio as "evidence, usually bound in some form of container, that suggests or demonstrates a person's skills and abilities". This is the most relevant definition of portfolio applicable to our situation. This is because our students' portfolios collect their works, which show their ability and their use of all macro skills. Crockett also suggests that portfolios are regarded as an "authentic form of assessment" (Crockett 1998:5) and a tool for "life-long learning".

Genesee and Upshur suggest that a portfolio should encourage interactive responses and that the amount of collected work should be "practical" (1998:103). A portfolio is seen as self-reflective (1998:105). Students should be allowed to make comments and express their own opinions on their collected work.

Schafer, quoted in Bailey (1998:216), describes the portfolio as a "collection of student work that tells the viewer about the student". Bailey herself sees the portfolio as a powerful and authentic form of performance assessment (1998:215). A portfolio is seen as a medium for teacher/student problem solving discussions (Hoy & Gregg 1993:39). Of all non-traditional approaches to instruction and assessment, portfolio use seems to show the greatest promise in enhancing diverse dimensions of learning and developing multiple intelligences, as well as promoting learner autonomy (Chen: 2006:69).

Despite portfolios being messy to use, time consuming to evaluate and difficult to score reliably, they promote many positive effects, listed by Genesee and Upshur (1995:100).

Portfolios provide:

- *A continuous, cumulative record of language development*
- *A holistic view of student learning*
- *Insights about progress of individual students*
- *Opportunities for collaborative assessment and goal-setting with students*
- *Tangible evidence of student learning to be shared with parents, other educators, and other students*
- *Opportunities to use metalanguage to talk about language*

Portfolios promote:

- *Student involvement in assessment*
- *Responsibility for self-assessment*
- *Interaction with teachers, parents, and students about learning*
- *Student ownership of and responsibility for their own learning*
- *Excitement about learning*

- *Students' ability to think critically about schoolwork*
- *Collaborative, sharing classrooms*

From the list of benefits above, we find that portfolios are also a powerful way to develop a positive self-concept because students play an active role in their own learning and assessment, so students have more freedom and involvement. It may help them develop a sense of academic achievement. However, these benefits might not happen without the help of teachers, as Genesee and Upshur (1996:103) indicate that using portfolios interactively and collaboratively does not happen automatically, but requires conscious and systematic planning by teachers. From their advice we can further infer that teachers are not the center of the classroom anymore, but they assist necessarily and vitally in creating an atmosphere of negotiation, in which much of the decision making about portfolios emerges through creative interaction among teachers and students. Hoy and Gregg (1994:39-40) collect suggestions for using portfolio assessments from several authors and show that portfolios should be developed in a systematic manner by collecting assignments at predetermined intervals. The collected assignments should also reflect the students' various stages in learning a new concept or skill. The teacher should analyze the samples collected using a standard form. The portfolio, however, should also serve as a focus of teacher-student problem-solving discussions. The teacher can assist the student in the self-evaluation of selected samples. Together, the teacher and the student can discuss reasons for difficulties or success on particular assignments. The teacher may modify how instruction is presented or the student may modify an approach to tasks based on these discussions. Notes about the discussions, the decided modifications, and samples of future assignments are included in the portfolio and provide invaluable data about attempted strategies.

Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000:32) propose nine characteristics of portfolios which include collection, range, context richness, delayed evaluation, selection, student-centered control, reflection and self-assessment, growth along specific parameters, and development over time. All characteristics are important to

consider when the portfolios are designed, especially the three main ones: collection, reflection, and selection.

Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000: 119) emphasize that:

> *For the portfolio, the process of combination to create recognizable portfolio-life forms occurs through two further processes: reflection and selection. Everything that we have read about how and why portfolios work successfully, as pedagogical tools, teacher development tools, and as assessment tools, teaches that without reflection all we have is simply a pile, or a large folder—a collection of texts. Reflection starts the deliberative process, recognizes strength and need, places pieces together mentally, relates them to each other, engages in a host of mental processes: This can happen with just a collection, but a collection is not a portfolio until the reflection is there because it is not accessible to the reader otherwise. Reflection is like a biological engine, an imperative: Once it is turned on it naturally wants to keep going and move into selection, into discrimination and thus to discarding some elements and making others more prominent. Through this process is shaped the recognizable life form that is each person's unique portfolio.*

Moya and O'Malley (in Douglas, 2000: 243) also propose five positive characteristics of portfolio assessment procedures:

- *comprehensive: both depth and breadth of work is represented*
- *predetermined and systematic: careful planning is essential*
- *informative: work must be meaningful to teachers, students, staff and parents*
- *tailored: work included must relate to the purpose of the assessment*
- *authentic: work should reflect authentic contexts, in and out of the classroom*

In portfolio assessment, teachers should evaluate more than content knowledge. They should also consider continuous stages, as suggested above, which make this sort of assessment possible. Portfolio assessment is widely accepted and used for all English language skills, as Douglas (2000:241-242) points out. He indicates that the use of portfolios, particularly in the assessment of reading, writing, and speaking, is a growing trend and certainly has potential applications in assessment. He also provides an example of a reading portfolio which includes the following:

- *the texts read by the learners during the semester;*
- *the reading exercises the learners carried out;*
- *learners' think-aloud written reflections on the reading process;*
- *oral discussions between the instructor and reader / reading group on text content and reading process;*
- *a final written summative essay;*
- *a final instructor-reader / reading group conference.*

An academic writing portfolio should contain copies of writing assignments and student responses to each one. Often multiple drafts are included, thus providing a record of the revision process. A speaking portfolio would contain taped samples of a learner's presentations and interactions, as well as any documentation associated with the spoken performances (Douglas 2000:242). Compared to the general assessment of all language skills, Hoy and Gregg (1994:308) propose these five steps in the assessment process:

1. *develop the purpose of the assessment process;*
2. *develop record sheets to record assessment data;*
3. *conduct an integrated assessment;*
4. *analyze the error patterns; and*
5. *develop instructional objectives based on careful analysis.*

Methodology

Subjects for the study were 45 first year students from the faculties of Dentistry and Pharmaceutical Science at Mahidol

University. These students were taking the Introductory University English II course. The emphasis of the course was on reading. However, other skills were also included, including writing, speaking and listening. The implementation of portfolio assessment helped generate a balance between all macro skills, both in learning and evaluation. These learners studied reading and writing from in-house materials, which accounted for 60% of the course marks. They practiced listening by watching six hours of English language videos in the language laboratory (the videos include "My Beautiful House," "The Animal I Love," "the Story of Tofu," "Alternative Medicine," "Weight Loss," "Animal Hospital," "So I Want to Be: A Cardiac Technician," "Medical Detectives," and "Supernatural Power") and another six hours in the computer laboratory using the "Real English Program" (CAI). The listening exam accounted for 15% of the course marks. The last 25% of the course marks came from assessing students' portfolios. The portfolios included many pieces of students' work. The content of the portfolio in each semester varied according to the directives of the course coordinator for each semester. Basically, the portfolios included some or all macro-skill activities.

Listening and writing

1. One UBC worksheet: in which each student chose a UBC program to watch and then summarized the program content, with comments and personal opinions.
2. One summary report: a group of 4-5 students listened to and summarized another group's oral presentation.
3. Real English record sheet: each student used the CAI program to watch as many video lessons as she/he wanted (chosen from among the four topics of travel, entertainment, sport and business) in order to do exercises of her/his choice: matching, sequencing the text, gap filling, true or false, and multiple choice.

Speaking

1. Each group of 4-5 students received an oral evaluation form. The forms were for recording self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher assessment for an oral presentation on a topic based on the reading and writing in-house materials. Out of 50 marks for each oral presentation, self-assessment and peer-assessment accounted for 10 marks each; and teacher assessment 30 marks. All assessors used the same criteria in evaluating the oral presentations.
2. Included role-plays of real-life situations in which students worked in pairs or groups of 3-4 to simulate real-life situations in their daily life or future careers.
3. Required a news report in which each student reported to the whole class for three minutes on any interesting news. Students were assessed using the same rating scales.

Reading and writing

1. One book review worksheet: each student read a book from the Language Clinic (or any other book they chose) and summarized it and filled in information about the book on the worksheet.
2. Website summary: each student chose a field-related article from any website and summarized the article.
3. Descriptions: each student wrote a comparison-contrast composition and a "place" description based on the content of the writing materials for the course. Students were assessed using the same criteria as for the speaking activity.
4. Journal writing: each student kept a personal journal for 20 days. At the end each journal was assessed to rate improvements in fluency and accuracy. Students were trained to set their own goals. This exercise helped boost students' life-long learning skills and autonomy. Activities could be added to each section of the list, with mutual agreement between student and teacher.

Data were collected by using questionnaires and interviews. Through questionnaires, students were asked to rank their preference of learning styles used, skills needed, activities preferred for each skill and activities to be included in the portfolio. There were also open-ended questions on the questionnaire for students to suggest additional real-life situations in which they needed to practice using English for their life and future careers. The questionnaires were piloted and adapted before being used with the subjects.

A semi-structured interview was used. Both individual and group-interviews were used to follow up on information not obtained from the questionnaires. Some students did not answer the open-ended questions. Most of them didn't give suggestions at the end of this section. The questions used for the interview were centered around the following:

1. What do you think about the amount of work included in the portfolio for each skill? Too much, too little?
2. Are there any activities that should be taken out or any activities that should be added to the portfolio?
3. What real-life tasks are relevant to your life or field of study or your future careers? What are your daily life activities? What are the career tasks for which you need to use English?
4. What are the role-play situations you need to practice your English in? Give some examples

Computers were used to analyse the data collected from the questionnaires and the interviews.

Results of the study

The results from the questionnaires (1 = most agreeable, 6 = least agreeable)

1. Learning style

More students (46.7%) reported a preference for working with a teacher as a whole class, rather than working in groups, in pairs, or individually as shown in Table

Table 1: learning style preferences

Item	Most agreeable				least agreeable		Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Work individually	5	7	8	25	0	0	45
Working in pairs	9	13	22	1	0	0	45
Working in groups	10	20	7	8	0	0	45
Whole class with a teacher	21	5	8	11	0	0	45

2. Skills most needed

Most students (53.3%) felt that speaking is more important than listening. Reading and writing skills were generally not perceived as not as necessary, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: skills most needed

Item	Most agreeable				least agreeable		Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Listening	11	22	6	3	0	0	42
Speaking	24	10	8	3	0	0	45
Reading	4	6	14	21	0	0	45
Writing	5	7	14	19	0	0	45

3. Activities preferred for the four skills.

a. Listening

There were four listening activities provided in class. More students (46.7%) liked to practice listening to English by watching UBC programs and working on the worksheet provided. The second most popular listening exercise was watching video programs in the

language lab (40%) and doing the corresponding exercises. The least interesting for students was to practice by listening to cassettes in the laboratory, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: listening activities

Item	Most agreeable				least agreeable		Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Listening: Listening to cassettes in the language lab	1	6	15	23	0	0	45
Listening: Watching videos with exercises in the language lab	18	22	5	0	0	0	45
Listening: Listening to CD-ROM in the computer lab	5	15	11	14	0	0	45
Listening: Watching UBC programs with worksheets	21	2	14	8	0	0	45

b. Speaking

Of all the six activities shown in Table 4 what students liked best was to practice speaking with native speakers in small groups of 15-20 students (51.1%). The most interesting speaking practice for them was doing role plays of real-life situations, such as a conversation between a dentist and a patient. Another useful practice was to speak English in class with the teacher and friends. The least beneficial speaking practice was debates on controversial topics and oral presentations based on the text studied in class.

Table 4: speaking activities

Item	Most agreeable				least agreeable		Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Speaking: Oral presentations based on the text studied in class	1	2	6	8	6	22	45
Speaking: Oral presentations (your own topics)	3	8	6	14	12	2	45
Speaking: Role-play	9	15	13	4	3	1	45
Speaking: Speaking English in class with the teacher and friends	8	10	10	6	9	2	45
Speaking: Debates on controversial topics	1	5	3	11	9	16	45
Speaking: Speaking to a native speaker in a small group	23	5	7	2	6	2	45

c. Reading

There were five kinds of reading material provided for the introductory English courses for these students, as shown in Table 5. The most stimulating reading activity for students (84.4%) was reading books of their own choice, such as Harry Potter, "The Lord of the Rings", "Many Lives" and science fiction. The second most interesting reading materials were books borrowed from the Language Clinic. The books provided in the Language Clinic were graded readers of the intermediate or upper intermediate level. They were simplified versions of Classic Literature. The least exciting was the reading material provided as the course book, which focused on reading strategies and functions.

Table 5: reading activities

Item	Most agreeable				least agreeable		Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Reading: Introductory University English I & II for DT PY MT VS student	2	3	1	11	19	0	36
Reading: Books borrowed from the LC	2	28	6	3	6	0	45
Reading: Books of your own choice	38	6	0	0	1	0	45
Reading: General articles from websites	3	7	22	10	3	0	45
Reading: Field-related articles from websites	1	0	7	21	16	0	45

d. Writing

There were six activities for students to practice their writing. As shown in Table 6 below, these activities include studying the Language Focus section and doing exercises from the textbook, using grammar books with exercises and answer keys provided, writing a summary of their friends' oral presentations, writing a summary of an article from websites, writing a book review and writing a journal or diary. Of all these activities, students enjoyed writing their own journal or diary (46.7%) more than writing book reviews or summarizing website articles. As shown is Table 5, students think that the Language Focus section with exercises in the textbook, grammar-book exercises and summaries of their friends' oral presentations are the least beneficial activities.

Table 6: writing activities

Item	Most agreeable				least agreeable		Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Writing: Language focus and exercises from textbook	8	5	7	7	7	11	45
Writing: Grammar Books with exercises and answer keys	5	7	2	6	14	11	45
Writing: Summary of oral presentations	0	0	5	12	12	16	45
Writing: Summary of articles from websites	2	4	20	8	9	2	45
Writing: Writing a book review	9	17	8	8	3	0	45
Writing: Writing journal/diary	21	11	4	3	1	5	45

The results from the interviews

The interviews were done both individually and in groups of 2-5 students. The students who were sociable, expressive, and outgoing were interviewed individually, but those who were shy about expressing their opinions were interviewed in groups. The interviews were divided into two parts. The first part was designed to elicit students' further suggestions about what they thought should be included in the portfolio and their opinions on the content and the number of portfolio requirements for the introductory university English course.

1. What should be included in students' portfolios?

These 45 students were exposed to many activities, but were asked to choose just three activities for each skill to be collected in their portfolio. The results were as follows:

a. Listening

The students suggested many activities for practicing listening. These activities included:

- watching UBC programs
- listening to CD-ROMS (Real English and Wiser English)
- watching videos in the language laboratory
- listening to cassettes available in the language laboratory
- listening to songs
- watching English language movies
- watching documentary films
- watching cartoons
- listening to news of all kinds

The three most enjoyable listening activities were watching videos in the language laboratory, watching UBC programs and listening to CD-ROMS (Real English and Wiser English programs).

b. Speaking

Speaking activities suggested by the students include:

- speaking to a native speaker in a small group of 15-20 students
- doing role-plays
- making oral presentations on topics of their own interest
- making oral presentations based on the texts studied in class
- speaking English in class with their teacher and classmates
- interviewing people
- debating controversial topics
- participating in telephone conversations

The three preferred activities chosen by the students were doing role-plays, speaking English to a native speaker in a small group of 15 to 20 students, and speaking English in class with their teacher and classmates.

c. Reading

Reading activities suggested by the students are as follows:

- reading books of their own choice
- reading newspapers
- reading magazines

- reading materials prepared for introductory university English I and II
- reading general articles on the Internet
- reading field-related articles on the Internet
- reading books (simplified classic literature) borrowed from the Language Clinic
- reading textbooks

The three preferred reading materials were books of their own choice, books borrowed from the Language Clinic and general articles (not field-related) from the Internet.

d. Writing

Writing activities suggested include:

- writing paragraphs
- writing letters and reports
- writing summaries of their classmates' oral presentations
- filling in forms (i.e. application forms)
- writing book reviews
- writing summaries of articles from the Internet
- writing a journal/diary
- practice doing exercises in grammar books
- doing exercises in the Language Focus section of the course book
- writing a thesis in their field of study
- writing summaries of UBC programs

The three preferred activities for students were writing a journal or a diary, writing a book review and writing a summary of an article from the Internet. It is worth noting that only five students enjoyed doing a summary of their friends' oral presentations.

2. Students' comments

a. Students' comments on the teaching and learning process in general

All student comments can be summarized by discussing macro skills. Besides writing a journal and diary, in which students enthusiastically wrote about what interests them, they would like to correspond with pen-friends, especially by e-mail and practice filling in various kinds of forms.

Most students thought they could study and practice the writing section in their course book on their own because the emphasis is primarily upon grammar. Some students also said they had studied grammar for 12 years and wanted to focus on other important points or skills they need. Most students agreed speaking skills should be given the most priority and that they would prefer to study speaking with native speakers of English rather than with Thai teachers whom they think are better at teaching reading and writing. They thought the topic of speaking activities should be practical everyday situations rather than field-related topics about which first-year students do not know very much and that speaking activities could be generated from reading assignments. Students also thought they should debate in class after reading about controversial topics which are also reading assignments. They also reported they would prefer doing longer role-plays as they provide a better chance for everyone in class to have a more enjoyable speaking lesson. Students expressed a preference for self-selected reading materials and did not think "reading comprehension" necessary. They reported a desire to go beyond reading comprehension, stating that they prefer using reading materials as stepping stones to practice other skills. Some students also reported that they preferred doing research on their own rather than being taught in class.

b. Students' comments on the use of portfolios in class

This group of students was asked to include the following in their portfolio:

Listening:

1. A summary of a UBC program they had watched.
2. General questions and answers about a video they had watched in the Language Lab.

Speaking:

1. Doing an oral presentation with a group of 3-4 friends on a topic based on the text studied in class.
2. Doing a role-play in pairs or with two other classmates using real-life situations such as a conversation between a dentist and a foreign patient or a pharmacist and a customer.

Writing:

1. A book review of a book borrowed from the Language Clinic or a book of their own choice.
2. A summary of a field-related article from any website.
3. A diary/journal: The first two weeks were to be about students' daily routines. After that they could write about anything they wanted to. They had to find a topic to write about and more or less organize their writing, doing more than just providing a list or log of daily activities.

Reading:

1. Reading a book borrowed from the Language Clinic or a book of their own choice.
2. Reading a field-related article from the web.

The subjects were asked to hand in each assignment at a set time. The first assignment was due after the second week of semester. The other assignments were collected at regular intervals. All assignments were collected before the last week of the semester. Some assignments were collected and given back to students for revision and feedback for improvement. Often there were reactions or communications between the teacher and students.

3. Student comments on portfolio use

Writing

Most students thought there should be more interesting topics, such as writing about any subject that interested them and that three writing activities were appropriate, whereas a few students thought that this was excessive.

Speaking

Most students gave the opinion that speaking was more important than writing and that, consequently, they preferred talking about or discussing articles from the Internet that they read with their friends in class rather than summarizing those articles. Some students did not like oral presentations because they usually turned out to be a regurgitation of what was in their textbook. Another reason is that, while one group of students was doing their presentation, the other students were worrying about their own work which they would have to do later rather than paying attention to the presentation. The overall impression of the presenters was that no one was listening to them because the designated listening group members were concerned about their own approaching presentation. However, most students liked the role-play exercises because they could think of their own topics to talk about. They suggested that the role plays should be longer than the ones used in this project, which were about 10-15 minutes in length. Students enjoyed working in groups and had fun talking to each other about topics of interest and doing creative activities that the whole class enjoyed. Nevertheless, students wanted to choose only those friends they felt comfortable working with. They also wanted to practice speaking English with native speakers and suggested that they could go to interview foreign tourists as well.

Listening and reading

Students wanted to have more listening practice on more interesting topics and to do more exercises. As for reading, they did not want to read just for "reading comprehension". They expressed

a desire to advance further by using reading as a starting point from which to practice other skills such as writing or speaking.

Most students agreed that they did not want to focus on grammar anymore since they had already studied English through traditional grammar-based approaches.

The results of this case study seem to suggest that portfolios in tertiary level English language classrooms can help to ensure a more student-centered approach in both teaching and learning processes, as also suggested by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000), Honsa, Jr. (2002), and Chen (2006). When portfolio assessment is used as a part of course assessment our experience supports the conclusion that the percentage for standardized midterm and final exams can usefully be reduced as portfolios assess students' language ability thoroughly and continuously whereas midterm and final exams are time-limited tests which test students' language ability at that time or within a specific time limit. Our portfolio assessment was found to be both more student-centered and potentially more reliable than traditional exam-based assessment.

Despite the comprehensive nature of the criterion-referenced portfolio assessment in this study, more work needs to be done to gain both teacher and student confidence in this alternative form of assessment. Intra- and inter-rater reliability requires further attention. Research in the area of inter-rater training and reliability and the use of assessment criteria for activities and/or test tasks should be addressed in detail. More needs to been done in the area of how to best implement self-assessment and peer-assessment in English classrooms effectively. What matters most in the use of portfolios and how to assess their content and that the process should proceed gradually and practically so as to avoid resistance from learners and teachers. In this case study, all the activities were carefully chosen and evaluation criteria were provided. Yet inter-rater reliability and training requires further attention.

The Authors

Somchoen Honsa, Jr. is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts, Mahidol University. She obtained her Master's degree in English from

Humboldt State University, USA. Her interests and experiences include Greek Mythodology, women writers, folklore in literature, language testing, and alternative assessment, such as self-assessment and portfolio assessment.

Pongrat Ratanapinyowong is an Assistant Professor in the English Program, the Faculty of Arts, Mahidol University. She graduated with a Master's degree in Education (TEFL) from Srinakharinwirot University, Prasarnmitr. Her special interests are the teaching of writing, teaching methodology, and materials development.

Salee Kiewkarnka received her bachelor's degree (with honors) from the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in 1969, and a Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1982. She is currently an instructor of English and linguistics at the Faculty of Arts, Mahidol University. Besides teaching, she is also interested in translation. Her translation works include "War in the Blood," and three volumes in the set of Childcraft—The How and Why Library by Word Books. She is currently the Deputy Dean for Administration, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University.

Anchalee Sattayatham is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Arts, Mahidol University. She received her Master's degree in English from Central Missouri State University. She has been teaching English to medical and science students for 29 years. Her recent interests include self-access material development and analytical reading.

References

Bailey, K. M. (1998). *Learning about language assessment.* Pacific Grove: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Brown, H.D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices.* New York: Pearson Education.

Brown, J.D., & Hudson, T. (1998). The alternatives in language assessment. *TESOL Quarterly, 32,* 653-675.

Chen, Y.M. (1999). A portfolio approach to EFL university writing instruction. *Proceedings of the 16th National Conference on English Teaching and Learning in the Republic Of China* (pp. 313-332). Taipei: Crane Publishing.

Chen, Y.M. (2000). Change from within: A school-based professional development program at a junior high school. *Proceedings of 2003 International Conference on English Teaching and Learning in the Republic of China* (pp. 395-410). Taipei: crane Publishing.

Chen, Y.M. (2006). EFL instruction and assessment with portfolios: "a case study in Taiwan. *Asian EFL Journal,* Volume 8, Issue 1.

Cram, B. (1995). Self-assessment: from theory to practice. Developing a workshop guide for teachers. In G. Brindley (Ed.). *Language assessment in action.* Sydney: NCELTRE.

Crockett, T. (1998). *The portfolio journey.* Colorado: Teacher Ideas Press.

Douglas, D. (2000). *Assessing lanugaes for specific purposes.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Far, R., & Tone, B. (1994). *Portfolio and performance assessment: Helping students evaluate their progress as readers and writers.* Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace college Publishers.

Genesee, F., & Upshur, J.A. (1996). *Classroom-based evaluation in second language education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hamp-Lyons, L. (1994). Interweaving assessment and instruction in college ESL writing classes. *College ESl, 4 (1),* 43-55.

Hamp-Lyons, L. (1996). Applying ethical standards to portfolio assessment of writing in English as a second language. In M. Milanovic & N. Saville (Eds.). *Performance testing, cognition and assessment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hamp-Lyons, L., & Condon, W. (2000). *Assessing the portfolio.* New Jersey: Hampton Press.

Hsieh, Y.F., Lu, C.Y., & Yeh, H.N. (2000). Implementation of portfolio assessment in a sixth grade EFL classroom. *Proceedings of 2000 National Workshop and Conference on the Application of English Teaching.* Taipei: Crane Publishing.

Honsa, Jr. S. (2002). Alternative assessment. *Thai TESOL Bulletin. 15,* 46-56.

Hoy, C., & Gregg, N. (1994). *Assessment.* CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing .

O'Malley, J. M., & Pierce, L.D. (1996). *Authentic assessment for English language learners: practical approaches for teachers.* MA: Addison Wesley.

Newman, C., & Smolen, L. (1993). Porlfolio assessment in our schools: implementation, advantages, and concerns. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher, 6,* 28-32.

Payne, D.A. (1997). *Applied educational assessment.* Belmont: Wadworth Publishing.

Rolheiser C., Bower, B., & Stevahn, L. (2000). *The portfolio organizer.* Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Salvia, J., & Ysseldyke, J.E. (1998). *Assessment.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Smolen, L., Newman, C., Wathen, V., & Lee, D. (1995). Developing student self-assessment strategies. *TESOL Journal, 5 (1),* 22-27.

Weigle, S. (2002). *Assessing Writing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University press.