Chapter 8
Portfolios in Classroom L2 Writing Assessment

Introduction

Hailed as a useful form of classroom writing assessment and an alternative to large-scale writing assessment, portfolio assessment has, since the mid-1980s, become a popular tool for assessing writing in L1 contexts (Belanoff and Dickson 1991; Hamp-Lyons and Condon 2000; Yancey and Weiser 1997). Soon the literature on portfolio assessment in L2 writing contexts has begun to mushroom, and portfolio assessment is increasingly viewed as an effective means to measure L2 student writing progress. Theoretically, portfolio assessment is grounded in the social constructivist theory of learning, which posits that learning is ongoing and constructed through the active involvement of the learners (Alleman and Brophy 1998; Klenowski 2002). It also dovetails with the principles of assessment for/as learning, which involves students actively in the learning and assessment process. During the portfolio process, students obtain feedback from multiple sources (e.g., teacher and peers), and such interactions provide experiences within students' zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978) and help advance their learning. In sociocultural terms, portfolio assessment is seen as a mediating factor for student learning (Vygotsky 1986). It also plays a significant role in enhancing student motivation and promoting self-regulation, which are contributing factors to academic achievement (Zusho and Edwards 2011).

Although much of the writing portfolio assessment literature is situated in the tertiary context, this alternative approach to classroom writing assessment is also apposite to L2 school writing contexts. First, writing portfolio assessment provides students with opportunities to write, learn to write, and demonstrate growth in writing over time. If writing portfolios are adopted early on and implemented consistently throughout schooling, students will be given an abundant amount of time to hone their writing skills and showcase their writing progress, within each grade and from one grade to another. Second, while younger L2 learners often find writing a taxing and anxiety-laden activity (Wang et al. 2016), the portfolio-based writing

classroom provides a relatively low-stakes environment where students can write with less concern about time constraints than in traditional product-oriented writing classrooms (White 1994). Also, delayed evaluation of portfolio assessment takes some pressure off L2 learners by allowing them to focus on the process of learning, unlike traditional school writing contexts where grades for one-shot writing are emphasized. Finally, when twenty-first century skills put so much emphasis on learner autonomy and students' ability to take charge of their learning, writing portfolios provide a useful pedagogical tool to help promote students' self-reflection and self-regulation by putting them at the center of learning (Hamp-Lyons and Condon 2000; Lam 2013; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006), and these skills have to be fostered right at the outset of schooling. Therefore, portfolio assessment is ideally suited for L2 school writing classrooms.

This chapter begins by examining the key features of writing portfolios, focusing particularly on two kinds of writing portfolios that are suited for L2 school contexts. It then discusses the role of writing portfolios in classroom assessment, underlining the dual assessment purposes they serve – namely, assessment of learning (AoL) and assessment for/as learning (AfL/AaL). The chapter then explores the portfolio process in the writing classroom and how feedback can play a supportive role in portfolio-based assessment. Finally, the chapter evaluates the implementation of writing portfolio assessment in L2 school contexts by drawing on research insights and exploring the challenges arising from its implementation.

Features of Portfolio Assessment

A writing portfolio is "a collection of texts which the student has had the opportunity to develop and reflect upon over a long period of time" (Burner 2014, p. 140). At the core of portfolio assessment are three key elements – "collection, selection, and reflection" (Hamp-Lyons 2003, p. 179). Specifically, portfolio assessment involves "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's effort, 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 self-reflection" (Paulson et al. 1991, p. 60); it focuses on documenting both the process and progress of student learning (Klenowski 2010).

It is clear from the above definitions that there is much more to writing portfolios than the mere collection of writing folders that comprise students' drafts. Portfolio assessment puts the onus on the learners to organize, reflect on, and take charge of their own learning (Hamp-Lyons and Condon 2000), and it helps students develop a strong sense of ownership of their writing (Yancey 1992). The three key elements of portfolio assessment – collection, reflection, and selection – require students to play an active role in the portfolio-based writing classroom. First, "collection" involves students in compiling multiple drafts of their writing throughout the course

or entire academic year, usually including a range of text types. The focus is not on the mere act of collecting drafts but more importantly on the effort to revise drafts and to keep track of students' own writing (Burner 2014). Secondly, "reflection" entails the process of self-assessment, where students reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing, review their personal learning goals, and set new goals for their further development. Finally, "selection" describes the process, whereby students select the drafts for assessment; while they compile the drafts into the portfolio according to some criteria provided by or negotiated with the teacher, they reflect on their learning at the same time. It is noteworthy that collection, reflection, and selection do not happen in a linear sequence but that they occur iteratively throughout the portfolio process. While the portfolio process often begins with "collection," "reflection" and "selection" can happen simultaneously. Some scholars describe the portfolio process in terms of collection, reflection, and selection (e.g., Burner 2014), while others refer to an alternative sequence of collection, selection, and reflection (e.g., Hamp-Lyons 2003).

In addition to these three key elements of collection, reflection, and selection, portfolio assessment is characterized by delayed evaluation, which involves the teacher in grading students' portfolios only after they have been compiled. This aspect of portfolio assessment, like other features of portfolio assessment described below (see Burner 2014; Hamp-Lyons and Condon 2000), distinguishes it from traditional classroom writing assessment where student writing is graded at the end of each writing task. Another major characteristic of portfolio assessment is that it provides judgment on multiple student writing performances, usually on a range of topics/genres, rather than a snapshot of writing performance as in traditional classroom assessment. During the portfolio process, students are given time for revision of their writing. While they write largely without time constraints and test anxiety in the portfolio-based classroom (White 1994), most traditional classroom writing assessment is based on the timed model, where students produce single drafts within a time limit. Also, students are at the center of learning in the portfolio-based classroom, while in traditional classroom writing assessment, the teacher usually takes the center stage. In the portfolio-based classroom, emphasis is put on student learning and growth, and specifically students are encouraged to set goals to monitor their development along specific parameters, such as idea development (content), paragraphing (organization), and aspects of language use (e.g., verb tense accuracy). In traditional classroom writing assessment, however, students' attention is often drawn to their performance in each and every single writing task signified by a score or grade.

In the main, portfolio assessment puts a great emphasis on student development over time, with delayed evaluation taking some pressure off students as they are given an entire academic year, in the case of school learners (or even several years consecutively during schooling), to learn and to develop their writing skills. In traditional classroom writing assessment, however, the time constraint is often an issue, and because each piece of writing is graded, students may feel hard pressed to exhibit improvement within a short time. Portfolio

assessment promotes the teaching and learning of writing by giving students plenty of time to develop their writing (in line with process pedagogy), emphasizing interaction and communication with the teacher and peers throughout the portfolio process. As Roemer et al. (1991) state, "grading students' work in pieces, product by product, or making significant judgments of students' writing based on one writing sample produced under timed circumstances, has come to seem a violation of the very things we teach about writing" (p. 455). Conversely, portfolio assessment provides opportunities for teachers to implement some of the best practices in L2 writing as depicted above, like multiple drafting, revision, teacher/peer/self-feedback, and student self-reflection, which are in line with the principles of AfL/AaL.

Worthy of note is that portfolios are contexts and tools for assessment, rather than substitutes for assessment, as they have proved to be more suitable for local, classroom assessments rather than large-scale testing (Callahan 1999; Freedman 1993). As demonstrated in an especially vivid, negative example in Callahan (1999), the use of portfolios as accountability tests "has overshadowed the pedagogical component of the assessment" (p. 34), resulting in disconnection between assessment and classroom instruction. There are fundamental incongruities between portfolios as high-stakes accountability tasks in large-scale testing and the use of portfolios in the classroom, and it is classroom-based portfolios that this chapter focuses on.

Two Types of Writing Portfolios for L2 School Contexts

There are different types of portfolios, different ways to classify portfolio use, and hence different labels to describe the different kinds of portfolios. For the purpose of classroom writing in L2 school contexts, two kinds of writing portfolios are particularly pertinent – learning portfolios and showcase portfolios (Burner 2014; Lam 2013). Learning portfolios keep track of students' learning and contain all the writing samples (interim and final drafts) produced by students throughout the academic year, as well as self-/peer feedback and written reflections. Showcase portfolios comprise representative samples of writing selected by students according to teacher instructions and/or some stated criteria. Example 8.1 provides explanations (and instructions for students) about the two different portfolio systems.

Example 8.1 Writing Portfolios – Instructions for Students

Learning Portfolio

Please collect all the essays you write in this academic year and compile them into a portfolio. For each essay, include everything from pre-writing ideas (e.g., mind maps and outlines) to interim drafts (including teacher feedback and peer feedback) and final drafts, as well as personal learning goals and reflective journals

Showcase Portfolio

Compile a showcase portfolio that provides representative samples of writing that demonstrate your best abilities. Your showcase portfolio should include the following:

A cover letter that outlines your personal goals for writing in this academic year

The best three essays on different genres (include all the documents like pre-writing ideas, goal-setting sheets, interim drafts, teacher/peer feedback, final drafts, and reflective journals)

A self-reflection about your progress in writing in this academic year

While learning portfolios are maintained by the students for learning purposes, showcase portfolios are submitted for formal assessment (though the final learning portfolios can also be formally assessed). During the compilation process of the portfolio, students submit drafts to the teacher, exchange drafts with peers, receive ongoing feedback from both teacher and peers, engage in revision, and reflect on their learning/writing. The ongoing evaluation of the portfolio is more informal and formative, whereas the final assessment is more formal and summative in nature. Thus, writing portfolio assessment is both formative and summative, serving the purposes of AoL and AfL/AaL (see the next section on "Writing portfolios and dual assessment purposes"). Example 8.2 illustrates a possible portfolio structure based on the showcase portfolio system, which may suit L2 school students.

Example 8.2 A Portfolio Structure for L2 School Students

A one-page cover letter that includes:

   The goals of the writing class in this academic year

   The personal learning goals you have set for your own writing

   A brief introduction to the works selected for the portfolio (e.g., why you
   chose them and what they say about you)

**Three best essays selected from the six essays written in this academic
year, including (for each essay):**

   Pre-writing documents such as mind maps, outlines, and graphic
   organizers

   Your personal learning goals

   Interim drafts, as well as teacher and peer feedback

   Final draft

   Reflective journals

**An overall self-reflection of the portfolio (one to two pages) that
addresses the following:**

   The goals of the writing class, your personal learning goals, the extent to
   which you have achieved your personal learning goals, and what you did
   to achieve them

   Your major strengths in writing

   The major areas that need improvement

   Where from here (your new goals for further improvement)

Writing Portfolios and Dual Assessment Purposes

Portfolio assessment serves dual assessment purposes. With a special emphasis on
student active involvement, reflection, self-regulation, and progress, portfolios serve
formative purposes – i.e., AfL/AaL. On the other hand, teachers evaluate students'
writing portfolios to provide judgments of their learning and writing – i.e., AoL.

Realizing Assessment for/as Learning in Portfolio-Based Writing Classrooms

Portfolios are underpinned by metacognitive perspectives on learning, where self-
reflection, self-assessment, and self-regulation play a primary role (Hamp-Lyons
and Condon 2000; Lam 2014). At each stage of the writing process, students are
actively involved and learn to take charge of their learning. At the pre-writing stage
(where I am going), students acquire the learning goals and success criteria and are
provided with opportunities to establish some personal learning goals for their

writing. During writing (how I am going), in particular when multiple drafting is involved, students make use of different kinds of feedback (from teacher and peers) to revise and improve their writing. Such feedback also serves as a source of stimulus for their self-assessment and self-reflection, helping them relate their writing to their learning goals and to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and areas that need improvement. After writing (where to next), students engage in further self-reflection – e.g., evaluating the extent to which their goals were achieved and setting new goals for further improvement.

During each stage of the portfolio process, students engage in metacognitive thinking – i.e., monitoring, controlling, and regulating of cognition (Belgrade 2013). They take control of their learning, monitor their own progress as writers over time, and enhance their self-regulatory capacities. Through students' efforts in compiling, selecting, and reflecting on their writing, writing portfolios can testify to students' development in writing and self-regulation, which is an important facet of AfL/AaL.

Assessment of Learning in Portfolio-Based Writing Classrooms

While students compile portfolios to keep track of their own writing development formatively, they submit their portfolios for summative assessment at the end of compilation. When teachers decide on the assessment criteria for summative evaluation, one fundamental question to ask is what should go into the portfolio and what assessment criteria should be used. For example, how many pieces of writing should be compiled, and what other artifacts should be collected? Should both process and product be assessed? Should they also assess the physical presentation of the portfolios? More importantly, should writing portfolios be assessed analytically or holistically?

Since each context is unique, it is not easy to come up with an assessment scheme that suits each and every L2 school writing context. All things considered, several principles should be applied in assessing portfolios of L2 school learners: (1) delayed evaluation, (2) sharing of explicit evaluation guidelines, and (3) analytic and diagnostic evaluation.

First, delayed evaluation makes it possible for both teachers and students to hold back summative judgment by focusing on the process of learning, so that students do not have to worry about their grades as they engage in the writing process. During the portfolio process, students' attention is drawn to the quality of learning, their active role in the learning and writing process, and how they should utilize the feedback from the teacher and peers to improve their learning. They receive a grade for their portfolio only at the very end of the portfolio process. In the spirit of AfL/AaL, as emphasized in Chap. 2, it is suggested that grades/scores not be given to final drafts during the portfolio process. Instead, what matters much more is quality feedback from the teacher and peers during the portfolio compilation process and students' efforts in self-reflection and self-assessment.

Secondly, teachers should decide what they are going to assess in students' portfolios and how they are going to assess them and disseminate such information very clearly at the beginning of the portfolio development process (Klenowski 2010). Example 8.3 shows a set of evaluation guidelines based on the portfolio structure illustrated in Example 8.2. The assessment rubric comprises four dimensions: writing process, quality of selected entries (i.e., writing products), personal reflection and growth, and presentation of the portfolio. Each dimension will receive a maximum score of five, with a total score of 20 for the entire portfolio. The guidelines can be adapted in accordance with the portfolio contents in different L2 school contexts.

Finally, as portfolio contents are wide-ranging, including drafts, reflective journals, and other artifacts that display student writing development, for the purpose of classroom assessment it is best to score portfolios analytically, rather than holistically, so as to provide students with diagnostic information about what they did well and less well (Lam 2014; White 2005). The assessment scheme in Example 8.3 is based on the analytic scoring approach, in which each dimension of the writing portfolio is scored; it can be expanded to include specific performance indicators for

Example 8.3 Writing Portfolio Evaluation Guidelines
5 = Excellent
4 = Good
3 = Average
2 = Below average
1 = Much room for improvement

Writing process
The portfolio demonstrates the student's consistent effort to revise and improve his/her writing by making good use of teacher, peer, and self-evaluations

Quality of selected entries
The selected entries demonstrate the student's growing competence in writing as evidenced by relevant/meaningful content, clear organization, fluency, and effective language use

Personal reflection and growth
The portfolio clearly demonstrates the student's awareness of his/her own writing development, strengths and weaknesses in writing, the extent to which the goals were achieved, and what further improvement is needed

Presentation of portfolio
The portfolio is well organized, is nicely presented, and contains all required entries

each level of the dimensions. Apart from scoring each of the dimensions, teachers are encouraged to provide descriptive, diagnostic commentary to inform students of their strengths and weaknesses in their writing portfolios. In so doing, even in summative assessment of portfolios (i.e., AoL), the spirit of AfL can be realized.

The Portfolio Process and Feedback in Portfolio-Based Writing Classrooms

In L2 school contexts where teachers usually dominate the assessment process and where students are passive and generally not encouraged to engage in self-reflection and assessment (Lee 2016), writing portfolios afford teachers with great opportunities to provide a feedback-rich environment (Hamp-Lyons 2006) and to experiment with a student-centered approach to classroom assessment. The portfolio process is characterized by an intertwined set of relationships between instruction, learning, and assessment, where instruction and learning are embedded within the assessment process pertaining to the three stages of learning referred to in preceding chapters – i.e., where I am going, how I am going, and where to next (Hattie and Timperley 2007).

Before Writing: Where I Am Going

For each writing task, the portfolio process begins with the question "where I am going." Teachers play an important role by providing students with specific goals which are relevant to the writing task and challenging enough for the target students. The goals have to be shared with students so that they can understand and articulate them and become metacognitively aware. Broad and generic goals such as "rich and relevant content," "clear organization," and "correct language use" are not going to be very useful because they fail to provide students with a clear sense of direction about "where they are going." Take story writing as an example. The learning goals should be specific enough to enable students to understand what makes a good story (see Example 3.1 for "Genre-specific goals for story writing").

As early as the "where I am going" stage, students should be encouraged to play an active role in the portfolio-based writing classroom. They should be given opportunities to reflect on the learning goals provided by/negotiated with the teacher, relate them to their own learning, become metacognitively aware of what needs to be done in the writing task (see Chap. 4 for examples of metacognitive questions students can ask), and then establish their personal learning goals for the target writing task. The importance of learning goals is underscored in Chap. 4 on AaL (see Example 4.2 which illustrates a student's personal learning goals for story writing).

During Writing: How I Am Going

To answer the question "how I am going," students need feedback that consists of concrete, specific information about their progress with reference to the learning goals/success criteria, so that they know how to proceed with their writing. Take story writing as an example again. Feedback can address some of the success criteria as follows:

- *The story begins with relevant background information about the time, setting, and characters*; *however, the story structure does not contain a clear indication of the problem.*
- *The story is interesting, but dialogues could have been included to make the characters come to life.*

Such feedback from the teacher and/or peers can provide incentives for students to revise and improve their writing. At this stage of the writing process, students can also engage in self-reflection and self-assessment – e.g., based on the teacher/peer feedback received. As they evaluate their own work, they can find out where they are going by referring to the same set of success criteria (as in Example 3.1) and/or the personal learning goals they establish for their own writing (as in Example 4.2).

After Writing: Where to Next

When the writing is finished, students need further feedback to find out how to bridge the gaps in their writing and to move forward. Generic and ambiguous feedback like "Good job, way to go!" or "There's plenty of room for improvement in your writing" is not particularly helpful. To address this "where to next" question, feedback can further challenge students to attain the learning goals, to make greater effort at self-regulation, or to provide more information about what has not yet been fully understood. Teacher feedback geared toward "where to next," again with reference to the learning goals/success criteria of story writing provided at the pre-writing stage, can include the following:

- *You have crafted a nice story that contains all the elements of the story structure. I encourage you to further work on the story opening and ending, mainly to include a more interesting opening that can grab the attention of the readers, and to end the story in a less ordinary way (*e.g. *that everyone lived happily ever after).*
- *You have already learnt the elements of the story structure. Check to make sure that you have included every single element of the story structure in your story.*
- *Time markers are useful to help you present the events in the chronological order. However, overusing time markers makes the writing a bit unnatural. Check to see if time markers are used appropriately.*

Since the feedback is task/genre specific, it may be tangential to students' next writing task (unless the genre is the same as the previous one). However, transfer is still possible if the feedback is about process and self-regulation, which will be discussed in the following subsection. To answer the "where to next" question, it is also important that students engage in self-reflection and set goals for themselves. They can keep a learning log, document their reflections and goals (see Example 4.4 "Student learning log" in Chap. 4), and monitor their learning throughout the portfolio process.

Example 8.4 illustrates the integral relationships between instruction, learning, and assessment in the multiple-draft portfolio-based writing classroom that is committed to AfL/AaL, with reference to the three stages of learning examined above.

While Example 8.4 illustrates the typical portfolio process that takes place in a multiple-draft writing classroom, portfolio assessment can be adopted even in traditional product-based writing classrooms where multiple drafting and peer review

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Example 8.4 The Portfolio Process in the Multiple-Draft Writing Classroom

Before writing (where I am going)
Teacher shares learning goals/success criteria
Teacher engages in explicit instruction
Students engage in pre-writing activities (e.g., brainstorming, mind mapping, outlining)
Students set personal learning goals
Students ask metacognitive questions before they start writing

During writing (how I am going)
Students write Draft 1
Students receive teacher feedback and/or engage in peer feedback
Students continue to ask metacognitive questions about their writing
Students engage in self-reflection, self-monitoring, and self-assessment
Students keep reflective journals
Students revise Draft 1 and produce Draft 2

After writing (where to next)
Teacher provides feedback on Draft 2
Students continue to engage in self-reflection (e.g., their strengths and weaknesses)
Students review metacognitive questions posed earlier
Students evaluate goals and set new ones
Students keep reflective journals
Students produce final/presentation draft

Example 8.5 The Portfolio Process in the Single-Draft Writing Classroom
<u>Before writing</u> (where I am going)
Teacher shares learning goals/success criteria
Teacher engages in explicit instruction
Students engage in pre-writing activities (e.g., brainstorming, mind mapping, outlining)
Students set personal learning goals
Students ask metacognitive questions before they start writing

<u>During writing</u>
Students write single draft

<u>After writing</u> (how I am going and where to next)
Teacher provides feedback on student single draft
Students review metacognitive questions posed earlier
Students engage in self-reflection, self-monitoring, and self-assessment
Students evaluate goals and set new ones

are not regularly practiced (Hamp-Lyons and Condon 2000). Although the latter is not ideal at all, Example 8.5 shows that the portfolio process in the single-draft writing classroom is still possible. Instead of receiving feedback on interim drafts and using such feedback to revise their writing, students receive feedback on single drafts (how I am going), reflect on their writing, and set goals for their further development (where to next).

The portfolio process is cyclical and iterative in nature; in other words, the process delineated in Examples 8.4 and 8.5 is repeated for each and every single writing task in the portfolio-based classroom.

Four Levels of Feedback in Portfolio-Based Writing Classrooms

As shown above, the portfolio process is dialogic, involving the ongoing interaction between the teacher and students (teacher feedback) and between students and their peers (peer feedback). Also, the portfolio process attaches great importance to student self-reflection, where self-feedback is essential. Since the writing portfolio "has to be continually in the making and document work in progress" (Nunes 2004, p. 328), feedback has a most critical role to play in the portfolio-based writing classroom.

At different stages of the writing process, students can benefit from feedback from the teacher, their peers, and themselves. Although research has suggested that L2 students tend to value teacher feedback more than self- and peer feedback

(Jacobs et al. 1998; Yang 2011), these different sources of feedback should be given an equally prominent role in the portfolio process, addressing any of the four levels proposed by Hattie and Timperley (2007), namely, (1) feedback about a task, (2) feedback about the process, (3) feedback that promotes self-regulation, and (4) feedback related to the self (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, and affective behaviors)

Feedback about a task (or product) gives information about how well a task is performed. In L2 portfolio-based writing classrooms, feedback about a task can address any aspect of the writing task, including content, organization, and/or language – e.g., "Your story structure is difficult to follow" (organization) and "inconsistent use of verb tense in your story" (language). It is important to remember that feedback about a task is more effective in the form of comments than grades/scores (Black and Wiliam 1998; Crooks 1998; Hattie and Timperley 2007). Feedback about process aims at improving strategies and processes, and hence compared with feedback about a task, process feedback is more likely to lead to deeper learning – e.g., "You could use the techniques learnt in class to begin your story in a more attractive way – e.g., a short dialogue, a proverb/saying, a conflict or a mystery." Feedback that promotes self-regulation "addresses the way students monitor, direct, and regulate actions toward the learning goal" (Hattie and Timperley 2007, p. 93) – e.g., "You have learnt that stories are narrated in the simple past tense. Check to see if your verb tense is correctly used in the story." Feedback about the self as a person is personal feedback directed to the learner – e.g., "You've done a great job!" Such personal feedback is not related to task performance nor the learning goals, strategies and processes, and students' self-regulation.

Effective feedback, according to Hattie and Timperley (2007), is feedback that proceeds from task to process and then to self-regulation, and the least effective feedback is feedback about the self. Of critical importance to the portfolio-based writing classroom is feedback about process and feedback that promotes self-regulation (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006), which can facilitate deep learning. Therefore, promoting student agency and active participation in the portfolio process is crucial to the successful implementation of portfolio assessment in L2 writing classes.

Evaluating Writing Portfolios as a Pedagogical and Assessment Tool for Classroom Assessment

Writing portfolios provide a sound pedagogical and assessment tool for L2 classrooms. Portfolio pedagogy combines a dual focus on process and product, which is a more holistic approach that reflects the true nature of writing than the traditional product-based approach. It aligns instruction with assessment and takes into account the centrality of formative feedback in the writing process, enabling teachers to implement best pedagogical practices in the writing classroom. More importantly,

writing portfolio assessment emphasizes students' active engagement through promoting self-reflection, self-assessment, self-monitoring, and self-regulatory capacities. Students can chronicle their own development, using relevant documents and artifacts to showcase their progress in writing. As a pedagogical tool, the AfL/AaL strategies that students learn during the portfolio process can also be transferred to other subjects or classrooms to maximize their learning. As a classroom writing assessment tool, writing portfolio assessment adopts an expansionist approach based on multiple samples produced over time, rather than a reductionist approach that emphasizes one-shot assessment based on a snapshot of student writing performance (Klenowski 2010). As a result, assessment is rendered more valid and reliable.

Research on writing portfolio assessment, though limited, has shown that writing portfolios have positive impact on students, boosting motivation, enhancing writing performance, and facilitating the learning process through tapping the formative potential of writing assessment (Burner 2014; Fox and Hartwick 2011; Lam 2013; Lam and Lee 2010). Students generally express a favorable attitude toward portfolio assessment after they have been exposed to it (Aydin 2010), and they are found to be more self-reflective, more language aware, and more independent (Fox and Hartwick 2011; Hirvela 1997). Recently, Graham et al. (2012) and Lam (2014) have shown that a specific focus on self-regulation in the portfolio-based classroom could lead to better performance in writing, though Lo (2010) has noted the difficulty some students have in engaging in a deep level of reflection. In addition to a positive impact on student learning, writing portfolio assessment is found to benefit teaching by bringing assessment and instruction more closely together. In the portfolio-based classroom, teachers provide explicit instruction in a range of skills such as revising, self-assessment, and self-reflection (Lam 2014), leading to teacher empowerment too (Porto 2001).

Much of writing portfolio research, however, has been conducted in postsecondary and tertiary contexts (e.g., Lam 2013; Lam and Lee 2010); empirical research on the impact of writing portfolios in L2 school contexts is particularly sparse (Hamp-Lyons 2007). Given the traditional outlook of many L2 school writing teachers, the heavy examination culture, and teachers' lack of exposure to portfolio assessment, implementing writing portfolio assessment is likely to present challenges to both teachers and learners. For example, the time-consuming nature of the portfolio process and the focus on student agency and teachers sharing responsibility with students may create barriers in traditional product-oriented writing classrooms that value single drafting and encourage students to play a passive role in learning. Since writing portfolio assessment "speaks to a changed attitude about the teaching and judging of writing" (Roemer et al. 1991, p. 456), teachers need to develop knowledge and skills and acquire the "right" attitudes, to implement writing portfolios as a pedagogical and classroom assessment tool. Teachers also need to learn how to merge instruction with assessment and how to teach students to set goals, self-assess, and reflect on their writing. They also have to learn how to help students utilize feedback (from teacher, peers, and self) effectively to maximize learning.

While writing portfolios are, from a commonsensical point of view, a better alternative to one-shot and timed essay writing, simply supporting writing portfolios "on faith" (Condon and Hamp-Lyons 1994, p. 277) is by no means adequate. More empirical research on writing portfolio assessment has to be carried out in L2 school writing contexts to find out the specific challenges teachers and students in school contexts face. For example, Lam's (2013) study showed that postsecondary students might prefer learning portfolios (where all drafts are compiled) to showcase portfolios (where best drafts are selected and compiled). It would be useful to find out what kind of writing portfolio may suit younger L2 learners studying in schools. Hirvela and Sweetland (2005) and Lam (2013) have found that students' consciousness of grades could distract them from the process of self-evaluation and self-reflection. In view of the fact that grades/scores normally play an important role in L2 school contexts, it would be interesting to explore the role of grades in writing portfolio assessment in L2 school contexts and whether delayed evaluation (i.e., grading the final portfolio) is a desirable option. In many L2 school contexts, students are accustomed to playing a passive role and have a strong tendency to rely on the teacher. Writing portfolios, however, put students at the center of learning, and compiling a portfolio can be labor-intensive and time-consuming. Some students may not be willing to reflect on their own learning/writing (Aydin 2010; Hirvela and Sweetland 2005), and others may engage in a surface level of reflection. How students can be motivated to participate in the portfolio process and helped to foster a deeper level of reflection are significant questions that provide fruitful areas for further investigations.

Conclusion

Referred to as the third generation of writing assessment (Hamp-Lyons 2001; Yancey 1999), portfolio assessment is considered a way forward to improving the quality of student learning and writing. While traditional L2 school writing contexts tend to emphasize AoL at the expense of AfL/AaL, writing portfolios present a splendid opportunity for teachers to combine the two functions and in particular to promote AfL/AaL, which is undervalued in a large number of L2 contexts. When teachers use portfolio assessment, assessment is put "at the heart of their teaching" (Hamp-Lyons 2001, p. 180), where teaching and assessment are interwoven. Student writing abilities can be assessed in a more valid manner in portfolio assessment than in traditional writing assessment based on a single performance (Brown and Hudson 1998; Gearhart and Herman 1998). Through delayed evaluation, students can learn to write, set goals, self-assess, self-reflect, and conduct peer assessment in a relatively low-stakes and anxiety-free environment. Their attention is drawn to the process of learning and writing, and the focus is on their own growth as a writer. When used at the classroom level, reliability can also be enhanced through clearly articulated portfolio contents and assessment rubrics (Crusan 2010; Weigle 2002).

Writing portfolios are not necessarily paper based. In this technological age, the use of the electronic portfolio is definitely a feasible option. E-portfolios allow students to showcase their writing abilities with the support of multimedia tools such as weblogs, podcasts, vodcasts, and wikis (Yancey 2009), which are generally suitable for contexts where a variety of artifacts and a diversity of content material are compiled, including audio and/or video clips – e.g., higher education, teacher education, and the workplace. In L2 school contexts, teachers can consider adopting paper-based writing portfolios, to begin with, and perhaps integrate technology at different points of the portfolio process where appropriate. The next chapter will turn to examine the role of technology in classroom writing assessment.

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