

Improve Oral Training: The Method of Innovation Assessment on English Speaking Performance

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ABSTRACT

The advantages of portfolios come from observing the student learning process and recording feedback. Students utilized their own learning portfolios to do learning assessment and self-correction. The research that has been done in Taiwan has shown that using a portfolio is effective in improving English speaking performances (ESP). The purpose of this study is to apply the portfolios to assess students' speaking performances. The researcher administered speaking evaluation forms and the PRCA-24 as the instruments. The PRCA-24 was used to assess students' communication apprehension and was analyzed by t-test. The major findings were summarized. The portfolios were expected to enhance students' ESP and intended to reduce students' communication apprehension through self-monitoring their ESP. Finally, this research can provide valuable perspectives on the use of portfolios and self-monitoring, and prompted the expansion and sustainability of English education system.

Keywords: Communication Apprehension, Language Learning, Oral Training, Portfolio, Self-Monitoring

1. INTRODUCTION

A paradigm shift in the past decade has changed the focus in education from a teacher-centered instructional environment to a student-centered one (Brooks, 1997; Terheggen, Prabhu, & Lubinescu, 2000). Grades are no longer proof enough of learning; multiple stakeholders in education want documentation that demonstrates the entire learning process (Heaney, 1990). Ruhland and Brewer (2001) called attention to the increased demands for accountability that emphasize assessment of student learning. Universities have

begun to focus on student learning outcomes as a way to measure what students have learned and are able to do when they complete their degree (Dori & Belcher, 2005; Wickersham & Chambers, 2006). Due to the assessment emphasis alternative processes to the traditional test are being developed as a means to meet accreditation and accountability expectations (Ruhland & Brewer, 2001). The electronic portfolio creates a personal collection of thoughts and work that enhances the use and knowledge of technology, improves instructional practices and showcases the candidates for potential employers, students and students' patents (Hewett, 2005; van Aalst & Chan, 2007). Technological innovations of

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past century, from audiotape recorders to the Internet, can be used to provide English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) students with authentic language exposure and meaningful practice, but many learners need guidance in accessing these resources and integrating them into daily life (Dahlman & Rilling, 2001). Moreover, the need for technology will need to be weighed against what technology adds to the value of the assignment (Carney & Jay, 2002; diSessa, 2004).

A portfolio is an effective way to assess student performance. It was first used primarily in the field of fine art to display illustrative samples of an artist's work (Moya & O'Malley, 1994). Later it was used to support career education and to assess and credit experiential learning in higher education (Farr & Tone, 1998). Currently, educational portfolios are implemented in Science, Mathematics and Geography and also have become widely used in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Melles, 2009). An educational portfolio is a collection of work that an individual has built to demonstrate his or her learning processes and progress (Chambers & Wickersham, 2007).

While creating a portfolio, students observe their development in learning, and have opportunities for reflection on their learning processes. Portfolio assessment is a student-centered assessment. Santos (1997) mentions that as part of the portfolio process, students are asked to think about their needs, goals, weaknesses and strategies in language learning. They are often asked to select their best work and to explain why the work is valuable to them. When the students prepared their own portfolios, they self-monitored their performances. Students utilized their own learning portfolios to do learning assessment and self-correction.

While many foreign language educators may have ignored the role of the portfolio in language teaching, the portfolio is still widely used in learning. It appears that students frequently use a portfolio as a learning tool to self-monitor, assess and learn a foreign language (Collins, 1993). However, relatively little research attention seems to have been devoted to consid-

eration of the use of the portfolio in language learning to utilize the learners' English speaking performances. Although growing numbers of researchers have considered the positive potential for using the portfolios in language teaching and learning, very little attention has been given to student self-monitoring, of their performances in English speaking and their frequent use of the portfolio as a leaning assessment.

Digital portfolios include using recorders, cameras, digital cameras, computers, and Learning Management System (LMS) as the instruments for teaching. With these technologies, students can make their work more organized and systematic. Moreover, in this study the students collected their speaking videotapes or burned the films onto CDs. Thus, the students were able to exchange their CDs with their classmates for peer-review. One of the primary benefits of developing any portfolio-digital or paper-based could be the depth of an individuals' involvement in selection of contents (Wiedmer, 1998) and a considerable amount of thinking that they apply to the contents (Holt, McAllister, & Ingram, 2001). Unlike the liner path of paper portfolios, the interconnectivity of artifacts across pages in an electronic portfolio can promote a deeper understanding of the relationship between standards and performance, promoting a sense of professional efficacy (Holt et al., 2001).

The study was designed to investigate the effects of using self-monitoring and portfolios in the English as Foreign Language (EFL) speaking classroom. Sixty EFL college students who major in English were recruited to participate in this study. The participants were randomly assigned to either a portfolio or a non-portfolio group. The researcher videotaped students' weekly English speaking performances. Students in both the portfolio group and the non-portfolio group observed their English speaking performances via videos of weekly oral presentations. However, only the students in the portfolio group were asked to create student portfolios and to review their videotaped speeches. The participants in the non-portfolio group were only asked to do the

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