



A Review of the Research on the Evaluation of High School English Writing Portfolio

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ABSTRACT

Teaching writing has always been an important part of high school English teaching, and improving students' writing ability has always been a challenge for teachers. Traditional writing teaching focuses too much on the results of writing and neglects the process of reflection and summary after writing. Recent changes to the English college entrance examination have focused on flexibility and innovation in writing, and new questions such as reading followed by writing have appeared one after another in the provincial entrance examination. Portfolio assessment has been used as one of the main tools of formative assessment and has been used in foreign language writing teaching at home and abroad. It has also been a guiding factor for the reforms in the new English writing teaching in high school. The purpose of this paper is to review & analyse the research on the use of portfolio assessment in foreign language writing by scholars at home and abroad through literature collection and see what the current situation is in China and give new ideas for future research on the use of portfolio assessment in high school foreign language writing.

Keywords: high school English writing, portfolio assessment, research review

1 Introduction:

The use of the archive bag (portfolio) can be traced back to 40 years ago when artists collected their own works and displayed the creative process through portfolios. With the independence and development of the field of pedagogy, the principle of learner-centred teaching evaluation was widely affirmed in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and other countries and regions in the mid-1990s, among which, portfolio evaluation is considered to be a typical representative of showing this principle, and thus, portfolio evaluation also began to be introduced into the training of writing, listening and reading in foreign language teaching (Huang Ji-zhen, 2012). This paper summarizes the application models and related research of foreign language portfolio assessment in writing teaching at home and abroad, covering the current situation and application status of portfolio assessment, etc., to provide reference and guidance for the development of portfolio assessment in foreign language learning and assessment in China.

2 Conceptual elaboration of the file bag assessment method

(1) *Definition of Portfolio Evaluation by Domestic and Foreign Scholars*

As early as 1992, a portfolio was defined as a purposefully collected collection of student work that demonstrates students' efforts, progress or achievements in a particular area. (Arter J A & Spandel V, 1992) Moya & O'Malley (1994), in terms of the purpose of the Portfolio Assessment, argued that the Portfolio Assessment is a collection of different types of student learning outcomes over a period of time that is used to verify and evaluate the breadth and depth of student development. Hancock (1994) argues that portfolio assessment focuses on the process of student development and growth and emphasizes the subjectivity of students in assessment because it can effectively motivate teachers and students to help students collect their own learning work and present their learning to others. Thus, a writing portfolio is a collection of texts that students have had the opportunity to develop and reflect on over a long period of time. A writing portfolio is an important assessment tool that can aid learning

because it focuses on processes and progress (Klenowski, 2010). Based on these characteristics, they proposed three major steps in the creation of the portfolios, namely, collection, reflection, and selection. The collection is not just about gathering text, but tracking and working to improve drafts. Self-assessment is often mentioned as an example of reflection, i.e., reflecting on one's text through training. Selection is also a form of reflection in which students must indicate which pieces they are most satisfied with and what they have learned over time. This is where students need to be creative.

In China, many scholars have also given their own definitions of portfolio assessment. Gong Yafo and Luo Shaoqian (2002) believe that file-bag assessment is a comprehensive assessment based on certain assessment criteria, combining students' learning works, teachers' classroom observations, and students' self-assessments. According to He, and Xinyong (2012), file bag assessment is an ongoing process involving the selection of student work samples by teachers and students, and its purpose is to demonstrate students' progress and stimulate their interest in writing.

(2) Profile bag assessment under the high school English curriculum standards

In China's new high school English curriculum standards, assessment is required to pay attention to students' overall development and growth, highlight the students' main position in assessment, pay attention to the classroom teaching process, emphasize the diversity of assessment methods, and give play to the counteracting effect of assessment. The file-bag assessment method coincides with the diversified assessment advocated by the new high school English curriculum standards (Luo Shaoxi, Zhang Shuai, 2019). The file bag assessment method emphasizes the combination of students' self-assessments and other assessments (Lin, Xiaofen, 2016). After students select their own work and create a file bag, the teacher will organize students' self-evaluation and peer evaluation, and students also have the opportunity to participate in evaluating others. In this process, each student becomes an active participant role. Based on the concept of multiple assessments, students will be motivated to work on self-reflection with the aim of self-improvement.

3 Research on the Application of File Bag Evaluation Method in High School English Writing

(1) Chinese scholars' research on the application of the file bag assessment method in writing

Chinese research on the use of file bag evaluation in the classroom is mostly focused on college English classrooms, and a small number of them are focused on high school English classrooms (Huang Guangyang, 2003). The author believes that the reasons for this may be the following: the production process takes a long time and teachers in each class have progress requirements (Yu Jiaxin, 2019); the requirements for teachers are high (Ma Zhili, 2016); students' independent learning ability is still weak at the secondary school level; the standardization and objectivity of the file bag evaluation are low and certain financial investment is needed.

Although some studies have used the file bag in high school English classroom, they are mainly focused on the case studies of some master's theses, and the students' participation time is relatively short, but still have some reference value. For example, Huang Yang (2013), in order to verify the positive effect of the file bag evaluation method on high school English writing teaching, took two parallel classes of the same teacher at Hongxing Middle School in Maanshan City as the subjects of the study. The pre-test results showed that there were no significant differences between the two classes in terms of writing performance, writing interest, writing confidence, self-reflection and writing habits. After three months of experimental observation, using the questionnaire and writing

test scores as data, it was found by comparing the experimental group with the control group that the experimental class showed a greater improvement in students' writing scores, and students' interest in writing, confidence and autonomy also improved, and students' writing habits and self-reflection habits in the process also improved accordingly.

In addition to the comparison of students with similar levels, Hu Shiqian (2020) took a more intensive sample of 50 students from the senior 1915 class of Xianggang No. 1 Middle School in Xiangtan City, Hunan Province, and grouped the 50 students according to their English learning ability, personality traits, interests, gender and other differences, and followed the principle of "homogeneous group and homogeneous group". The principle of "same group heterogeneous, different group homogeneous" was followed, so that each group had three levels of students, high, middle and low, to promote peer support. After 18 weeks of teaching (two writing classes per month), the data collected and analyzed using tests, questionnaires and interviews revealed that the writing skill problems that existed before the test, such as mixed punctuation and misuse of capitalization in vocabulary; errors in tense, subject-verb agreement and singular-plural use in pragmatics; and in content, inability to accurately express the main meaning of the composition, were all improved to some extent, and the class The average writing score increased by 2.25 points. Among them, the improvement was more significant for students with intermediate English writing levels. The results of the questionnaires and interviews also indicated that the file bag evaluation method could stimulate students' interest in writing, and develop their writing habits and students' reflective awareness.

Similarly, Song Shixian (2020) used 12 senior high school students of different writing levels in a key high school in a city as the study subjects over a period of three months. Before the experiment, the study subjects completed a pre-test and a pre-questionnaire. During the experiment, the research subjects self-evaluated the test, peer-evaluated each other, and submitted the first draft, self-evaluation form, and peer-evaluation form to the teacher for evaluation, after which the students completed the self-reflection form and wrote a reflection journal. After the experiment, the study participants completed the post-test, post-questionnaire, and interview. The results of the comparative analysis of the data showed that, in addition to finding that the use of the profile bag evaluation method could improve students' motivation, attitude, self-confidence, reflection, and thus their writing skills, it was also found that the progress of the intermediate and the latter students was greater than that of the top students, and the progress of the intermediate and the latter students were shown in their verbal expression, while the progress of the top students was shown in their thinking skills.

(2) Foreign scholars' research on the application of the file bag evaluation method in writing

Compared with China, foreign scholars' research on the use of file bag evaluation is mostly focused on elementary schools or universities, and less applied in secondary schools. In addition to focusing on students' writing ability, interest in writing, efficiency and self-reflection, they also focus on the sub-skills of writing. For example, the study of Jordanian scholars Obeiah S F and Bataineh R F (2016) examined the impact of the Profile Bag assessment on the overall writing performance of Jordanian learners of English in grade 10 and their performance on subskills such as focus, development, organization, habituation, and word choice. The study was quasi-experimental in that they selectively drew an experimental group and a control group of 20 students each from a tenth-grade class in a public girls' school in the Northeast Badia Education Department. As required by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000), the experimental group received instruction on how to generate

ideas, essay structure, drafts, and edit their written work, while the control group received routine instruction as prescribed in the Teacher's Manual. The findings revealed that the profile bag group outperformed the traditional instruction group in overall writing performance as well as in writing subskills such as concentration, development, organization, habituation, and word choice ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). Meanwhile, in the context of educational policy reform in Iran, Ghoorchaei B, Tavakoli M and Ansari D N (2010) study investigated the effect of the Dossier assessment as a process-oriented assessment mechanism on the English writing skills of Iranian EFL high school students. Sixty-one students with similar writing skills were selected as participants in this study. They were divided into two groups; the experimental group underwent the profile bag assessment, while the control group received the traditional assessment. The results of the data analysis revealed that students in the profile bag assessment group outperformed the control group in overall writing ability and in the subskills of focus, elaboration, organization, and vocabulary. To triangulate the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were used to stimulate students' perceptions and reflections on the Portfolio Assessment method. The results of the study suggest that the Profile Bag assessment enhances students' learning of English writing.

In addition to writing, some scholars have shown that profile bag assessment is also significant in helping teach listening (Amirian S & Moghadam R G, 2016), reading (Khavar R C, Shahrokh J, Morteza K, 2012), etc. However, the results of the experiments do not converge across scholars, such as the Turkish scholars Irfan Y and Tolga E (2009) who aimed to find out the effects of the profile assessment on the reading, listening and writing skills of students attending secondary school language preparation classes and to analyze the opinions of these students about the profile assessment. They selected two random groups, experimental ($n=22$) and control ($n=22$), from secondary school English preparatory classes whose students were 15 and 16 years old, respectively. And the file bag assessment activities were included in the program of the experimental group. The findings showed that the profile bag assessment had a significant effect on students' writing skills. However, the same results were not found for reading and listening skills. In addition, the analysis of students' answers to open-ended questions indicated that the Portfolio Assessment was used in the method of writing instruction; it was a more pragmatic approach than traditional assessment methods; it increased students' responsibility and motivated them. However, during the interviews, students also indicated some of the negative effects of the portfolios, such as the amount of time required for portfolio research, as well as the daunting task of self-assessing, reviewing, and correcting students' work.

In addition to the studies on the profile bag assessment to improve students' writing skills, some studies focus on the acquisition of a specific sub-skill. For example, Iranian scholars (Tahriri A, Sabet M K, Aeineh A, 2014) tried to investigate the effect of file bag assessment on Iranian English learners' ability to use idioms (idioms) in their writing. For the purpose of this study, 30 Iranian Rasht Language Institute students from intermediate to advanced levels of English participated in this study. They were randomly divided into an experimental group and a control group. The TOEFL test and the idiom test were administered separately to ensure the homogeneity of the students in terms of language proficiency and knowledge of idioms. The purpose of the experimental group was to create a profile bag and place samples of their writing using idioms in the profile bag. After they participated in self- and peer-assessment, the teacher also provided them with feedback and comments. In contrast, the control group received traditional instruction in which the control group used the idioms in their

writing without receiving any comments and submitted it to the teacher for grading. Post-tests were administered after ten sessions. Analysis of independent samples t-tests showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of idiomatic phrases in writing and that the file bag was able to improve students' understanding of the mastery and use of idioms in writing.

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