

PORTFOLIOS AS ASSESSMENT TOOLS FOR *BASIC SPEAKING* LESSON: ITS USEFULNESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. Portfolio is method which is alternatively can be used to assess students' ability in English. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate the usefulness of using portfolios as assessment tools in Basic Speaking lesson in higher education. The data were two lecturers who are teaching Basic Speaking in English Education Department. The data were then analyzed qualitatively since this study observe the natural phenomena happen in English language teaching and interview was also used to obtain more information both from students and lecturers. The results revealed several things, such as portfolios provide students to see their own strengths and weaknesses when they produced the tasks, also provide students to look at closer their own learning within a unique way and hereafter as their critical self-analysis, and last but not least, it provides many information both from the students as their language learning process and lecturers enable to impersonate the process of teaching.

Keywords: portfolios; assessment tools; speaking ability.

INTRODUCTION

To be able to speak English fluently and accurately, however, requires supporting knowledge and other skills of speaking. It also entails a full understanding of what is involved in the speaking skill. Burns and Joyce (1997:2) acknowledges that the mastery of the speaking skills engage a number of complex skills and types of knowledge about how and when to communicate. Similarly, Thornbury (2005:11) adds that to have a sufficient skill of speaking the EFL learners require linguistic knowledge and extra linguistic knowledge. Thus, the significance of understanding familiarity of speaking skills and related skills might favor EFL learners in improving their speaking skill.

Regarding some factors that really influence the quality of the speaking skill, Harmer (2001:269) emphasizes that to speak well, speakers should have not only a good comprehension on knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process information and language in context. In line with Harmer, Shumin (2002:204) states that when people learn to speak a foreign language, they require more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules, and learners need to acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use the language in context. In short, understanding those factors really facilitate EFL learners' awareness of the speaking skill and improve its quality.

A common problem that occurs in a speaking class is that teachers frequently feel it difficult to involve students in the speaking activities. In fact, English teachers should work hard to attract the students to speak a lot in the class. It occurs because many EFL learners have such personality problems, for instance they are not confident, reluctant, and afraid of practicing and using their English. Brown (2001:269) notes one of the major obstacles learners have to overcome in learning to speak is the anxiety generated over the risks of blurting things out that are wrong, stupid, or incomprehensible. Rarastesa (2004:322) contends that the most difficult part of teaching in a speaking class is to make them speak up. Their views of speaking problems were supported by the claim that some EFL learners are reluctant to speak because of many factors such as inadequate vocabulary and control of grammar, lack of fluency, encouragement, and the students' shyness (Nation & Newton, 2009:112). These problems are still frequently experienced by teachers and become a challenge for them in teaching speaking in the class.

In the practice of the teaching of EFL speaking in Indonesia, both English teachers and students still have been encountering many problems. Based on some research, there have been at least four main issues that some researchers and teachers often investigate.

Widiati and Cahyono (2006:277) report that the teaching of EFL speaking for tertiary-level students deal with teaching problems, classroom activities, teaching materials, and assessment. These things are related to the improvement of the teaching quality of EFL speaking that would point out obvious picture of the teachers' position and what they are necessary to do.

Portfolios have been used for ages in English Language Teaching besides multiple choices test does not meet the expectation. It can be applied to all skill of English including speaking skill.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Speaking Skill Assessment

Communication, an inevitable part of human life, has taken a very significant role in our lives. People use a language to communicate with others for expressing their willingness, intentions, ideas, and so forth. The language therefore could be a prime vehicle for the delivery of meaning. According to Ferguson (2004:37), communication is the transmission of messages among people or groups. Commonly, people communicate in spoken and written forms in their daily lives. They use these forms of communication for different purposes since they have their own characteristics or features and functions. Therefore, people might use spoken and written forms for different circumstances depending on the need and purposes. Consequently, both communications either spoken or written form becomes a pivotal part of our lives.

In language teaching, the need for spoken communication in foreign language teaching has rocketed (Mauranen, 2006:143). The main purpose of speaking is to accomplish a task such as, conveying a message, obtaining information, or expressing an opinion and etc. In short, speaking for people has become an inevitable need for different situations and functions.

To speak another language, one should know how to articulate sounds in comprehensible manner, has adequate vocabulary and mastery in syntax (Nunan, 1999:226). In addition, Burns and Joyce (1999:2) argue that learning to speak occupies developing a number of complex skills and different types of knowledge about how and when we communicate. In this sense, the ability to speak another language is not that simple; it needs to know the nature and characteristic of spoken language, which requires very complex skills and knowledge of its language. Therefore, students need to gain awareness of practicing aspect of linguistics knowledge, developing production skills, and raising some socio-linguistic or pragmatic points (Hughes, 2002:6).

Definition of Portfolios

Portfolios can be defined simple as a collection of students' works. Since it is a collection, it refers to a submission of students' creativity and tasks which are demanded to be finished within a limited time. Moreover, it is used also by the lecturers to store and monitor students' progress, knowledge, skill, and attitude (Erdost & Cinar, 2015). Furthermore, (Burke et all) divided portfolios into three parts. They are introduction which is including covers, biography and learning objectives inside, the, the collection of works itself, and the last is rating scale of the portfolios that is exist also kind of assessment by lecturers, peers even their parents, if it is needed.

The Advantages of Using Portfolios In General

For this part, it discusses general advantages of using portfolios itself without referring to any skill at all. Since this study focuses on looking at deeper and it is empirically

derived from students' works in Basic Speaking lesson in higher education, hence it is needed to reveal its general advantages of using portfolios as one of assessment tools.

Portfolios led the improvement of assessment in the process of teaching and learning. Through this use, students can easily take part of their production of the material given by the lecturer, evaluate their own work and also do a reflection on it. Secondly, it is still dealing with the reflection itself. It refers to how students think critically, and give reasons analytically. They may integrate both of them into their learning.

Challenges in Applying Portfolios in Classroom

Besides knowing its advantages in general, the challenges of portfolios should be learnt too. It may challenge both teacher and students. As people all know that technology may ruin everything. It also can happen to students who are familiar with the use of technology. The challenges may come from the teacher who is not familiar with the use technology itself. It affects to the implementation of using portfolios itself.

The Purpose of Using Portfolios in Classroom

It is crucial to see carefully the purpose of using portfolios in classroom. As it is stated in Brown, the acronym may help to understand well of its purpose, that is CRADLE. C itself refers to collections. Since portfolios are the students' works of particular lesson. R itself refers to reflective. It is dealing with how the students' works are assessed, and again it depends on the lecturers' way how they assess their students, whether the it is an assessment which is coming from their peers of the lecturers. A itself refers to assessment it is including into the term reflection itself. While the letter D refers to documentation, it should be highlighted that documentation is very important to reveal students' achievement. Letter L refers to linking. Linking here means as a bridge or connection how the use of portfolios can be a good medium for students, parents, and other community to know what is an actually student can with their creativity. The last is E which refers to evaluation. Evaluation through the use of portfolio are done continually and time consuming.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study was qualitative way. The data collection of this study was document and interviews of the lecturers. The lectures are the persons who are responsible to English language teaching especially for speaking skill and language assessment, both using portfolio traditional and alternative assessment. For the interview, it was unstructured interview. Several questions were given to the students and lecturers. The students' products and lecturers' tasks for students were also investigated to see whether the portfolio itself contribute much to their speaking improvement or not. Regarding to the purpose of this study to know the usefulness of portfolio in Basic Speaking lesson, so the students, lecturers, and also their alteration in term of doing the process of speaking activity were all recorded carefully.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were several questions which were asked to the teacher dealing with the implementation and searching for its usefulness and also regarding to the implementation of portfolio in assessing students' speaking skill. However, the answers might be like these:

Since Bloom puts 'create' as the highest level of cognitive skill in learning, it is important to see that speaking should push students to create their own product of speaking (Chantanarungpak, 2015). It gives authentic products of students' production in term of speaking if it is compared to giving test in classroom. Once students' works are uploaded in You-tube or other online application, teachers can easily look at the materials they have made.

Those things are authentic products from the students. Such it is also stated by Barrett's in (Uçar & Yazıcı, 2016) that portfolios intentionally collect students' performance of all English skills and it is as a means to record all the process of students' performances both verbally and spoken (Popescu-mitroia, Lumini, & Greculescu, 2015). Teachers can also give scores towards it. Portfolio can be as special notes of students' assessment that deals with a better learning process. Once students are conducting their works, they have their own process. Portfolio gives so many chances to the students to work in their own steps to achieve the goals itself. It is a kind of long term process of students' production. Giving more time to the students is another important consideration for the teacher to receive a better result from students and directly this portfolios may change the way how students deal with their environment and their task they are doing (Üstünel & Deren, 2010).

Teachers should know and do something precisely dealing with the duration of making or doing some projects. It gives students opportunity to show their strengths off not their weaknesses in doing such an assignment. Since portfolio also provide a holistic view of students language learning as it is adapted from Genesee & Upshur, 1996, p 100 in (Sajedi, 2014) Here, teachers should pay attention fully to the production from students and it is important to give more pressure to the students' process rather than their products as it is stated by (Demirel & Duman, 2015) In term of Speaking projects, teachers should give some pressures what should students correct and fix to have better performances in Speaking. It make teacher easier in knowing students styles in learning. Students tend to show their real style in learning. It helps teachers to know deeper how actually their students are. On the other hand, their learning styles determine their progress and how should teacher treat them in speaking class and finally it can create learning environment which make them aware of their abilities and potentials (Demirel & Duman, 2015).

It gives students chances to participate actively in assessment term. Using portfolios is just something which is quite wasting time. Students need to know what kinds of points of the assessment itself. So it easier for them to take their position and do the effort to have best scores for Speaking skill. It helps teacher to assess their students' improvement in learning easier. It helps teacher in making decision and fixing students learning process. It alternates teacher also to work with their parents. Sometimes, parents are eager to know their children works eventhough they are in university, teachers. Portfolio helps other people to be included in a particular learning process of our own.

Portfolio in speaking lesson forced students to express themselves in using target language. When the lecturer asked them to conduct such a video, they were feeling free to use any kind of creativities may support the result of their speaking. They felt to be in a circumstance where they have to be able to finish the task as soon as possible. Students can find their own area to express themselves and use English communicatively. Yet they had to speak up, they have their own capability to express themselves. Portfolio helped students to work alone and spent their own time. It is still relating to the students' learning style that several students like to work alone. Speaking portfolio is a good idea to promote classroom interaction and collaboration. It can promote self-assessment. Once they know the points they need to fill to get the scores. Students make themselves aware of their bad and good side of the languages in term of speaking skill. On the other hand, (Erdost & Cepik, 2015) proposes that besides its goodness, the drawbacks of using portfolios also should be taken into account, especially in terms of its cultural context, and again teacher should stand in a robust way to keep the cultural embedded on their activities.

CONCLUSION

This study intended to find out the usefulness of using portfolio as assessment tools for Basic Speaking lesson. The lecturer stated that using portfolio, the students have an area to

express themselves. Through this way, they can actively participate in Speaking class done in the classroom. Again, it should be highlighted that using portfolio is very useful as an alternative assessment for lectures in teaching in a classroom. However, it cannot be separated that the way how teachers manage its use is another important thing to consider. Once it is used it can be a tool to keep and assess students' performances better.

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