The Role of Self-Assessment in Students' Writing Portfolios: A Classroom Investigation

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Self-assessment, an integral part of self-regulated learning, is defined as a study skill through which students are able to develop the capacity to think about their learning critically. More specifically, self-assessment in writing refers to a metacognitive skill employed by students to evaluate (1) the content, organization, and purpose of their own written texts and (2) their writing process including the selection of strategies, monitoring of strategy use, and assessing the effectiveness of those strategies throughout. When writing, self-assessment may occur within the pre-writing, while-writing, or post-writing stages and can be either formal or informal. This paper discusses a project in which students were required to self-evaluate one of the final drafts to be put into a portfolio during the last two weeks of a 15-week writing program.

Review of the Literature

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment research has been going since the 1950s and originated within the field of social and clinical psychology (Hilgers, Hussey, & Stitt-Bergh, 2000). The two key concepts embedded in the notion of self-assessment are self-observation and self-monitoring. Self-monitoring, the parent of self-assessment, provides individuals with internal feedback which allows them to compare the current level of behavior with some well-recognized social standard (Kanfer, 1975). This feedback comes partially from observation and evaluation, which have been shown to be key processes in affecting change with deep-seated human behaviors (Bellack, Rozensky & Schwartz, 1974; Cavior & Marabott, 1976).

In writing research, studies on self-assessment, which is sometimes referred to as revision within the writing process, began to receive attention in the late 1970s when the Flower and Hayes (1981a) model of the composing process permeated composition studies. This was also the exact period when cognitivism was in vogue. The view of self-monitoring, which belongs to the domain of behaviorism, was out of fashion. Hence, studies of self-monitoring were gradually replaced by studies focusing on writing coping strategies and their effects (Flower and Hayes, 1981b; Hayes, Flower, Schriver, Stratman, & Carey, 1987). According to the Flower and Hayes's (1981a) model, revision is one

component of the cognitive writing process, and modifying writing strategies or texts is due to the constant evaluation and reevaluation of the text. Nevertheless, in 1996, Hayes proposed that a new framework for understanding cognition and affect in writing was needed. In Hayes's new model, revision was reorganized and subsumed under a new category, reflection, which is a function that requires writers to problem-solve and make decisions (Hayes, 1996).

In the 1990s, social constructivist theory made it clear that all behaviors are influenced in one way or another by the social contexts in which they are situated (Bruffee, 1984; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). However, from a behaviorist or cognitivist perspective, self-assessment is viewed as a set of isolated acts. This view does not take into account how individuals acquire self-assessment strategies and under what circumstances they make use of socially contextualized criteria to self-evaluate their own work (Hilgers, Hussey, & Stitt-Bergh, 2000). Consequently, studies of self-assessment that adopted a behaviorist or cognitivist perspective have been unable to identify ways that an individual's self-assessment practices could be made more effective, thus helping an individual become a better writer who can actively engage in the composing process. Therefore, more research is needed on how novice writers in an EFL context adopt self-assessment and its impact on their writing development.

Writing Portfolios

Since the 1990s, writing portfolios have been widely adopted as either a large-scale writing assessment or classroom-based assessment in various teaching contexts in the United States. Part of the appeal for using writing portfolios is the component of reflection, which helps students think about what they have achieved throughout the process of writing individual pieces as well as the overall portfolio construction (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Weigle, 2002; Yancey, 1998; Yancey & Weiser, 1997). Within Hamp-Lyons and Condon's (2000) theoretical framework of portfolio assessment, the terms reflection and self-assessment are used interchangeably although Broadfoot (2007) argued that they do not mean the same thing. These two terms also suggest that students will revisit their early and interim drafts to reflect upon their effort and progress throughout the course of writing. For example, when teachers adopt a showcase portfolio approach, students are usually asked to review all papers and drafts and then select the best ones either for display (e.g. to a future employer) or for summative grading. Self-assessment, as defined by Hamp-Lyons and Condon, can help students better understand what they are expected to compose as well as explore their own strengths and weaknesses in writing in order to make further improvement.

Portfolio assessment, therefore, has the potential to create positive washback on students' writing (Biggs & Tang, 2003; Hughes, 2003). Traditionally, students have been asked to write in a "one-draft, one-reader" context (Arndt, 1993). Having received a grade

and minimal feedback from the teacher, students may make corrections on their drafts. After that, the learning process is supposedly finished and students are asked to write on another topic. The product approach to writing promotes students' reliance on a teacher's summative judgments rather than helping students to self-assess their own drafts before submission. The adoption of a portfolio approach in EFL writing classrooms may empower students' active participation in self-evaluating their own work within the writing process (Weigle, 2007; White, 1994; Yancey, 1998).

Central to portfolio pedagogy is the issue of growth. Students grow and develop as writers as they reflect on and self-assess their work as they compile a portfolio. It is essential to include self-assessment in the portfolio process as students may gain a deeper understanding not only of the drafts they have written but also the strategies that they employed to write them (Murphy, 1994). More than that, self-assessment embedded within portfolio construction helps students to see themselves as writers. Self-assessment, building one's own self-consciousness in his or her writing, can make students better writers who are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their work and formulate strategies to make further improvement (D'Aoust, 1992). Likewise, Cumming (1995) pointed out that self-assessment could encourage students to take greater charge of their writing skills. In this regard, students are more likely to get a wider perspective about different aspects of writing such as content, organization, mechanics, and rhetoric when they self-evaluate their portfolio entries. Hamp-Lyons (as cited in Hirvela & Pierson, 2000) mentioned EFL students tend to underestimate their own writing. However, after participating in the portfolio program, students may realize that not only does self-assessment help them better diagnose their writing, but it also makes them respond to their work in a much more positive light.

In connection with student learning, a one-shot approach to writing assessment may not be able to inform students how much they have achieved and what they should improve in the next stages of their development as a writer (Boud, 1995, 2000). Neither can it help students to adopt a deep approach to learning such as focusing on planning 'what' and 'how' to write in relation to their prior knowledge. In addition, Johnson (1983) contended that one-shot writing assessment in schools or colleges interrupted the cycle that is crucial to enhancing effective learning. His argument is grounded on the theories of self-directed learning that students need opportunity to reflect upon their writing experiences in order to make further revisions. Nevertheless, self-assessment has usually been taken away from this teaching and learning cycle. Worse still, most EFL writing teachers have denied students the opportunity to self-assess their own work by doing it for them. This scenario is particularly true in some exam-oriented writing classrooms in which teachers regard self-assessment as a distraction from the exam syllabus (Black & Wiliam, 1998; McDonald & Boud, 2003; Sengupta & Falvey, 1998).

From the literature reviewed above, a practice as significant and essential as self-assessment may have its usefulness in the revising process, be it strengthening students' writing standards or raising their linguistic awareness. Despite its importance, self-assessment has received very little attention in scholarship on ESL/EFL writing (Hilgers, Hussey, & Stitt-Bergh, 2000). In her work, Yancey (1998) presented a three-tier reflection framework which includes (1) reflection in action; (2) constructive reflection; and (3) reflection in presentation. While her framework is well-defined in terms of when and how self-assessment takes place, these definitions of the framework are theoretical rather than empirically backed by authentic data collected from students' self-assessment activities. Furthermore, it seems that how students perceive self-assessment as a learning activity and its impact on their learning has been scantily explored (Broadfoot, 2007; McDonald & Boud, 2003). Though the literature has highlighted the learning potentials of self-assessment, studies concerning students' perceptions towards the use of self-assessment in portfolio-based writing classrooms seem to be scant. Thus, this study aimed to address the following questions:

1. When given free choice for selecting a paper on which to do a self-assessment analysis to include in a portfolio, what motivates students' selections?

2. What are students' perceptions of the impact of self-assessment on the improvement of their writing?

3. According to students and teachers, what are the benefits of self-assessment on students' writing development in the EFL writing classroom?

Method

Context

The context where I taught EFL writing is a community college which provides 2-year sub-degree programs for students who did not complete high school. The students, aged 18 to 20, are non-English majors who are required to take a core foundation writing course as one of the graduation requirements after two-years of study. In general, students' writing proficiency is relatively weak. On the writing portion of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), two-thirds of the students scored 5.0 to 5.5 and the other third scored below 5.0 out of a total possible score of 9.

In the writing course, a process-oriented approach to writing instruction was not supported and students were expected to write their essays in the traditional one-draft, one-reader context where instructors simply judge students' final products (Arndt, 1993). Students did not receive any timely or quality feedback throughout the semester as students' essays were simply scored against the holistic rubrics and returned. The primary form of assessment was a one-shot, high-stakes writing assessment in which students had to sit for a timed, in-class writing test of 500 words at the end of the semester.

As one of the instructors of the writing course and the course coordinator, I proposed a portfolio-based assessment to replace the original timed impromptu test. The portfolio contained three different papers (a summary, a critique, and a comparison and contrast essay) with two drafts each (initial and final drafts), a self-assessment form, and a reflective journal. At the beginning of the semester, students were introduced to the purpose of constructing the writing portfolio and how portfolio entries documented and demonstrated writing abilities.

On average, students were given two weeks to write each genre and another one week to revise the first draft after I had marked their work. The written comments given by me were mainly form-focused and indirect marking was adopted so that students needed to fix their errors by themselves. After marking each initial draft, I arranged a 10-minute conference with each student to discuss his or her draft. During each conference, my comments focused mainly on content and organization.

Self-assessment was implemented towards the end of the semester when students reviewed all previous papers and drafts and selected one for self-assessment. Students had to fill in a self-assessment form to record which portfolio entry they chose for self-assessment and why they selected it (see Appendix A). Although self-assessment was new to students, adequate training was given through checklists and guided questions to self-evaluate their initial drafts informally. Apart from the self-assessment form that was a part of the portfolio, the reflective journal was another strategy to help students evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their writing (see Appendix B).

Approach

The present study employed an action research approach; therefore, I played the role of teacher-as-researcher in my teaching context. I chose action research because it helps teachers to investigate classroom situations with a view toward improving practice (Creswell, 2005). Likewise, Elliott (1991) and Nunan (1992) contend that a frontline practitioner who understands classroom contexts perfectly is the best person to conduct action research and to generate professional knowledge to improve his or her instruction.

Data Collection

Text Data

There were two forms of data collected in this study. The first was textual data consisting of students' self-assessment forms and reflective journals, which were part of the required portfolio entries. Students were asked to fill in a self-assessment form and complete a writing journal during the last two weeks of the semester. In other words, self-assessment was done retrospectively at the end of the semester. The self-assessment process involved students referring back to their drafts, figuring out which entry was the

best, and justifying why they believed it was well-written. Self-assessment forms were collected from thirty students. Twenty reflective journal entries were also collected from students. The reflective journal entries that were selected for use in this study mentioned the benefits of self-assessment and discussed them at length.

Interview Data

The second form of data was interviews of both students and instructors. Six students enrolled in the writing course were selected for interviews based upon their interest in this study and their active participation in the writing course. There were three male and three female students whose academic abilities varied. Two of them were more able students who could speak and write fluent English. The English proficiency of the other four students, assessed through the placement test conducted by the instructor, ranged from intermediate to low-intermediate. The semi-structured interviews lasted about 30 minutes and were conducted in Cantonese, the students' mother tongue. The interview transcript was then transcribed for analysis and further interpretation and translated into English (see Appendix C for the student interview guide).

Each of the four instructors, including the author, was assigned to teach one tutorial of around 30 students, carry out self-assessment with their class, and record how students perceived the impact of self-assessment on their learning. The author conducted a 20-minute interview with the three other instructors individually after the portfolio program was completed (see Appendix D for the instructor interview guide). Though the textual and student interview data were mainly collected in the author's tutorial group, the other three instructors' opinions towards self-assessment were a helpful comparison point with the opinions expressed by the students. The instructors' interviews were conducted in English and the interview data were transcribed for coding and interpretation.

Results and Discussion

Reasons for Self-Assessment Selection

The majority of students in the writing class (70%) selected the critique for the self-assessment portion of their portfolios (see Table 1). The critique was the most difficult writing task of the three portfolio entries according to instructor consensus and the course evaluation, which showed that almost 90% of the students claimed that they had not learnt how to write a critique in secondary school. The percentages shown in Table 1 suggest that the majority of students liked to write a more challenging written genre and, therefore, selected it for self-assessment.

Table 1

Number of Students Selecting Various Entries for Self-assessment

	Portfolio entry	No. of students selecting the entry for self-assessment	Level of difficulty
1.	Summary	5	Undemanding
2.	Critique	21	Challenging
3.	Comparison and contrast essay	4	Resonable
		N = 30	

The fact that writing a critique was a novelty to most students in the tutorial group suggests that students are more likely to be motivated when they explore a new written genre. When asking students why they chose the critique for self-assessment instead of the other written genres, one student remarked that since critique was a genre that he had not learnt before, he believed that self-assessment would "motivate [him] to improve the draft since [he] will fix the errors more carefully." Another student selected the critique because it was "a demanding genre" and she felt "motivated to learn how to write it" and thus wanted to "self-evaluate it for further improvement."

When coding the responses on the self-assessment form regarding why students selected the critique for self-assessment, seven categories emerged (see Table 2). The top three reasons for choosing the critique for self-assessment were (1) motivation, (2) preference, and (3) challenge. Regarding the first reason, motivation, one student remarked, "selecting critique for self-assessment motivated me to learn better how to write this genre." Similarly, one of the instructors commented that "students may be more motivated to select the critique for self-assessment as it is a new genre to which they have never been exposed. There is so much for them to learn."

The second reason, preference, refers to students' interests and liking towards writing the critique. One instructor pointed out that if students preferred writing the critique, it was likely for them to choose it for self-assessment because self-assessing the genre could inform students whether they had mastered its linguistic and schematic structures.

The last reason, challenge, indicates that students were willing to face challenges and take risks by selecting the most difficult genre for self-assessment. One student wanted to self-evaluate the portfolio entry that was "the most demanding piece of writing" because it could help her "better develop [her] critical thinking skills."

Table 2

Reasons Why Students Selected the Critique for Self-assessment

	Categories	Frequency	Description of reasons for selecting the critique
1.	Motivation	9	Students' enthusiasm to attempt a written genre that they have never done before
2.	Preference	9	Students' interests and liking to write the entry
3.	Challenge	7	Students' willingness to write the most difficult genre
4.	Interpretation	6	Opportunities for students to express their opinions and exercise their critical thinking
5.	Awareness	2	Students' abilities to compare the existing and the past performances
6.	Appreciation	2	Students' admiration of the literary text they read and respect for other cultures

Perceived Impact of Self-Assessment

As shown in Table 3, when students were asked about which aspects of their writing they could further improve, three major areas emerged. The first aspect was to use a wide range of vocabulary to express ideas. The second and the third aspects were to avoid careless grammatical errors and inappropriate sentence structures respectively. It is interesting to note that students mainly focused on surface-level errors such as mechanics and vocabulary when asked to consider how they could improve their writing. Only a handful of students mentioned fixing global errors, such as content and organization, as an area of potential further improvement (see Table 3).

Even though students were coached how to respond to both local and global errors when reviewing their own drafts, their perceptions of improvement in writing were primarily concerned with fixing surface-level errors rather than global errors. There may be two reasons to account for this phenomenon.

Table 3

Students' Perception of Areas Needing Improvement in Their Future Writing

	Categories	Frequency	Description
1.	Lack of vocabulary	11	Students' lack sufficient vocabulary items to express ideas in their writing
2.	Grammatical mistakes	10	Students' commit careless grammatical mistakes in their written work.
3.	Problematic sentence structures	8	The sentence structures used are either too simplistic or ungrammatical.
4.	Poor organization	4	Ideas are not logically and coherently connected in a piece of work.
5.	Inadequate content	3	Ideas are not rich and diversified in a piece of work.
6.	Wrong tenses and punctuation	3	Tenses and punctuations are not accurately used in the written text.
7.	Inadequate knowledge of written genres	2	Students should develop a better understanding of how to write various genres.
8.	Ineffective para-phrasing	1	Students should use more of their own words to express ideas in writing summaries.

First, students have difficulty differentiating between the processes of revising, which concerns both content and organization, and editing, in which only grammatical errors are given attention. During an interview, one student admitted that she interpreted self-assessment as an exercise in which grammatical errors should be identified and then modified. She commented: "to me, self-evaluating my own final draft means to check whether there are any spelling mistakes or other grammatical errors." This conception

was further reinforced by students' secondary teachers who only marked grammatical errors in their essays. One of the instructors interviewed for this study said that "in secondary classrooms, students were mainly trained how to correct grammatical errors. Producing an error-free essay was high on agenda in the writing classroom."

The second reason students were focused on correcting local rather than global errors was that students were perhaps incapable of revising higher-level errors such as organization and coherence in ways that matched the various written genres. One student remarked that "it was usually the writing teachers who wrote all these corrections for us" and that he was "not used to fixing these errors by [himself]." Another student commented, "I could fix some of the grammatical errors in my final drafts after doing self-assessment, but it was difficult to correct errors about content and ideas." In her journal, a third student mentioned that "it takes some time to learn how to fix errors on both content and form when doing self-assessment."

The instructors shared a similar perspective to the students. One instructor commented that "students may find it difficult to fix content errors when they have already finalized their drafts at the end of the writing process." Another instructor said that "students take it for granted that readers may understand their writing even though its ideas are logically vague and disoriented." It is evident that the students needed more training and guidance in order to self-assess global errors in their writing.

The students provided some insight into the role teachers can play in guiding students to become better at self-assessing global errors. Students suggested that the teacher can be a resource person that carefully guides the students' self-assessments or a participant that offers support when students feel frustrated and helpless when doing self-assessment activities. One student commented that follow-up work with the instructor is important. "I think follow up work can be given to us after we self-assess our own drafts. With these post-self-assessment tasks, we can make improvement in our writing."

It can be said that students' perceptions towards improvement in their writing are positive, but students need more support both academically and affectively to move beyond self-assessment of surface-level errors. Instead, they should be encouraged to focus more on global errors of their writing in order to make self-assessment a meaningful and productive activity in the writing process.

Benefits of Self-Assessment

To address research question number three, students' responses from their reflective journal entries were analyzed and coded. Though there were thirty students in the writing class, only twenty reflective journal entries were collected at the end of the semester. All the entries were read twice for coding and four categories emerged in relation to the benefits of self-assessment. As revealed in Table 4, the four categories include (1) building up linguistic awareness, (2) self-assessment as a monitoring tool, (3) improving future writing, and (4) having more practice in writing.

Table 4

Benefits of Self-assessment

	Categories	Frequency	Description
1.	Building up linguistic awareness	12	Students develop awareness of editing and revising their own work more independently.
2.	Self-assessment as a monitoring tool	11	Through writing reflective journals, students can monitor whether the selected writing strategies are effective in the learning process.
3.	Improving future writing	4	Self-assessment can help students to improve their works in the next step of the writing process.
4.	Having more practice in writing	2	Writing reflective journals can provide students with more opportunities to write English other than regular written assign-ments.

These data suggest that students saw two major benefits from doing self-assessment in the EFL writing classroom. The first benefit was raising students' linguistic awareness when revising their work. The second was to adopt self-assessment as a tool for monitoring the strategies used during the writing process. Most students felt that doing self-assessment towards the end of the semester could help further improve the quality of their drafts and help them become more careful writers. In one journal entry, a student remarked that "to a certain extent, I think self-assessment can make me much more conscious of the language I used in my final draft as I was given opportunities to revise my work." Another student mentioned in his journal entry that "self-assessment is a useful practice which can help improve the accuracy of my writing through the process of editing but it may not help too much with the ideas."

As shown in Table 4, many students also believed that self-assessment could help them monitor their growth and progress in writing. Through engaging in self-assessment, students were able to evaluate how much progress they had made by referring back to the evidence of their learning, specifically multiple drafts written for the construction of their portfolios. Some students reported that self-assessment made them take on a new role and become more responsible for their own writing. This helped them become more conscious

of the mechanics within their writing and ultimately more accountable for their work. As one student pointed out, "self-assessment makes me accountable for what I put in my entries, so I will check my work carefully and make sure it is of good quality." In a similar vein, this same student remarked that self-assessment made her "much more engaged in the writing process than before." Previously, she was "very passive and seldom checked [her] drafts after they were completed."

Although self-assessment was implemented toward the end of the writing process in this study, students recognized the importance of extending self-assessment throughout the writing process. Some students recognized that stronger students in the class revised their work throughout the semester even though self-assessment was not introduced until the end of semester. One student noticed that her "more able course mates always reviewed and rewrote their work independently." These students further added that less proficient students would benefit most if they were instructed to adopt self-assessment in order to monitor their own writing. One student asserted, "I think less proficient writers would benefit most from self-assessment. It would help them learn to re-examine their writing in a more thorough manner." And one of the instructors agreed with this comment saying that "all students can benefit from self-assessment, but the less proficient students may benefit more than the more proficient."

From the above discussion, it seems that self-assessment does benefit students' writing in one way or another. At the least, it can boost students' motivation and interest in writing and help less-proficient students enhance their linguistic awareness and monitor whether the writing strategies they have adopted are effective.

Pedagogical Suggestions

In this small-scale study, it is evident that self-assessment has a role to play in enhancing students' motivation and writing abilities. Its implementation in the portfolio-based writing classroom can help the less-proficient students to become writers who monitor their own work through self-generated feedback. Based upon the findings, the following are some recommendations for the use of self-assessment in the EFL classroom.

Sustaining Students' Motivation in Self-Assessment

In this study, self-assessment was only introduced and implemented towards the end of the semester. Students' motivation and enthusiasm to self-evaluate their own work was easily maintained because it was a one-time assessment practice. Furthermore, self-assessment was a novelty to most students and instructors resulting in interest and curiosity about self-assessment. However, sustaining students' interests and motivation in self-assessment throughout a semester or even a school year could be more challenging.

One idea to sustain students' motivation for self-assessment is to vary its mode of delivery and self-evaluation tasks. Semi-structured assessment forms coupled with

either open-ended or close-ended questions are one option. Checklists which characterize schematic structures of various written genres could also be employed (see Appendix E). Using forms, checklists, self-reports, journals, podcasts, and blogs are all possible means for varying the delivery and tasks in order to motivate students to engage in self-assessment.

Making Self-Assessment a Part of Our Teaching Agendas

The positive responses shown in the study indicate that both students and instructors were in favor of self-assessment and welcomed its adoption into the writing classroom. Despite the advantages that emerged in the data, some teachers may think that implementing self-assessment in exam-oriented countries, such as Hong Kong, is a luxury because self-assessment is not an exam-focused practice. Furthermore, it may take a lot of class time to carry out. Given that self-assessment can motivate students to examine their writing more carefully resulting in improved writing abilities, teachers should consider making self-assessment a part of their teaching agenda in order to facilitate better learning of writing. Initially teachers may need extra time to train students in the process of self-examining their own work. However, once students develop the habit and become automatic in the practice, self-assessment, when incorporated into the process of teaching, actually takes up very little time, and can yield substantial gains in students' learning.

Coaching Students to Attend to Global Errors

As illustrated in the data, students' perceived improvement in their writing was mainly focused on surface errors rather than global errors. In order to help students attend to global errors, such as content, coherence, and organization, teachers should first consider adopting a process approach that features multiple draft writing. A process approach gives teachers more opportunities to give both verbal and written feedback to students, and it gives students more opportunities to focus on revising and improving their writing. After providing feedback on students' writing, teachers can coach students on how to act upon the feedback (McGarrell & Verbeem, 2007). Writing conferences with individual students as well as whole class discussions are two means through which teachers can help students effectively respond to feedback. If teacher feedback is selective and focuses on the development of ideas and coherence in the writing and students are trained to respond to this feedback, students will learn to shift their attention to the global errors highlighted in their writing. In order to make global error revisions a regular practice, teachers can have students keep error logs or include revised drafts as portfolio entries.

Emphasizing Self-Assessment When Learning to Write

Many students in this study felt that self-assessment could help them better monitor whether the writing strategies they employed were appropriate for the task. Writing teachers, therefore, should consider adopting in their classrooms the practice of self-

assessment so that students can learn to monitor their own work more effectively. Internal feedback, generated by students themselves while doing self-assessment, helps them become familiar with the assessment criteria of the specified written genre as well as scrutinize what writing strategies were used to tackle the genre. Self-assessment, similar to other higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing or synthesizing, is of great significance to students' writing development especially when students want to advance their writing beyond the basic level.

Conclusion

In this study, self-assessment, adopted as part of the semester-end portfolio assembly process, played a role in boosting students' motivation in their writing. Many students chose the most demanding genre written during the semester as the focus of their self-assessment. These students felt motivated to improve their work with the most difficult genre because self-assessment helped them identify their mistakes and make plans for improvement.

The impact of self-assessment on students' perceived improvement in their writing was positive. However, students tended to think that self-assessment could only help them to tackle surface-level errors such as the mechanics of writing and the appropriate use of vocabulary and only a very few of them attended to global errors with the content and organization of their writing.

Most students believed that self-assessment benefitted their writing by enhancing their linguistic awareness and helping them better monitor the writing strategies they selected for composing the portfolio entries.

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About the Author

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Appendix A
Self-Assessment Form

Name: _____   Group: _____

Part 1:

Choose ONE entry from your writing portfolio and evaluate your performance based upon the following guidelines.

   1. *Portfolio entry to be selected for self-assessment:*

       Summary on *'A Child Called It'*

       Critique on *'Hills Like White Elephants'*

       Comparison and contrast essay on *'Matilda'* and *'The BFG'* *

       (* Tick as appropriate)

2. The reasons why you chose this entry for self-assessment:

Part 2:

Answer the following questions.

   3. Write TWO words (or adjectives or phrases) to describe your level of satisfaction with the entry you selected.

   4. Rank with a number from 1 – 6 (1 being the best, 6 the least) the following aspects you think you have done the best in your entry.

       Vocabulary and sentence structures _____
       Grammatical accuracy   _____
       Coherence and organization   _____
       Completion of tasks   _____
       Appropriate style and tone   _____
       Communication with readers   _____

   5. Which of the following best describes you?

       ☐ an apprentice writer   ☐ a novice writer

       ☐ an experienced writer   ☐ a skillful writer

The reasons:

   6. Before you wrote this piece of writing, what did you expect to learn?

   7. After you completed this piece of work, what do you think you have actually accomplished?

   8. Which aspects of your work do you think you are satisfied with?

9. Which aspects of your work do you think you can make further improvement on?

10. In your opinion, what have you learned as a result of this chosen entry?

11. What would you plan to do when you are asked to write a similar writing task next time?

12. I would give this piece of writing a grade* of _____ because…

   [Scoring Keys: A+, A, A- (Excellent); B+, B, B- (Good); C+, C, C- (Adequate); D (Marginal); F (Fail)]

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Appendix B
Guidelines of the Reflective Journal

Guided questions for writing the reflective journal:

1. What have you learned in the writing course?

2. Which portfolio entry do you like? Why?

3. In what way do you think self-assessment can help you improve your writing in the writing course?

4. Do you think the end-of-term self-assessment activity can help you review your overall writing performance?

5. What are the benefits of doing self-assessment in the course?

Appendix C
The Student Interview Guide

1. Can you briefly talk about what self-assessment is?

2. Which portfolio entry do you think is the most challenging to compose?

3. Which portfolio entry did you select for self-assessment and why?

4. To what extent do you think self-assessment can help improve your writing abilities?

5. What did you benefit from self-assessment?

Appendix D
The Instructor Interview Guide

1. Which portfolio entry do you think students are likely to choose for doing self-assessment? Why?

2. To what extent, do students believe that self-assessment can help them improve their writing abilities?

3. What are students' perceived benefits of self-assessment on their writing development?

Appendix E
Self-assessment Checklist

Check the boxes on your right if you have written the following in the comparison and contrast essay.

1. I have written an introductory paragraph.   ☐

2. I have included a clear and coherent thesis statement in the essay.   ☐

3. I have written four to five paragraphs to support the thesis statement.   ☐

4. I have written a topic sentence in each paragraph.   ☐

5. Each paragraph makes a different point about the topic.   ☐

6. I have identified two subjects which can be compared.   ☐

7. I have identified a few categories that help elaborate the similarities
and differences of the two subjects.   ☐

8. I have found out the similarities and differences between the two
subjects.   ☐

9. I have stated whether I will focus on similarities, differences or
the mixture of both in the essay.   ☐

10 I have used the point-by-point model to organize my essay.   ☐

Conference Announcements

GLoCALL 2010 Conference. December 1-3, 2010. Globalization and Localization in Computer-Assisted Language Learning. Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. The conference aims to share knowledge, research and experience on how to use computer technology to make language learning more effective and pleasant; to explore how the technology can be adapted to better meet the local needs of students and teachers, while at the same time providing global perspectives on computer-assisted language learning (CALL); and to bring the technology within the reach of local teachers who wish to develop their professionalism in CALL. GLoCALL is jointly sponsored by APACALL and PacCALL. PacCALL is working in partnership with the ACM Chapter on E-learning and Technical Communication at the University of Aizu, Japan. E-mail: programs@glocall.org. Web site http:// glocall.org

Applied Linguistics Association of Korea (ALAK) International Conference. December 4, 2010. Korea University in Seoul, Korea. The theme of the conference is "Interdisciplinarity in Applied Linguistics." E-mail: alaksecretary@gmail.com. Web site http:// alak. or.kr

Hawaii TESOL Annual Conference. February 19, 2011. Brigham Young University – Hawaii. The deadline for proposal submissions is December 31, 2010. E-mail jamesm@byuh.edu. Web site http:// www.hawaiitesol.org

TESOL Arabia. March 10-12, 2011. 17th Annual International Conference & Exhibition JW Marriott Hotel, Dubai, UAE. The theme of the conference is "Rethinking English language teaching: attitudes, approaches and perspectives". E-mail: tesolarabia@icedxb.com. Web site at http:// tesolarabia.org

Canada International Conference on Education. April 4-7, 2011. Toronto, Canada. The theme is "Education, Pedagogy, Research." The CICE is an international refereed conference dedicated to the advancement of the theory and practices in education. The CICE promotes collaborative excellence between academicians and professionals from Education. The aim of CICE is to provide an opportunity for academicians and professionals from various educational fields with cross-disciplinary interests to bridge the knowledge gap, promote research esteem and the evolution of pedagogy. The CICE-2011 invites research papers that encompass conceptual analysis, design implementation and performance evaluation. E-mail info@ciceducation. Web site at http:// ciceducation.org