The Effect of Portfolio-based Assessment and Language Processing on Acquiring Second Language

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ABSTRACT

The merits of portfolios are producing input; improving fluency by assisting the improvement of automaticity through practice; helping learners notice gaps in their knowledge as they are forced to unmistakably encode concepts in L2 shapes; permitting learners to test speculations they have defined as a portion of their creating linguistics system, with opportunity for monitoring and revision; providing a chance for others to comment on issues and give corrective feedback. While the importance of alternative assessments especially portfolio assessments has been recognized, there is only a little research that has studied how information from alternative assessments especially portfolios might be best utilized in developing second language acquisition processes of a single individual student's comprehension of simple present tense as one of the grammar aspects. To understand these ideas more completely, a greater initial must be set on a study. Using mix method design, this study examined the language processing of two students studying at MTsN 4 Surabaya. According to the findings, there was a difference in the degree to which the high ability student accurately noticed the answers to the questions (the use of s/es in simple present tense), rather than the low ability student. Both low ability and high ability learners could recognize the learning gaps before and after the learning process, and they notice their development system towards the target language. However, the high-ability student performed better.

Introduction

English is an international language that should be learned by Indonesian students. Thus, there are many aspects of English that students must acquire. They, among others, are Lexicon (vocabulary) such as word meaning, pronunciation (and spelling for written languages), grammatical category (part of speech), and possible occurrence in combination with other words and in idioms; Phonology (sound system) such as speech sounds that make a difference in meaning (phonemes), possible sequences of consonants and vowels (syllable structure), intonation patterns (stress, pitch, and duration), rhythmic patterns (pauses and stops); Morphology (word structure)

such as parts of words that have meaning (morphemes), inflections that carry grammatical information (like number or tense), prefixes and suffixes that may be added to change the meaning of words or their grammatical category; Syntax (grammar) such as word order, agreement between sentence elements and focus or structure information within sentences; Nonverbal structures (with conventional, language-specific meaning) such as facial expressions, spatial orientation and position, gestures and other body movement; Discourse such as ways to connect sentences, and to organize information across sentence boundaries, structures for telling stories, engaging in conversations (Saville-Troike, 2012).

As written above students must acquire grammar, therefore, the use of alternative assessment is really important as a modern perspective assessment in developing second language acquisition through developing English grammar using four skills namely speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills (Petre, 2017). According to Brown and Hudson (1998), as cited in Monib et al. (2020), alternative assessment has achieved a bigger degree of significance and acknowledgment in the EFL/ESL field of instruction. It is because of the reality that the practices of language-testing associated with language learning are unavoidably distinctive from testing practices predominant in other areas. Alternative assessments can be in the forms of diaries, logs, portfolios, self-assessments, and peer-assessment helps to uncover what students can do with language. Most of them are considered performance-based assessments (Phongsirikul, 2018).

Portfolios have been related to the expressions, where planners, picture takers and other craftsmen collect their pieces of work in arrange to show them to future bosses or imminent buyers. Since the '90s, the use of portfolios has been extended in different instructive settings such as educator instruction and evaluating the progress of learners. Since the appearance of the portfolio on the alternative assessment has been acknowledged, different definitions have been proposed. Then, portfolio assessment, according to Genesee & Upshur, (1996: 99) as cited in Daskalogiannaki (2012), defined the portfolio as 'a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress, and achievements in certain areas.

According to Saville-Troike (2012), portfolios have many merits for EFL learners to acquire a second language. They are, among others, producing input; improving fluency by assisting the improvement of automaticity through practice; helping learners notice gaps in their knowledge as they are forced to unmistakably encode concepts in L2 shapes, which may lead them to deliver more consideration to important information; permitting learners to test speculations they have defined as a portion of their creating linguistics system, with opportunity for monitoring and revision; providing a chance for others to comment on issues and give corrective feedback. Besides, writing portfolios are also good for students to acquire a second language acquisition because writing portfolios enable students to improve students self-image as they take part in the choices

approximately content, enable students to give responsibility for self-assessment, enable students to connect with other students, teachers, and parents about learning, enable students to utilize metalanguage to the conversation around language, enable students to show their creativity and originality, and enable students to think critically about their assignment (Daskalogiannaki, 2012).

While the importance of alternative assessments especially portfolio assessments has been recognized (Petre, 2017), there is only a little research has studied how information from alternative assessments especially portfolios might be best utilized in developing second language acquisition processes of a single individual student's comprehension of simple present tense as one of the grammar aspects. Due to this limitation, the present investigation investigated the effect of an alternative assessment especially a portfolio task on the language processing of two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) young learners (i.e., one high-ability learner and one low-ability learner) in simple present tense scores (grade seven EFL class) at an MTsN 4 school in Surabaya, Indonesia. More detailed, the study investigated the extent to which the use of s/es after verbs in the simple present tense (i.e., short answers) had been processed by two learners of changing language proficiencies during doing alternative assessment tasks.

As detailed in the previous study conducted by Phongsirikul (2018), it was found that students communicated ideas demonstrating the possibility of utilizing alternative assessment tools as assessment tools and triggers for learning motivation in other English skill courses. Not only that, but portfolios as one of the alternative assessments are an imaginative way of assessment for youthful learners' composition. It offers openings to assess learners' language development as an entirety and to direct classroom instruction agreeing to the learners' needs (Daskalogiannaki, 2012). Another previous study conducted by Monib et al. (2020) found that all of the methods of alternative assessments checked on in the selected studies helped improve students' development in foreign language learning. The reported findings also showed a critical change in the fundamental language learning skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) of the students. Most of the articles were centered on the portfolio, self/peer assessments, and taking parts much to learners' performance and achievements.

Another previous study conducted by Birgin & Baki (2007) found that portfolio assessment enables students to reflect on their progress during the learning process as well as enables students to learn during the assessment process. Not only that, according to the study conducted by Efendi (2017) the use of portfolio assessment enable students to reflect on their mistakes of grammar in writing recount text. Students develop their writing skills through the process of doing portfolio assessments. Another related study conducted by Yulastri et al., (2018) also stated that the use of portfolio-based assessment enables teachers as well as students to analyze and evaluate their progress in learning English.

Another study conducted by Ok (2014) found that the portfolio-based assessment process turns into an enjoyable process for the students to learn English. The result of the study also showed that through the portfolio-based assessment process, students can make longer sentences, make more complex sentences, focus more on specific grammar rules, do not make the same mistake anymore in writing, correct the mistakes in writing more easily, consolidate all grammar rules, and write more fluently.

The previous study related to the use of portfolio-based assessment was also conducted by Ma'arif et al. (2021). The study stated that the use of portfolio-based assessment enables students to analyze their weaknesses and strengths related to English skills. Thus, it leads to the improvement of students' learning autonomy. Another former research related to the use of portfolio-based assessment is a study conducted by Demirel & Duman (2015). The study showed the implementation of portfolio practice to the students can boost students' listening, writing, and reading skills. Not only that, through implementing the portfolio-based assessment practice in the class, the students develop their vocabulary as well as the production of English sentences in the class. Therefore, all previous studies have a positive view of the use of portfolio-based assessment in developing students' English skills.

Regarding the previous studies above, however, only a few studies have explored the relationship between the use of portfolio-based assessment and language processing to acquire a second language. To understand these ideas more completely, a greater initial must be set on a study. In addition, there must be a more prominent center on how teachers can implement alternative assessments, especially portfolio assessments, and how the information from these assessments can be utilized to inform and direct the learning process. To address the limitation in the study, the current study explored the following research questions:

1. How do individual EFL learners studying at MTsN 4 Surabaya process a new learning point (i.e., short-answer questions related to simple present tense) on a portfolio language assessment?
2. How and to what degree do high-and low-ability language learners in MtsN 4 Surabaya differ in their capacity to process this new learning point?

1. Types of Portfolio-Based Assessment

According to Melograno (2000), there are types of portfolio-based assessments. They, among others, are (a) Personal portfolio: The portfolio for students and teachers to form a more holistic thought about students and to celebrate their interests. The portfolio can be awards, photos, videos, or other memorabilia. The personal portfolio is a catalyst for self-reflection and sharing, (b) Working portfolio: It is a kind of portfolio for the ongoing and systematic collection of student work. The portfolio's collection can be daily, weekly, or monthly, in the form of a unit of work products,

(c) Record-keeping portfolio: Teachers usually keep this kind of portfolio. It includes necessary assessment samples and records that may be required such as written exams or proficiency tests. It can also include observational information such as anecdotal notes, frequency index scales, narrative descriptors, behavior checklists, and progress reports that supplement traditional report cards, (d) Group portfolio: Each member of a collaborative learning group contributes individual items in addition to group items such as samples, photos, a community project to present the effectiveness of the whole group, (e) Thematic portfolio: This portfolio is related to a unit of study With a particular focus, (f) Integrated portfolio: This type of portfolio is viewing all students and works from all fields which shows connections among subjects. For example, this portfolio

Can be used in math or science courses, (g) Showcase portfolio: A limited number of items are selected and grow over time to serve a specific purpose. Usually, only the students' best works are presented, (h) Electronic portfolio: Technology has made electronic portfolios. However, if it is a software database (storage for photos, sound, or words) they are the same as a hanging file or milk crate, (i) Multiyear portfolio: Students will gather items from a cluster of grade levels over 2-, 3-, or 4-year intervals. This portfolio will be stored at the school. For example, this portfolio can be used to monitor students' progress periodically during primary and secondary school and university education.

2. Components of Language Processing

The components of language processing according to Purpura (2009) as cited in Perrone (2011) are noticing, accommodation, developing a system, and feedback. Noticing means students can notice the new input and make the connection between the form and the meaning. Accommodation means that the new language form is available for more processing and may be accommodated into the learner's language system. The developing system means that the students have acquired an understanding of the new grammatical form. Finally, Feedback refers to descriptive feedback for learners to have opportunities to consider the learning gaps.

Method

1. Research Design

The current inquiry, a case study, examined the language handling of two EFL learners studying in grade seventh in MTsN 4 Surabaya, as proven by their performance on alternative-based assignments (i.e., portfolio assessment). To comprehend, describe, and conceptualize the alternative assessment and language processing more fully, the inquiry required a mixed-methods design, with the analysts collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data on an alternative assessment, especially portfolio assessment.

2. Research Participants

This study examined the language processing of two students (i.e., a high-ability learner and a

low-ability learner) studying in grade seventh at MTsN 4 Surabaya. To get the participants for this phase of the inquiry, the researchers used purposive sampling; the two learners were chosen based on their score differences in the English class, especially under the topic of simple present tense. Alfath, an L1 Indonesian speaker, was a 12-year-old male who had studied English for seven years in elementary and junior high school. For the current study, he was considered a high-ability learner as he got the highest score in English class, especially under the topic of simple present tense on a daily test mark of 92 out of 100. Faza, also an L1 Indonesian speaker, was a 12-year-young female, who had studied English for seven years as well. She was a low-ability learner as evidenced by her low marks namely 65 out of 100.

3. Alternative Assessments Task and Data Collection

This research investigated a portfolio assessment focused on a collection of some tasks related to simple present tense. The focus of the simple present tense topic was on the students' acquisition of the utilization of s/es after the verbs. Students were expected to differentiate whether or not they used -s/-es regarding the singular and plural object of the short-answer questions. The data collection was taken over 4 weeks (4 meetings). At the beginning of the class, the researcher who became a teacher explained the utilization of positive and negative forms of simple present tense. Before the class ended, the teacher distributed the first assignment. Students were asked to change the given statements (positive form) into negative form. In the second meeting, the teacher explained again the use of positive and negative forms of simple present tense. Before the class ended, the teacher collected the second assignment from the students' work. The teacher asked the students to change the given statements (negative statements) into positive forms. In the next meeting, the teacher explained how to make questions using the simple present tense. At the end of the class, the students were asked to translate the given statements (using the Indonesian language) into English. The collection of the assignments (portfolio assessment) was shared with the students' pairs to check the correct and incorrect answers (the right answers were told by the teacher) and was submitted to the teacher. Finally, the teacher explained the answers to the students. The total of assignments was three and each assignment included 5 short-answer questions.

At the last meeting, the teacher deliberated interview protocol to the students related to the student's understanding and learning process during learning Simple present tense by doing portfolio assessments. The questions were based on processing models by Purpura (2009) as cited in Perrone (2011). These categories were: (a) noticing, (b) accommodation, and (c) developing a system (through practice). The students typed the answers through mobile phones and sent through WhatsApp. Even though the data collection was done online, the students were asked to answer the questions in class.

4. Data Analysis

This study examined the students' accuracy of noticing. To be able to know students' accuracy of noticing, the number of correct answers per each assignment (i.e., the number of short-answer questions related to the use of s/es were answered correctly) was divided by the total number of items namely five per each assessment (The total assignments were three). The raw scores were presented.

The data which was got through the interview protocol was divided according to the coding of the questions namely (a) noticing, (b) accommodation, and (c) developing system (through practice). The questions as well as the answers used the Indonesian language so that the students could answer well.

Discussion

The findings are presented according to the sorts of components of language processing, namely: (a) noticing, (b) accommodation, (c) developing system (through practice)

1. Noticing

In the EFL class, the two learners had been taught with new input (i.e., short-answer questions related to the use of simple present tense). The following section presented the answers of the students related to their capacity to notice the new input and connect the form and the meaning related to the use of simple present tense in sentences (Purpura, 2009 as cited in Perrone, 2011).

Answering the question from the interview protocol related to the students' noticing about the second meeting's assignment, the question of "Change it into a positive form: She does not do her homework every night", Alfath (high ability student) stated:

> "I remember doing this question. I should delete *does not*, and just say *she does her homework every night.*"

Faza also stated about the same question related to the same item:

> "I know this item. I remember my teacher taught me about this. I should *answer she does her homework every night*".

In response to the instruction "Translate it into English: Apakah Nina dan Tina mendengarkan Musik setiap hari? *Do Nina and Tina listen to music every day*?", Alfath stated:

> "I also remember this question and the explanation from the teacher. We have to look at the subject. Even though the subject uses the name, we will consider it as they because the name is more than one".

However, Faza replied:

> "I remember this question. I understood the explanation, but now I forget".

Alfath's answers in the interview suggested that the portfolio assessment was useful in making him notice the knowledge related to simple present tense. Not only that, he also still remembers the

teacher's explanation regarding the answer to the assignments. Different from Alfath, Faza remembers all the items but not all the explanations of the right answer to the assignments. She did not seem to have internalized all the lessons presented in class well.

The clear difference in the learners' capacity to notice the language forms were related to the accuracy. It can be said that there was a difference in the degree to which Alfath accurately noticed the answers to the questions (the use of s/es in simple present tense) compared to Faza's answers. Out of 5 questions in the first assignment, Alfath got 4 correct answers. Then, he answered all questions correctly for the second assignment. In the last assignment, he got 4 correct answers out of 5 questions. It means that he got 13 correct answers for 15 questions of the collected assignments in 3 meetings. Therefore, he accurately noticed that 86.7% of the portfolio assessments (collection of the assignments) related to the use of simple present tense. On the contrary, the low-ability student, Faza, performed to have more difficulty in noticing the correct answers. She could only notice 2 out of 5 correct answers in the first assignment. Then, she only noticed 4 out of 5 correct answers in the second assignment. The last, she got 4 correct answers out of 5 questions. It meant that she noticed 11 correct answers out of 15 questions. Therefore, she only noticed that 73.3% of the portfolio assessment related to the use of simple present tense. It meant that the high-ability student noticed more than the low-ability student.

Although the students were given the same treatment from the teacher, however, the result of the students noticing the explanation of the assignments' answers was different. It can be said that this result supports the theory of individual learners' differences (Zafar, 2012). The theory was related to the factors causing the different results for individual learners. The factors are sex, attitude, motivation, learning styles, learning strategies, and personality. Added by Dewaele (2017), it was reported that the factors causing the different results of students' learning process are students' ability such as language learner aptitude and personal traits such as extraversion-introversion, neuroticism-emotional stability, psychoticism, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and emotional intelligence.

The finding of this study is in line with a study conducted by Ma'arif et al. (2021) and a study conducted by Ivanova (2017). The study stated that the use of portfolio-based assessment enables students to analyze their weaknesses and strengths related to English skills. In the category of noticing, students can analyze the correct and incorrect answers as well as recognize their weakness.

This finding of the study also supports the previous study conducted by Yulastri et al., (2018). The study stated that the use of portfolio-based assessment enables teachers as well as students to analyze and evaluate their progress in learning English. This is because, during the process of practicing portfolio-based assessment, they can notice the new input that the teacher gave them.

Finally, they know their mistakes and know how to correct them.

2. Accommodation

After students take in the input from the explanation of the teacher, the new language form comes into the processing process and might be accommodated into the learner's language system (VanPatten, 1996 as cited in Perrone, 2011). Answers to the interview from the two learners highlighted the differences in their abilities to accommodate their language. Asking the interview related to the use of the item of the question, "Change it into a positive form: She does not do her homework every night", Alfath answered:

> "I was not sure how to form the sentence using a negative form of simple present tense using subject singular. Now I know the difference to construct the sentence, and I know the use of s/es and do/does"

Responding to the same question, Faza stated:

> "I used to be very confusing in changing the sentence into the positive form of the simple present. Now I understand, but sometimes I am not sure how to form the sentence. Sometimes, I am afraid I might place the wrong form"

Alfath's comment indicated that he could compare his prior skill to his current skill in which now he could construct the right sentence using a singular subject of simple present tense. Therefore, he was expected to be able to accommodate the new language structures. The low-ability student, Faza, could also recognize her learning gaps before and after the learning process. However, sometimes she was still not sure to construct the right structure.

We could see from the two learners' comments that they were aware of the difference between their previous and current knowledge related to the use of simple present tense. It indicated that the use of portfolio assessment (student's collection works) was helpful for accommodating new input into their grammar development. This case was related to understanding and constructing the new form, that is simple present tense.

This finding, however, is not in line with a study conducted by demonstrating that the low-ability student did not recognize the gap after he was trained using the classroom-based assessment. It showed a difference between the low ability student's language accommodation in this study and his study. The difference might be because of the different assessments of the two studies as well as the different individual students. As stated in a study conducted by Goctu (2012), portfolio assessment, however, also has disadvantages namely sampling of the students' process and the result has weak generalization. Therefore, the result of this research could not be easily generalized to any other research.

However, this finding supports the study conducted by Ok (2014) which found that through the portfolio-based assessment process, students can make longer sentences, make more complex

sentences, focus more on specific grammar rules, do not make the same mistake anymore in writing, correct the mistakes in writing more easily, consolidate all grammar rules, and write more fluently. The finding of this current study proves that students can understand the new input namely the language system. This can be said that the students can consolidate the grammar rules after doing a portfolio-based assessment.

3. Developing System (Through Practice)

Alfath and Faza previous answers indicated that they acquired an understanding of the use of simple present tense. However, they had to do a repeated activity to have a portfolio assessment so that they could access the learning point (VanPatten, 1996 as cited in Perrone, 2011). The following section highlighted the effect of having a bundle of activities (collecting portfolio assessments) on the learners' capacity to strengthen their understanding of the use of simple present tense using singular and plural subjects.

Both Alfath and Faza felt the merits of doing a collection of assignments (portfolio assessments). Concerning the question of the interview related to the students' understanding after doing assignments, Alfath said:

> "The more assignment I get, the more I understand how to use the sentence using the simple present tense. I could do better at the second and third assignments rather than the first assignment"

Faza also commented:

> "I understand more after doing portfolio assessment, but I need to be trained more in order to strengthen my skill"

Both Alfath and Faza performed to be able to accommodate the new information into her developing system. In the third assignment related to translating the sentence from the Indonesian language into English (positive, negative, and question forms), Alfath did not do the same mistake as the first and second assignments related to the use of s/es without s/es in singular and plural subjects (both positive and negative forms). It indicated that Alfath accurately noticed 100% of the questions related to the use of positive and negative forms of the simple present tense in the third assignment. However, in the third assignment, Faza still did the same mistake as she did in the first assignment. She got one incorrect answer from 3 questions in the positive form of simple present tense. It indicated that the high-ability student performed well in the development system through practice rather than the low-ability student. However, all the students noticed the development system of understanding the use of simple present tense using singular and plural subjects.

Through the process and the result after doing the assignments, the teacher and students themselves knew their development related to the understanding of simple present tense especially the use of s/es or without s/es according to the singular and plural subjects. Therefore, this finding

indicated that it supports the finding of a study conducted by Goctu (2012) entitled portfolio assessment in English language teaching. The finding stated that the portfolio gives detailed information about students' development in the learning process to teachers, parents, and students themselves. Therefore, a portfolio assessment was a great choice to be conducted in the ELT class. not only that, this finding also supports the finding of a study conducted by Keyvanfar et al. (2019) entitled improving grammar and writing skills of Iranian EFL learners through portfolio assessment. The finding of the study confirmed that the students could diagnose the weak points and stop repeating common mistakes by considering several drafts and keeping them as a portfolio.

In line with a study conducted Saville-Troike (2012) which stated that portfolios have many merits for the EFL learners to acquire the second language namely improving fluency by assisting the improvement of automaticity through practice, this finding of the study found that both the high ability and low ability learners performed to be able to accommodate the new information into their developing system. It can be said that both students improve their skills especially present tense.

This finding of the study is also in line with a study conducted by Monib et al. (2020) which found that all of the methods of alternative assessments checked in the selected studies helped improve students' development in foreign language learning. Not only that, this study also supports a study conducted by Daskalogiannaki (2012). The study offers openings to assess learners' language development as an entirety and to direct classroom instruction agreeing to the learners' needs.

The finding of this current study also supports the study conducted by Demirel & Duman (2015). The study showed the implementation of portfolio practice to the students can boost students' listening, writing, and reading skills. Not only that, through implementing the portfolio-based assessment practice in the class, the students develop their vocabulary as well as the production of English sentences in the class. Therefore, all previous studies have a positive view of the use of portfolio-based assessment in developing students' English skills.

The study conducted by Huang (2012) is also in line with this current study. The study stated that the use of portfolio-based assessment develops learner autonomy, develops language skills and cross-cultural awareness, and increases learning motivation and confidence. This current study stated that both low ability and high ability students develop the language system which means the students also increase their skills related to the use of simple present tense.

Another study conducted by Sulistyo et al. (2020) is also supported by the finding of this current study because the study stated that most of the participants agreed that portfolio-based assessment improves their writing skill in terms of grammar. This current study also showed that students develop their language system in terms of grammar. Therefore, it can be said that the use of portfolio-based assessment can be a good choice for teachers to conduct in the class as a kind of

assessment for acquiring a second language acquisition.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the effect of portfolio-based assessment and language processing on acquiring a second language focusing on simple present tense especially the use of s/es after verbs. The two students (high and low-ability students) appeared to process language differently in noticing, but not in the accommodation and the development system. The high-ability student was able to notice all the language form more accurately, compared to the low-ability learner. Repeated practice through portfolio assessments could help them to internalize the new form of the language related to simple present tense and 'notice the gap' between their previous and current knowledge. However, the high-ability learner performed better in developing the system of understanding the target language.

This study found that portfolio-based assessment gave benefits in language processing on acquiring a second language. Therefore, teachers in the future are hoped to continue to use portfolio-based assessments for teaching English to students. In addition, the use of a portfolio also could be done to assess students' development in acquiring a second language acquisition. Furthermore, to broaden the study results, it is suggested for future researchers to conduct further studies that include teachers and students from different levels of schools so that they can compare the results to get more variety of interpretations and discussions on the effect of alternative assessment and language processing on acquiring second language acquisition. Not only that, but further research should also examine other types of assessments or the focus point of the target language.

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