PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN ESL ACADEMIC WRITING:
EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF REFLECTION IN THE WRITING PROCESS

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Writing is done through a process of drafting and editing. Traditional writing assessment techniques, such as large-scale standardized tests and multiple-choice tests, are not compatible with the process-oriented curricula. Researchers and educators have started to explore other types of student assessment. Portfolio assessment has been suggested as an alternative to traditional writing assessment because it can integrate instruction and evaluation, which can be a way of providing for validity.

In this study, I examined students’ perceptions of the portfolio assessment in an advanced academic writing course for ESL graduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Students in the course wrote four major assignments, each in a different genre, and they were required to provide drafts of the assignments. Students were also asked to write reflective journals where they kept records of their writing and revision processes and could set goals for future development. Students’ reflective journals were analyzed to understand students’ revision processes. Students were also asked to complete a questionnaire that investigated their past experiences with portfolios and their impressions of the portfolio they were required to compile for the course. I, then, analyzed students’ drafts in terms of fluency, accuracy, and grammatical complexity to find further evidence to support the use of portfolio assessment in an ESL classroom.

The results of the reflective journals show that students were able to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in the journals. However, the analysis also revealed an overreliance on peer reviews and writing conferences to write their journals. The results of the questionnaire show that students’ perceptions about portfolio assessment were generally positive with some recommendations about better guidance and instruction. Students
also expressed the intent to use portfolios for other projects as a part of their professional development. The fluency, accuracy, and grammatical complexity were analyzed using one-way ANOVA. The one-way ANOVA did not yield statistically significant results but did provide some evidence for improvement in the ESL academic writing courses. It seems that genre and topic familiarity could have influenced students’ writing abilities because many international graduate students are accustomed to writing to specific audiences in their fields. General topics and genres could be more difficult to write for these students who may not be familiar to them. Limitations and suggestions for future study show a need for more research in areas of electronic portfolio software and their effects on the reflection process. In addition, dynamic assessment could play a role in improving portfolio assessment and future study could provide models for their use in second language classrooms.
I would like to acknowledge my fellow ESL TAs for their support and advice. Many thanks to my adviser, Fred Davidson, for insightful feedback and support. I would also like to thank my committee members, Randy Sadler and Jinming Zhang, for their guidance and support. Finally, thanks to my parents, sister, and many friends who have been very supportive throughout the entire process.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

In academia, writing is a means of expressing one’s ideas. Writing, unlike speaking, is done through a process of drafting and editing. For many international students who plan to study in English-speaking countries, TOEFL or GRE writing classes are where they learn how to write in English. Those classes focus mainly on teaching students strategies that can help them do well on those tests. For example, such classes might also help students to write a set formula or template in order to get high scores because TOEFL and GRE writing tests examine only one or two finished products from a pool of writing questions. This means that these tests are not able to assess students in various types of writing.

Traditional assessment techniques, such as large-scale standardized tests and multiple-choice tests, are not compatible assessment tools with the process-oriented curricula. These assessment tools seem to measure the correctness of a response, rather than the thought processes involved in arriving at a composition. Researchers and educators have started to explore other types of writing assessment methods that are more authentic and performance-oriented.

One type of authentic and performance assessment is portfolio assessment. It has become an alternative to standardized testing in large-scale and classroom assessment because it can integrate instruction and evaluation, which can be a way of providing for greater validity. In portfolio assessment, a collection of student’s works is measured according to specific criteria that match the instructional objectives. Portfolio assessment can encourage use of multiple measures and help promote student-centered learning.

As an English as a second language writing instructor at the University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign, I saw many of my colleagues using portfolios in their classrooms as a means of assessing students’ writings. Naturally, I adopted portfolio assessment in my classroom based on the positive remarks given by fellow writing instructors on how the final portfolios provided them and their students with the opportunity to reflect on the overall process of the course. The experience of using portfolio assessment in my classroom led me to re-evaluate the method and investigate whether portfolio assessment would actually live up to its expectations.

Portfolio assessment, in writing instruction, is an authentic assessment method because teachers can consider various language contexts and skills over a period instead of relying on one or two pieces of writing. Portfolios can let learners and teachers follow the progress of language development. Portfolios are said to be valid and reliable testing tools because students are assessed using a combination of instruments.

Reflection is a key element in portfolios. Learners can share their thoughts on what the procedure was like for them when comprising their portfolios, what they found challenging, and what they enjoyed. The thought processes involved in arriving at the response can encourage students to reflect on their own learning in both depth and breadth. The reflection process could push students to become more active, reflexive, thoughtful learners. Students can also discuss contents of their portfolios, such as what part of the course they enjoyed, what lesson they would like to do more of, and the kinds of things they feel they need more work on. The reflection process is not only beneficial to students, but teachers can also see the effectiveness of their teachings through the eyes of their students. Varying experiences from students can influence teachers in their beliefs about teaching and learning and assist teachers in redefining teaching approaches.

Despite the fact that various studies conducted to find advantages of portfolio on writing
instruction and assessment and the potential benefits to students’ learning, not many studies have investigated the effects of portfolio assessment on English language learners and how it can be a reliable and valid form of assessment for L2 learners. Therefore, my research question is whether portfolio assessment can be a reliable assessment tool for ESL writing instruction and whether the reflection and emphasis on process-oriented writing does influence student performance.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

A valid form of assessment would be used to provide information and evidence that can support the validity and reliability of the assessment and that the assessment is designed for its intended purpose (Messick, 1989). Moreover, Messick (1989) explains that a valid language test would be able to provide predictive evidence to judge the relevance and decisions that can be made from the test scores. In order to investigate the validity of the portfolio assessment, the literature review will investigate the different types of writing assessment, portfolio assessment, examples of portfolio assessment.

Types of Writing Assessment

Multiple-choice writing tests. In writing assessment, many traditional tests have taken the format of multiple-choice tests, which focus on knowledge about sentence grammar. However, researchers found that writing is not a set of discrete skills that can be evaluated through multiple-choice questions (e.g., Yancey & Huot, 1997). It is also difficult to conclude that knowledge of sentence grammar does not lead to writing. Multiple-choice writing tests do not evaluate the actual behavior of writing because there is no form of writing involved. They also found that multiple-choice tests do not even try to measure elements such as unity, organization, and content. Anderson (1998) suggests that because these tests focus on discrete information, the bits of information require only lower-level thinking skills.

Impromptu writing samples. Another form of writing assessment is impromptu writing samples (Camp, 1993). One example is TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language. This test is required of all international students who plan to study in North American colleges and universities. TOEFL tests all four language skills necessary for communication: reading,
listening, writing, and speaking. The recently introduced TOEFL Internet-based test, also known as TOEFL IBT, has added an integrated writing section to the existing Test of Written English (TWE) section. In TWE, test-takers had to produce an essay on a randomly assigned topic in thirty minutes. The newly added writing section requires writers to incorporate academic reading and listening and respond to a question. In the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), test-takers are required to write two essays to assess how they present information, construct an argument, and discuss issues. Tests like TOEFL and IELTS have also been criticized as affecting the society’s understandings of language and test validity. Shohamy (2008) argues that language tests, given their power and influence in societies, play a major role in the implementation and introduction of language policies. They act as mediators between ideologies about language and serve as powerful tools in complex political realities and controversies. Language tests can also influence classroom instruction and how schools or administrators make decisions about language teaching and learning. These impromptu tests dominate the language teaching and learning strategies around the world due to political power differences.

Alternative assessments. Various alternative assessments have gained popularity in recent years because of the observed drawbacks of traditional assessment (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Alternative assessments procedures are checklists, journals, logs, and videotapes. Other examples include portfolios, conferences, diaries, self-assessments, and peer assessments. Some common characteristics of alternative assessments are that they require students to use higher thinking and problem solving skills, tasks are meaningful and challenging, and process is assessed as well as product (Aschbacher, 1991). Alternative assessments evaluate students on what they produce during day-to-day classroom activities (Huerta-Macias, 1995). Anderson (1998) states that because different people have different interpretations about knowledge, it is
impossible to agree on a single meaning. She claims alternative assessment assumes that
knowledge has multiple meanings, so individuals can bring their own interpretations. Anderson
also asserts that the purpose of assessment is to facilitate students’ learning, not to classify
students. In other words, alternative assessment methods allow students to display their
proficiency in an extended process and induce less anxiety than traditional assessments.

Raimes (1987) compared native and non-native English speaking college-level students’
writing strategies. The study showed composing strategies common both to the ESL students
across course placement and language proficiency levels and to L1 and L2 writers, but found that
the two groups of students differed in how they felt about revising their work. Non-native
students were more open to editing and correcting their work. Based on the finding, it could be
suggested that instruction that is focused on the process of revision can be more effective for
non-native writers. The emphasis on the writing process can help the learners analyzed their
strengths and weaknesses in their compositions.

Levine (2004) also advocates alternative assessment that focus on task-based instruction
by showing that maximal use of the target language and extensive exposure and contact with the
language places students in an environment where the target language must be used, thus
simulating a realistic environment. Active participation in task-based activities, such as role
plays, help students use what is learned in the classroom. Assessment that is geared towards what
the students actually learned and practiced in class will help enhance learning and create positive
washback.

Discussion. The drawbacks of traditional types of tests are that they force test-takers to
write under timed conditions and that test-takers have to respond to unfamiliar topics.
Furthermore, Timed-essay tests disregard the writing process, for it limits writing as first-draft
writing. In addition, a majority of students who had low scores on timed writing tests did get significantly higher scores when classroom writing was assessed. The studies on alternative assessment attempted to show the benefits but did not provide supporting data or analysis to support their analysis. Brown and Hudson (1998) suggested various methods of alternative assessment to evaluate ESL learners, but did not provide evidence as to why alternative assessment is better for ESL students than traditional types of writing assessment. Their ideas might be more helpful to ESL instructors if they provide specific guidelines or example evaluation rubrics to supplement their arguments.

Shohamy (2008) provides a good overview of how test can shape society’s judgments and knowledge of language competence. It also shows examples of different studies on the topic of language policy and the power of tests. The different argument she brings about language assessment and its relation to policy and power relates to current issues related to developments in large-scale standardized tests and their influences on language instruction and washback in diverse communities in which the tests are used. She, however, does not give concrete suggestions on how tests should be used and developed for tests to become positive influences to society.

In Raimes (1987), the suggestions for classroom implications were sensitive to the needs of classroom teachers. However, the author might want to provide more examples of the coding that she used to support her study. Only eight subjects were involved with four students in each group, so any conclusions must be viewed as tentative and need to be supported by further research on more ESL students at similar levels.

Levine (2004) suggests a realistic, task-based approach to second language learning in university-level foreign language classrooms. However, it might be more persuasive if the author
could show the effects of these methods on student learning. The suggested ideas seem effective, but it will be better if the author can provide empirical results.

Other studies by Huerta-Macias (1995), Anderson (1998), and Aschbacher (1991) provide good overviews and explanations of alternative assessment and compare alternative assessment and traditional types of assessment. The comparisons do help the readers to understand the strengths of alternative assessment, but fail to build up their arguments by producing empirical data that show students’ improvement.

**Portfolio Assessment**

The definition of portfolio varies among researchers. Most agree, however, that it is a meaningful collection of students’ work that shows their growth (Arter, Spandel, & Culham, 1995; Wright, Knight, & Pomerleau; 1999). According to the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC), portfolio assessment is the systematic, longitudinal collection of student work created in response to specific, known instructional objectives and evaluated in relation to the same criteria. Portfolios have long been used by artists, writers, architects, and other professionals to demonstrate samples of their work and display their interests and abilities (Lyons, 1998; Moya & O’Malley, 1994). Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) claim that portfolios have only recently been introduced and used in assessment. Portfolio assessment has been used to assess writing for a variety of students for different reasons and is one of the most widely used alternative assessment methods.

Similar to portfolios used in the fine arts, in the educational field, portfolios can demonstrate students’ capabilities and depth through collections of students’ work. It is, however, important to bear in mind that portfolios are not just piles of work a student produces; rather, educational portfolios can be applied to meet both instructional needs and assessment
requirements. Because portfolios are comprised of a variety of products from students, teachers can see the course of development more clearly. Portfolios can comprise of a variety of materials, such as essays and compositions in draft and final forms, audio and/or video recordings, journals, diaries, and self- and peer-assessments (Brown, 2004). They are also more authentic than traditional methods of assessment because instruction and assignments are directly related (Barton & Collins, 1997). By implementing portfolios, it is easier for students to take responsibility for their own learning because it is up to them to put together portfolios with assistance from the teacher. Students are aware of the grading criteria and can even participate in developing the criteria with the teacher. This method can also individualize learning. Portfolios can act as a reflection of a teacher’s teaching as well. Teachers might be able to assess the effectiveness of their own instruction. Portfolios can even help teachers in subsequent courses the students might take. Future teachers can analyze the students’ work samples from previous classes and modify their course syllabus to meet the needs of students.

**Examples of portfolio assessment.** Johnston (2004) studied various approaches to portfolio assessment and their underlying assumptions through a review of literature and provides analyses of the articles to show limitations in the area of portfolio assessment research. She explains the different perspectives of portfolio assessment (e.g., positivist, interpretivist, feminist). Johnston examines and critiques different research articles on portfolio assessment. The author shows that the different approaches toward portfolio assessment are based on various methodological and ideals and suggests that many researchers of portfolio assessment based their studies on the positivist approaches. Through a review of literature, the author shows that there are many niches in research and recommends that more studies should be carried out to discover inventive methods. She also suggests that longitudinal studies and action research could be used
to better understand portfolio assessment and its effects.

Many studies have examined the effects of portfolio assessment in large-scale conditions, mostly in the K-12 context. The studies show that portfolio assessment can be modified to meet the needs of students or a particular curriculum. Delett, Barnhardt, and Kevorkian (2001) provided a framework for designing and implementing portfolio assessment in foreign language classrooms. The suggested framework considers students and teachers in trying to help them understand the portfolio process. The framework they suggest is a result of a three year project conducted by the NCLRC (National Capital Language Resource Center). Teachers from all around the nation provided their input to develop the framework. Their experiences were assembled by the NCLRC to create the framework. The framework is designed to be flexible to fit different classrooms with the intention of developing a systematic assessment process. The framework suggests seven steps to developing a systematic model for using portfolio assessment. The framework for portfolio assessment consists of seven steps: (1) planning the assessment purpose, (2) determining portfolio outcomes, (3) matching classroom tasks to outcomes, (4) establishing criteria for assessment, (5) determining organization, (6) monitoring the portfolio, and (7) evaluating the portfolio process. The framework offers teachers a fair and reliable assessment model that creates an interactive assessment. This assessment method involves different stakeholders and creates a partnership in the learning process.

Klenowski (2001) conducted a study of pre-service teachers in their first year of a two year course in teacher training. The portfolio was a requirement for “Classroom Teaching Skills” and “Instructional Design and Strategies for Effective Teaching.” The study shares ideas about the implementation of portfolios in pedagogy and learning and the reflection processes and procedures. The author found that portfolios were helpful in growing self-monitoring and self-
assessment skills for students. The portfolios helped students develop comprehensive presentations, build a student-centered learning environment and promote independent learning.

LeMahieu, Gitomer, and Eresh, J. T. (1995) discussed the results of a district-wide writing portfolio assessment in grades 6-12 and teachers’ views on this type of assessment and use in classrooms. The authors studied 1,250 portfolios from grades 6-12 in the Pittsburgh Public School District in the summer of 1992. Twenty-five raters assessed the portfolios based on a common scoring rubric after training using benchmark samples of student portfolios. Two raters graded each portfolio. The results show that portfolios can be a useful tool in large-scale assessment because there were high inter-rater reliability and consistency of scoring among raters. The methods and rubrics aligned with the district’s goals for the writing program and revealed that portfolio assessment has psychometric integrity. The authors claim that traditional assessment methods alone will do no more than insist that the evidence be produced in traditional forms. Portfolio assessment can be used to show various sides of students’ development and be consistent and reliable to be used in a large-scaled assessment environment.

Freedman (1993) provided several examples of portfolio programs that could be used in large-scale situations. He also reviewed large-scale writing testing and classroom assessment and their limitations by looking at the history of portfolio assessment and the difficult problems that it faced and explained the current issues in implementing large-scale portfolio assessment. Freedman explains that difficulty the large-scale standardized tests are faced with has to do with difficulties in linking classroom assessment to large-scale testing. Most of the times, creating and submitting portfolios often require classroom reform that is externally supported. The relationship between the testers and teachers should be well maintained to make sure that the test aligns with instruction. The author suggests that portfolios are especially suitable for writing
instruction but, as explained above, the difficulty lies in making the link between the classroom and the large-scale test developer. The complex relationship could turn the tester into CIA or IRS agents and teachers could feel the pressures in being audited. Freedman claims that it is important for test developers and teachers to constantly engage in conversation that can be productive for both parties.

Song and August’s 2002 study examines a different population compared to the previous studies mentioned in this section. Their study focuses on how ESL students at the City University of New York perform on portfolio sections compared with non-portfolio sections. They are particularly interested in whether the pass rates for their summative impromptu writing test differed significantly between portfolio sections and non-portfolio sections. They studied 103 students from 9 sections of ENG C2 that used portfolio assessment and 107 students in ENG C2 that used CUNY WAT, a summative impromptu writing exam, as an exit criterion. Students from both groups had received 6 or 7 on the CUNY WAT they took for entry into ENG C2. Whether the students were in a portfolio or a non-portfolio section, they had difficulty in timed-impromptu tests (WAT), which shows that timed writing proficiency tests are difficult for ESL writers. The study found that the ESL students are twice as likely to pass their English composition course when they are evaluated by their portfolios and found no evidence that using portfolio assessment would reduce ESL students’ achievement in subsequent English courses.

**Validity of Portfolio Assessment.** Supovitz, MacGowan III, and Slattery (1997) examined the validity of portfolio assessment by assessing agreement in interrater reliability of portfolio assessment. The researchers try to find whether external raters who are unfamiliar with the students would be able to assess the students at the same performance level as the students’ teacher. Two groups of teachers, classroom raters and external raters, graded 393 portfolios from
kindergarten – 2\textsuperscript{nd} grade students in Rochester, NY. The grades of the two groups were compared to find the percentage of portfolios had matching grades and interrater correlation. The 393 portfolios were graded by 20 Rochester school teachers who were identified to be exemplary practitioners. Twenty external raters were participants in the summer institute. The 20 Rochester school teachers are classroom raters and the teachers who participated in the summer institute are external or institute raters. The two rater groups did not show high correlations in reading and writing in all three grade levels and only showed moderate levels of reliability.

In 1995, Reckase investigated whether portfolio assessment yield high levels of reliability so that it can be used as an alternative assessment method in a relatively high stakes assessment. In the study, the author used an operational definition of portfolio assessment to show a hypothetical, yet realistic, application of portfolio assessment. The methodology for this study was non-experimental. After the development of an example portfolio, the author analyzes past research on portfolio assessment to find uses of psychometric quality on actual portfolios. This stage is to identify qualities of portfolio assessment that could be generalized to provide realistic estimates of the reliability of portfolio assessment. The expected reliability was used to find out the possibility of large-scale use of portfolio assessment. Twelfth grade writing portfolios were used as samples in the study. The portfolio was assumed to be a part of the statewide assessment system and the portfolios could be sent to particular universities to be used as placement into entry level college writing courses. For the hypothetical portfolios used in the study, reliability values of .43 and .55 were considered, and correlations of .16 and .28 were used. Based on the results from the hypothetical portfolios, at least a .55 single entry internal consistency measure and .28 correlation between entries will be required to approximate a reliability of .80 for a 5-entry portfolio. The results of this study suggest that a well-organized and structured portfolio
assessment could be used in a large-scale setting to meet the standards for reliability required for use with individual students.

Herman, Gearhart, and Baker (1993) investigated a sample of student portfolios to provide preliminary data on important measurement issues of transfer and generalizability of scores. They studied whether portfolio scores can be meaningful indicators of student achievement. Their longitudinal study considered portfolios, scoring rubrics, and rating information. The subject of the study was an elementary school that served as a longitudinal research site for the national Apple Classroom of Tomorrow (ACOT) project. Data was collected from 1989 to 1990 classrooms representing grades 1, 3, and 4. The authors found that it is possible to score portfolios consistently – if the aim is to reduce them to a single score of overall quality – and that it is possible to use a common rating scale to score disparate classroom assignments of similar genre. Portfolio designs and score schemes need to be coordinated with the intended purpose of an assessment. They emphasized that collecting and compiling pieces of student work does not guarantee that meaningful assessment or learning is taking place.

Ruetten (1994) compared the ESL student pass rates to non-ESL students, based on both the exam and appeal folder using a z-test. An appeal folder is a portfolio of writing done during the semester. Ruetten investigated the number of times students took the course to pass between ESL and non-ESL students using a z-test. She analyzed 27 ESL and non-ESL students’ English Proficiency exam results from 1991 at University of New Orleans. The study indicates that ESL students enrolled in this course are twice as likely to fail the exam compared to non-ESL students but were able to pass the course through the appeal folder. The results show that ESL students’ writings met the composition standards based on their in-class and out-of-class work during the course of the semester that are compiled in their appeals folders. The discrepancy between the
ESL students’ performance on proficiency tests and in-class work could be because of anxiety levels and preparation time.

**Discussion.** Johnston (2004) looked at ESL students’ performance on proficiency exam, but needs to provide information on the assessment criteria on both the appeal and the proficiency test to better compare the two forms. The comparison could improve with a more detailed look into the faculty that assesses the writings through questionnaires or interviews.

Delett et al. (2001) suggested a framework to design and implement portfolios in foreign language classrooms. Readers might have been able to understand the framework better if the authors had provided backgrounds of some representative teachers and their classroom contexts. More background information on the teachers that provided input might be a factor in deciding to use this model in the classroom. The framework that the authors provided is different from other studies that only try to show the effects of portfolio assessment in foreign language classrooms.

In Klenowski (2002), the study lacked information about the subjects and where the study was taking place. The study could have been more beneficial to classroom instruction if the author had provided a syllabus or an outline of the course content and grading criteria.

Song and August (2002), in their study of college-level ESL students, compared students’ achievements in two different classrooms. The authors’ attempt to compare portfolio assessment and ENG 22 could not be fully developed because the assessment criteria for the two courses were different. The study, however, showed that portfolio assessment can used as quantitative data, which is rare in ESL writing assessment and instruction.

A major drawback of Reckase (1995) was although the study tried to assess the potential use of portfolios in larger settings with more rigid standards, the methodology of the study was
unclear and unstructured. The participants of the study and the criteria used to select the particular genres of writing in the portfolio were not explicitly identified. The discussion on the cost of mailing a portfolio seemed irrelevant to the other arguments made in the article.

Most of the studies on portfolio assessment reviewed in this section need to provide information on the assessment criteria and rubric. More detailed information on the context of the classrooms and districts that used portfolio assessment can help other teachers or districts that want to use portfolio assessment as a part of their assessment tools. Deeper understanding about the population of the students can help teachers and administrators evaluate whether the results from a certain study can be generalized.

**Overall Discussion**

Building a class using portfolio assessment can be an interesting process both for the teachers and the students. They can collaborate on making grading criteria and students can individualize their own learning. Portfolios can help learners and teachers see the progress of all four skills in a language: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. They can be a valid and reliable testing tool if planned out carefully because students are assessed using a combination of instruments.

Due to its benefits, portfolio assessment has been used in many school districts across the United States. Developing a strong curriculum based on portfolio assessment is no easy task. Teachers have to keep in mind that portfolio assessment is a constant journey, so they have to keep adjusting and adapting. An approach that worked well in one course may not be appropriate in another. They should also share their experience with other teachers and learn from each other. It is important to keep in mind that teachers can implement parts of portfolio assessment to fit their classroom situations, such as using portfolios as performance assessment tools. The effort
would be worthwhile when teachers and students see their accomplishments.

The studies examined in the literature review can be guidelines for teachers and test developers, but first, there should be more research conducted on aligning classroom and instructional goals with assessment. There should be more studies done on methods of training raters on how to accurately assess portfolios because portfolios have various works by students that could be different in genre and purpose. Creating specific and effective rubrics and benchmarks can also help in training raters.

The studies in the literature review also tended to look at the positive effects of portfolio assessment. Further analysis on some of the failures and shortcomings in portfolio assessment could be used to critically analyze the current format of assessment and create a better, more effective assessment tool. More comparison studies on portfolio and non-portfolio groups on their long term learning achievements can also help support the validity of portfolio assessment. A longitudinal study of the predictive validity of the portfolio procedure is time-consuming and requires continuity within the portfolio administrator and stability of the student population. Despite its difficulties, a longitudinal study can show the rationale of using portfolio assessment in ESL instruction.

Balancing the use of objective and subjective techniques for gathering information and supporting distinct sources of information in the portfolio may increase the validity of the conclusions reached from assessment. The discrepancy among independent sources of information could be due to lack of validity for measuring the language competence stated in the goal or the unreliability of information. Checklists could be used in place of portfolios to consistently show student strengths in using language if portfolio assessment is not well-constructed.
Conclusion

The question of whether portfolio assessment can be used in writing assessment can be discussed further by examining some of its drawbacks. First, portfolio assessment may seem subjective and less reliable compared to other standardized tests. Because many schools require the evidence of standard test scores, it may not be an adequate method of assessment in some cases. Developing criteria can be unfamiliar to teachers.

There are also institutional constraints. There are many situations where teachers have to give traditional testing and grading in addition to portfolio assessment. This can be very time consuming. It is sometimes difficult to integrate portfolios into traditional classrooms. The preparation time, both for the teachers and the students, is very long. There is also the question of whether conclusions derived from the portfolio data can be as predictive and reliable compared to other traditional types of tests. Whether students’ grades from teachers’ individualized checklists or assessment criteria can be compared to more formal and standardized tests is also questionable.

There have been some studies done where researchers studied portfolios as an alternative assessment method and achieved positive results. The studies examined in this literature review provide examples, frameworks and suggestions on how portfolio assessment can be used in various contexts for various assessment purposes. Based on the analysis, the answer to the question lies in the relationship between instruction and test and how those two align.

An ideal testing situation would be where the teacher and the test developer have complete knowledge of each other’s goals and share ideas through constructive dialogue and constant revision and feedback. In a situation where the teacher and test developer have full understanding of each other, a well-designed portfolio assessment could be used in large-scale
assessment. In situations where there is lack of communication and support, portfolios would be mere collections of students’ work with no apparent instructional goal or purpose and there would be negative washback. It should also be taken into consideration that the application of portfolios to large-scale settings should be carefully designed, so the development of such assessment could benefit from being built on smaller implementations. Smaller implementations could include single classroom examples where course goals and materials are clearly defined and the teacher has a deep understanding of students’ needs and skills.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Research Methodology

The current study has three major research goals: portfolio assessment specification development, teaching using portfolio assessment and evaluation of the portfolio assessment process and outcome. The portfolio assessment used in the current study was developed for ESL 501 Intro to Academic Writing class for international graduate students at UIUC. Students can be placed into ESL 501 based on their scores from the English Placement Test (EPT)\(^1\). Newly admitted international graduate students who do not satisfy the campus English proficiency requirements are required to take the EPT. Based on the EPT results, international graduate students can be required to take one or two ESL writing classes. ESL 501 is the more advanced writing course of the two required courses. The emphasis in this course is that students acquire some basic writing strategies used in American academic writing and familiarize students to the writing conventions. There were 14 students in the class but only 11 students that consented to participating in the research and submitted complete portfolios.

\(^1\) [http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/placement/]
Table 1

**Participant Background Information**

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<td>3</td>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wang</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Electrical Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fang</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fara</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lin</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Bioengineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pedro</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Finance</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
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<td>Economics</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chen</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. All names are pseudonyms.*

ESL 501 deals with four major topics: a) review of the writing process and the three-part argumentative essay, b) strategies to avoid plagiarism (summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting) and source-based writing, c) critique writing, and 4) research paper. Students are required to submit one assignment for each major topic and also have to submit four self-reflective journals. The self-reflective journal is a means of communication between students and teacher regarding class activities and assignments. Students are encouraged to comment on, to discuss, and to ask questions about all aspects of the class and assignments. More information about the course layout and content can be found in APPENDIX A.

**Development of portfolio assessment specification.** The portfolio assessment specification was based on a 16-week ESL academic writing course (ESL 501). The specification
was developed based on the guidelines of Davidson and Lynch (2001). The main goal of the course is to help students develop skills necessary to write a source-based research paper in their fields of study. After a brief review of basic academic writing skills in topic 1, the course will concentrate on a research-based theme and will try to help students from various fields of study to incorporate the course materials into the writing conventions in their own fields and develop as a competent writer in their academic communities. Therefore, self-reflection is a very important aspect that will encourage students to review their own writings to improve on areas that they feel that would make them better writers in general as well as a member of academia.

There was one major assignment for each major topic – four major assignments in total. For each major assignment, students were required to submit two drafts, rough and final draft. For assignments one through three, all students were given identical writing prompts. For the final assignment, research paper, due to the different needs of students and areas of study, students had two options, a) write a research paper or b) write a literature review. Details of each assignment are given in APPENDIX B.

Students also had four self-reflective journals to submit. In the self-reflective journals, students had to discuss strengths and weaknesses of a particular assignment and writing skills that they want to improve on for the next assignment. The self-reflective journal was somewhat of a learning contract based on their evaluation of their own writings. The goal-setting process was particularly important because by having students set goals, the class could become more individualized and learner-centered. Because the self-reflective process could have been foreign to students in a writing context, student-teacher writing conferences were held to help students effectively criticize their writings. More information about the student-teacher writing conferences will be discussed in the next section.
Teaching based on portfolio assessment. The teaching methods and materials were not different from the previous semesters of ESL 501 I taught or from other ESL 501 classes. However, one area that I emphasized to encourage self-reflection was the “student-teacher writing conference.” Writing conferences are student-teacher meetings where student compositions and course materials are discussed to assist in the student’s revision process. Students can negotiate with the teacher to find further points to work on and strategize the learning process to fit the goal.

In previous semesters, I conducted writing conferences two times per semester. However, for the current semester, I conducted four writing conferences, after the submission of each major assignment. Because the final draft of the fourth assignment was due after the end of instruction, the fourth writing conference was held after the students submitted the first draft of the fourth assignment. The writing conference was 20 minutes per student. Table 2 shows the organization of the writing conference.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time (min.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall teacher comment for the assignment and discuss areas for improvement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific comments for the assignment (e.g. grammar, style, organization)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question and answer with student</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting for the next assignment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The writing conferences were designed to assist in students’ self-reflection which would be the essence of their self-reflective journals. The required information in the self-reflective journals are listed below.
1) What is the strength of the particular piece?

2) What are some areas that can be improved in the particular piece?

3) What are some areas in your piece that you want to pay more attention to for your next assignment? How will you improve that particular area?

Therefore, the main topics of discussion in the writing conferences centered on the three questions mentioned above.

Through student-teacher writing conferences, students can assess their achievement. Based on the individual evaluations on their progress, they can continue to work on a particular goal or set a new goal for the following assignment. The learning negotiation with the teacher can put more responsibility on the student because outside the ESL writing class, they will be required to become responsible writers and researchers on their own.

**Evaluation of the Portfolio Assessment Process and Outcome.** After the semester, I analyzed the students’ reflective journals and final portfolio questionnaire to evaluate how the students perceived portfolio assessment. The investigation of how the students understood the portfolios that they compiled could be an indication to whether the portfolio assessment has face and content validity. The evidence from students’ testimonials could also be used as warrant for evaluation of the assessment method. In the questionnaire, students were asked to answer a short open-ended questionnaire (see APPENDIX C) about their experiences in the ESL writing course, keeping a writing portfolio and writing reflective journals. The questions were asked to get a deeper understanding of the face validity of the portfolio assessment and students’ understanding of the portfolio experience. The results from the analysis of the student reflections and final questionnaire will be available in the results section.

Further investigation of the students’ essays was conducted to explore changes, if any, in
students’ essays in terms of fluency, accuracy, and grammatical complexity. Although holistic grading of students’ essays is used often in ESL writing proficiency, this assessment method cannot provide a deeper understanding of students’ writing progress. As Homburg (1984) discussed, there could be problems in reliability of raters, inter and intra, in holistic grading. Proper training and calibration could reduce the problems of inconsistency between raters in holistic grading, but holistic grading does not provide test score users with information with what aspects of writings that the students could improve on.

In order to better understand students’ writing abilities in more depth, I used T-units to measure students’ essays in terms of fluency, accuracy, and grammatical complexity. Hunt (1965b) was first to study compositions based on the concept of a T-unit. T-units are the “shortest possible grammatically allowable sentences” (Hunt, 1965a, p. 305). According to Hunt (1965b), because the word sentence could be confused with other meanings and uses of the word, the term unit was used instead. Many researchers (e.g. Scott and Tucker, 1974; Larson-Freeman and Strom, 1977; Larsen-Freeman, 1978; Homburg, 1984; Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman, 1989; Hirano, 1991) used T-units to analyze students’ writing progress. In this study, I followed the recommendations provided by Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim (1998) to analyze the essays. According to Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998), fluency is measured by rate and length. They largely define fluency by the number of words or production units (e.g. sentences, T-units, phrases) that a writer can produce. The fluency measure most applicable to this assessment model was words per T-unit method (total number of words divided by total number of T-units). This method was found to be consistent and proficiency levels in the literature.

Accuracy is measured to compare second language learners’ language use to the norm (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman argue that, despite the previous
studies that looked into accuracy as a measure of second language writing, differences in how ‘errors’ could definitely influence how the results are interpreted (as cited in Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). In addition, there is the question of what kinds of errors were categorized as errors. For example, some studies counted errors in punctuation, lexicon, morphosyntax, and spelling as errors (e.g. Larson-Freeman and Strom, 1977; Hirano, 1991) while other studies only considered morphosyntactic errors as errors (e.g. Scott and Tucker, 1974). In this study, morphosyntactic and lexical errors were counted as errors. Many previous studies used frequency of error-free T-units as a measure of accuracy but this method is usually regarded to be meaningful only in tasks with time restrictions (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). Hence, I used accuracy ratios, in particular, error-free T-unit ratios to analyze accuracy (total number of error-free T-units divided by total number of T-units).

Complexity is a term that is considered to be most difficult and ambiguous to define. Pallotti (2009) explains complexity of defining complexity as the following:

Complexity is certainly the most problematic construct of the CAF triad because of its polysemous nature. To begin with, the same term complexity is used to refer to the properties of both tasks and language performance. It would be preferable, following Skehan and differently from Robinson, to call the former ‘difficulty’, specifying that it means objective difficulty, that is inherent to the task, and thus different from subjective difficulty, which arises from the encounter of a subject’s (in)competences with a task. (p. 592)

In this study, grammatical complexity is the varying structures in students’ written compositions. The total number of clauses was divided by the total number of T-units to measure grammatical complexity.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reflective Journal Analysis

Results. Most of the students followed the directions to the reflective journals closely by discussing the three main criteria: strengths, weaknesses and goals to work on. A typical organization of reflective journal is as follows.

1. Discussion of the unit: What the students learned, what they found to be different from the previous knowledge, what they found to be most useful
2. Strengths of the essay: Comments from peer reviews on what their peer reviewer noted as strengths, strengths that were discussed in the writing conference
3. Weaknesses of the essay: Comments from peer reviews on what their peer reviewers noted as weaknesses, areas to be worked on based on the writing conference
4. Goal setting: What the instructor suggested as areas with room for improvement, students’ self-assessment on their assignments

Many students reiterated the comments from the two main review sessions: a) peer review and b) writing conference.

Jun (reflection on 2nd major assignment): In this paragraph, my peer and instructor gave me some advices. ….. they want (me) to write more paraphrase because paragraph is a rather long quotation. My instructor thinks quotations should only be used in situations where the exact wording of the original is crucial to the meaning.

Lin (reflection on 2nd major assignment): The second shortcoming of my writing, according to the peer review, was the lack of topic sentences for some paragraphs. It was partly due to abuse of long sentences of course, because sometimes there were just one or two sentences in the whole paragraph and topic sentences in this case seemed not that necessary.
Claudia (reflection on 3rd major assignment): I am usually too open and I am use to be very honest when I am giving my opinion. My professor talked to me about a new English term named “Hedging.” With the use of hedges I can smooth my opinion making them sound a little bit more polite and professional.

Discussion. As discussed in Fernsten and Fernsten (2005), it was important for the instructor to provide an environment where students could share their writing process, thoughts, and learning styles in order to become independent writers. A supportive environment with sufficient amount of direction was necessary to encourage self-reflection and self-assessment. It was important to create concise, yet direct, prompts to lower the affective filter to bolster students’ self-esteem because for a majority of the students, portfolio assessment was a new approach. Difficulties encountered during the learning process using an unfamiliar method could have hindered learning and participation so I was careful not to leave out too many details in the prompts.

Based on the analysis of the reflective journals, it seemed that students were successful in following the prompt to compose what was necessary to complete the task. However, it was difficult to get a sense of self in the reflective journals. Most students cited their peer reviewers and instructor in the journals, but evidence of self-deliberation and self-inquiry was lacking in their journals. Could too much direction and information interfere with self-reflection? Could detailed prompts and samples be disruptive to self-exploration of the purpose of an assignment?

In addition to the observations from the reflective journals, the revisions made in the students’ drafts provided further evidence to support the lack of self-deliberation. The revisions that students made in the drafts were mostly surface error revisions that were pointed out during the writing conferences and/or comments from instructor. For example, in Fang’s first draft of the 2nd essay, there was a global comment at the end. I commented:
I think you have a good draft but missed some information at the end where the author talks about some suggestions she provides to solve the problem of ESL students.

However, little effort was made to revise this point in the next draft by adding in key information from the source article that the students’ were summarizing. Only grammatical errors that were clearly marked in the comments were corrected, showing only minimal revision efforts. Although it is suggested that teachers need to clarify assessment criteria and assignment prompts, too much interventions along the way may not lead to the expected results of self-reflection and deliberation.

**Final Questionnaire Analysis**

**Results. Question 1) What kind of instruction did you receive for writing in English in your previous schooling?**

Of the eleven students, only five students responded to having received English writing instruction in their home countries. Of the five students, three answered to have received exam-oriented instruction to prepare for the TOEFL and/or GRE tests. Two students said that they only focused on grammar points in writing classes and rarely did any direct writing. Four students said that they did not receive any kind of writing instruction in their home countries. The responses show that there is still a lack of focus on EFL writing instruction even for students who are preparing to study abroad in the United States. The result also suggests that there should be further analysis into what content is covered in EFL second language writing instruction and how it should be modified in order to better prepare students for the educational context in the United States.

In addition, the results could also suggest that students may not have been ready to conduct an in-depth analysis of their essays due to lack of prior instruction in and exposure to English academic writing. I have no doubt in the students’ knowledge in their own fields but it
seems that many students may not have been prepared to face the discourse communities in their own fields due a lack of instruction and information on what is expected of them as academic writers. This also stresses the importance of ESL writing instruction at the graduate level as a doorway to introduce students to the general academic writing conventions.

Question 2) What are some of the difficulties that you have when writing in English?

Ten students agreed on the lack of English vocabulary as the most troubling aspect of English writing. The focus of writing instruction at UIUC is to introduce students to process writing and to help students learn different genres of academic writing, such as summaries, critiques, and research papers. Students, however, answered that what they felt that they should improve on was related to proper word use and English expressions.

The result seems to propose two questions: Should English writing instruction focus on word- and sentence-level instruction, even at the advanced level? Are students accurately assessing their problems in English writing?

Question 3) Have you had previous experience with portfolio assessment in writing? If yes, please describe the experience briefly.

To the third question, nine students answered that they did not have any previous experience using portfolio assessment in writing. One student commented, “I think I need to prepare one (a portfolio) for my own career, for my own profession.” This student’s response shows that the portfolio experience in ESL 501 was a positive one, which could eventually lead to help students in other areas of their study. Moreover, it could be necessary to provide students with guidelines in compiling portfolios to ensure that the portfolio experience in the ESL course
is not a one-time experience. As can be seen in the positive reactions towards portfolios, helpful tips could be beneficial to students for their professional development as academics.

Two students had prior experiences in compiling a portfolio in ESL 500, Oral and Written Communication. One of the two students commented that the requirements for the ESL 500 portfolio were similar to ESL 501 with the exemption of the reflective journals. Reflection, which is the main purpose of doing portfolios, could have been neglected in other forms of portfolio assessment. Without the reflective aspect of portfolios, the process of compiling a portfolio could seem meaningless to students. Instructors should pay special attention to clarifying the purpose of the portfolio and the expected outcome of the process as to make the stages of making the portfolio meaningful.

*Question 4) What do you think is the purpose of the writing portfolio in ESL 501?*

For this question, most of the students said that the purpose of the writing portfolio is to view their learning progress. Below are some excerpts of students’ responses on the purpose of the writing portfolio:

Wang: "To judge how writing has improved from article to article. Also the best articles among all writings indicate the best performance of student to instructor";

Pedro: "Take a look at what we have done during the whole semester; review on the progress we made at academic writing"

Most responses were related to observing the progress in their writings and reviewing class materials and content. The students’ reflection on portfolio assessment seems to align with the findings in the literature in that portfolio assessment helps students in looking back at the course and assessing their strengths and weaknesses. However, there is also the question of
whether this response sprang from the fact that reflection and review was heavily emphasized throughout the semester. It could be difficult to exclude the teaching effect in the students’ responses to the question. There is a probability that students wrote on the questionnaires what they perceived to be right answers to the question. The observation I made is also one of the caveats that Fernsten and Fernsten (2005) discuss. They warn teachers that it is important to create an encouraging learning environment because it is possible that students’ behaviors may not agree with what is perceived to be good work and the fear of punishment through grading and disapproval could lead students to write what they think the teachers wants to read in the questionnaire.

*Question 5) What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of using portfolio assessment in ESL 501?*

All students agreed that a major advantage of portfolio assessment was that it shows improvements over time. Few students pointed out a disadvantage of portfolio assessment as being time consuming. As identified in the literature, the portfolio process is time-consuming for teachers as well as students and requires consistent encouragement. This was in accordance with the reflection of the students in ESL 501.

*Question 6) Do you think keeping a writing portfolio was helpful to you?*

Eleven students said that keeping a writing portfolio was helpful because the portfolio could act as a reference for future writing tasks. Student responded to the question by saying that:

Fara: I could always look up past questions I had

Lin: Through comparison and the feedbacks, I know in what way I can write better articles
Adi: That is an active learning process and, in particular, writing conferences helps me find my weaknesses.

The findings show that students appreciated the process that went into compiling a portfolio, including different kinds of feedback sessions and individual writing conferences with the teacher. It was interesting to see that students saw the portfolio as an active learning experience and take responsibility of the learning process.

*Question 7 & 8) Have you ever done any reflective writing before? Do you think reflection journal was helpful?*

All students did not have prior experience in writing reflective journals. Although most students claimed that the reflective journal gave them a chance to look back, get some reflections, and then proceed further, a few students felt the reflective journals were not useful. Pedro explained the reflective journals as unhelpful by saying the following:

I was pretty much aware of my deficiencies.

Chen said:

The comment from instructors will be more helpful than reflection journal.

In addition, Fang had difficulty identifying her problems and solving them in order to write the reflective journal:

No, because I do not know how to structure the articles without having a topic in my brain. And actually, even I write whatever about my improvement or my goal, it still hard for me to get any help from it. Because the biggest problem is that I don’t have time or pressure and don’t know how to solve my problem rather than I don’t know what my problem is.

This shows that students needed more guidelines in order to make the reflective journals more useful, which would have heightened the effectiveness of portfolio assessment. Students’
perceptions of the portfolio experience show that even though the overall experience was worthwhile, there should be a clear purpose for the portfolio and better feedback on the quality of the portfolio.

*Question 9* Do you think the portfolio assignment was beneficial to you?

Ten out of eleven students answered that portfolio assessment was beneficial to them. Most of the positive answers had to do with the use of portfolios as references for future writing assignments.

Wang: Yes, even though I don’t write a critique article in my research area it is useful for my research paper.

Claudia: I think this assignment was beneficial for me. Now I have a simple idea of how to begin the organization for the next one. Also it helps as a guide for future projects. I think this portfolio is like a back up, because it will help me to review the learned concepts, just in case I forget them.

The negative response also reflected on this point.

Yong: No, actually not now, but someday when I write the summary or the critique it could be great help.

It seems that students felt that the portfolios that the students compiled could be used in the future for other essay writings. In addition, the process of compiling the portfolio could be a good review of the course material.

*Question 10* Are there any other comments you would like to share with me regarding this course and the final portfolio?

For this question, most students did not provide comments but Claudia provided an interesting comment regarding the extension of portfolios for professional development.
Claudia: I think it is a good idea to prepare a portfolio based on the student’s professional needs. What I mean is to organize a portfolio focused on our careers, instead of using the material of the ESL course.

Claudia’s comment on the use of portfolios for professional development is an indicator that the introduction to portfolio assessment in the ESL course may not have an immediate effect but portfolios could be used in the long run for use in other areas.

**T-unit analysis.**

In the recommendations provided by Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998), T-units are used to analyze fluency, accuracy, and grammatical complexity. Table 3 outlines how fluency, accuracy, and grammatical complexity were analyzed.

Table 3

*Fluency, accuracy, and grammatical complexity analysis method*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Grammatical Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words per T-unit</td>
<td>Error-free T-unit ratio</td>
<td>T-unit complexity ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(total number of words divided by total number of T-units)</td>
<td>(total number of error-free T-units divided by total number of T-units)</td>
<td>(total number of clauses divided by the total number of T-units)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fluency.** One-way ANOVA was used to investigate the differences in the means in the number of words per T-unit in the students’ drafts. Students had written 8 drafts throughout the semester (2 drafts for each of the 4 major assignments). The descriptive statistics of number of words per T-unit for each draft is presented in Table 4.
Table 4

Descriptive statistics of the number of words per T-unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Draft</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.94</td>
<td>23.63</td>
<td>18.87</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.84</td>
<td>24.48</td>
<td>19.39</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>27.37</td>
<td>22.01</td>
<td>3.09</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>14.45</td>
<td>24.39</td>
<td>19.87</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.61</td>
<td>19.69</td>
<td>2.76</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.34</td>
<td>23.45</td>
<td>19.26</td>
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<tr>
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<td>32.34</td>
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<td>5.01</td>
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<td>15.38</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>22.67</td>
<td>6.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the one-way ANOVA to find if there were any differences in the number of words in a T-unit are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

One-way ANOVA of the number of words per T-unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sums of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>173.98</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.86</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1098.86</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>13.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1272.84</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The one-way ANOVA analysis shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the number of words in T-units among drafts. To get a better understanding of the changes in the mean number of words in T-units for each draft, a line graph was used to investigate for a trend, if any. Figure 1 shows the changes in the number of words in T-units.
as among drafts.

![Graph showing number of words in T-unit across different drafts and assignments.]

**Figure 1.** Number of words in T-unit

As can be seen in the line graph, there was a sharp increase in the number of words in T-unit for the 1st draft of the 2nd assignment, summarization of an article. The number decreased in the 2nd draft of the same assignment. The second assignment was the summarization task where students were required to summarize an academic article. In the first draft of the 2nd assignment, there were many instances of direct quotation and in some cases, plagiarism. The number of words in T-unit decreased in the 2nd draft of the 2nd assignment as students attempted to revise their previous drafts using the strategies that were discussed in the course, such as summarizing and paraphrasing. There was a second increase in the fourth assignment, the research paper or proposal assignment. The reason for the increase could be topic similarity. During the writing conferences, students had expressed difficulties in writing unfamiliar topics and genres. For many students, it was observed that topics that were provided by the instructor for first, second, and third assignments were foreign to them, making the writing procedure more challenging to the students. Even though the genres that the students were practicing for the first three
assignments could be considered relatively simpler than the final assignment, because the topics for the final assignment were self-selected, topic familiarity could have helped students perform better in regards to fluency in their writings. Moreover, most of the readings that the students do could be associated with their fields of study, so the exposure to topics and writing styles in their academic discourse communities could have led to development in the certain genre and topic. This shows that topic and genre familiarity could be a factor in the increase in fluency.

**Accuracy.** Accuracy was measured by calculating the total number of error-free T-units divided by total number of T-units. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics of the error-free T-unit ratios.

Table 6

*Descriptive statistics of the error-free T-unit ratio*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Draft</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.48</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.53</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.26</td>
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<td>0.52</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to investigate whether there are any statistical differences in the accuracy ratios among drafts, a one-way ANOVA analysis was used. Table 7 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA.
Table 7

One-way ANOVA of the error-free T-unit ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sums of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The one-way ANOVA shows that there was no significant difference in the error-free T-unit ratio among the 8 essays that students composed. Despite the insignificant results from the one-way ANOVA, further analysis of the changes or trends could help better understand the students’ writings.

A line graph was used to investigate for a trend in the accuracy ratio. Figure 2 shows the changes in the error-free T-unit ratio.

![Graph of error-free T-unit ratio](image)

*Figure 2. Error-free T-unit ratio*

The graph of the error-free T-unit ratio shows a similar trend compared to the fluency rates. The graph shows an increase in the 1st draft of the 2nd assignments. Then, the ratio drops back to a
point similar to the ratio of the previous assignment in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} draft. I believe that this change in ratio can be explained in a similar way to fluency. Because students could have resorted to direct quotations and/or plagiarism to complete the 1\textsuperscript{st} draft of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} assignment, the accuracy ratio would likely be higher compared to other assignments. The faults in the students’ essays were pointed out by the instructor, which can be the reason for the drop in accuracy in the following draft.

As with the fluency rate, there was a slight increase in accuracy for the final assignment. Topic familiarity and exposure to genre could explain for this trend, as with fluency.

**Grammatical complexity.** Grammatical complexity is measure by calculating the total number of clauses divided by the total number of T-units. Table 8 shows the descriptive statistics of the grammatical complexity.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Draft</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-way ANOVA was performed to explore whether there are any statistically significant differences in drafts in terms of drafts. Table has the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis.
Table 9

One-way ANOVA of the T-unit complexity ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sums of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result of the one-way ANOVA shows that there is no statistically difference in the T-unit complexity ratio among the eight drafts. Even though there was no statistical difference, I will look at the mean complexity ratio for each draft to investigate any changes in the students’ performance.

Figure 3 shows the changes in the mean grammatical complexity ratio of the drafts.

![Graph showing T-unit complexity ratio](image)

Figure 3. T-unit complexity ratio

Grammatical complexity line graph shows a different trend compared to accuracy and fluency ratios. In the beginning, a steady, yet small, increase was observed from the 1st draft of the 1st assignment to the 2nd draft of the 2nd assignment. Then, there was some fluctuation in the
following 4 drafts of the 2 major assignments, the critique and research paper/proposal. This observation was inconsistent with the observations made from the two previous analyses, where topic and genre familiarity was shown to have influenced students’ writing performance. A drop in grammatical complexity in the 1st draft of the 4th assignment could have been due to the characteristic of the assignment because it was the first time that the students were asked to write a longer essay. The word limits for the previous assignments ranged from 500 to 600 words whereas the word requirement for the final assignment was 2500-3000 words, excluding references. Students may not have had sufficient amount of time to revise and edit their essays to employ more sophisticated sentence structures. With more time to revisit their essays, students were able to perform to their usual levels of grammatical complexity, which can be seen in the increase in T-unit complexity ratio in the 2nd draft of the final assignment. The end of the semester is a busy period for students which could have affected their writing performances. The 2nd draft of the final assignment was due after the end of instruction which provided students with more time to review their essays and comments.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Discussion of the Results

Through analyzing portfolio assessment, I felt that portfolio assessment may not be enough to be used as a sole method in assessment. Portfolios can help keep track of the course and materials, but if not properly designed, portfolios can turn into meaningless work. The process of making a portfolio can just feel like extra work to the students and may not produce meaningful reflection, which is one of the main purposes for portfolios. In certain institutions, there are many situations where teachers have to give traditional testing and grading in addition to portfolio assessment. This adds a burden to both the teacher and students and can be very time-consuming. If there is discrepancy between the grades from traditional testing and portfolio assessment, the results might inaccurately suggest that the student needs additional work to build reasoning and analytical skills in handling classroom content. Throughout the process of writing paper, I learned that a more reliable test would be where different assessment tools are used that aligns with instruction and class material. Different assessment methods that fit pedagogy and goals can be better indicators of students’ achievement, rather than a summative portfolio.

Portfolios can be used to boost student motivation because I feel that motivation can play an important role in language learning. Many language classes measure students’ performance once at the end of the course. This one-time method of assessment can be very stressful and even discouraging to language students. Based on my pre-semester needs analysis when teaching ESL at UIUC, many students have a tendency to downgrade their abilities. If portfolios can be used well, students can see the course of their own personal growth throughout the course rather than being compared to others and clearly see their strengths as well as their weakness, students may not be intimidated by the sometimes-frustrating language learning
A portfolio can provide individual attention to students’ needs. Looking at students’ work all at once can help teachers improve their lessons and include more targeted instruction after analyzing both students’ improvement and problems. Because everything that a student has done is aggregated, students and teachers can come back to their efforts for reflection and further investigation. As mentioned in the results section, it is essential that teachers make the purpose of the portfolio clear to the students and make the entire process engaging and meaningful to enhance the learning experience. This point relates back the result of the questionnaire analysis where it was found that students would like to use the portfolio for other purposes, such as for their professional development. Making the process and the purpose of the portfolio clear could help students learn the skills necessary to compile portfolios that they can use for future career development.

The results from the ANOVA analysis for fluency, accuracy, and grammatical complexity, did not yield meaningful statistical results. This could be because the students were placed into the class based on the results of the EPT, and therefore, had similar English writing abilities. However, the results led to some implications for teachers in academic writing contexts. First area to consider is topic selection. The topic of the first assignment for the current semester was students’ opinions on genetically modified foods and whether they should be sold to the public. Students were given a newspaper article with information on both sides of the argument and they were asked to choose a side to write an argumentative essay. The topic for this assignment was selected by a group of teaching assistants teaching the same level because the first assignment that the students write are based on the first-day diagnostic exam that the students take at the

\footnote{The first day diagnostic exam is conducted for ESL instructors to get a general understanding of their students’}
beginning of the semester. A general academic topic is chosen so that students from all areas of study can relate to and understand the issue. The academic article that the students had to summarize and critique for the 2nd and 3rd assignments was provided by the instructor based on a topic that was general enough so that students in different fields and backgrounds could all relate to. However, as shown in the results of fluency and accuracy ratios, generality may not necessarily have translated to familiarity. General academic writing courses are designed to meet the needs of students from various fields of study where they could be required to write to discourse communities with very specific writing conventions and requirements. In addition, international students coming to US universities to seek graduate-level degrees may not have had training in writing general academic papers. They may be more familiar with writing to very specific groups of people in their fields of study and the majority of English writing that the students do may only be to that specific group of people. This observation brings up the issue of whether there needs to be academic writing courses for different areas of study. It would be a challenge to design courses for each specific major, but it could be possible to plan courses for major units, such as engineering, business, science, and humanities. A more focused course where students are provided with topics that are more closely related to their areas could help students feel more engaged in the course materials.

Another area to consider is the connection from assessment into courses to assessment in courses. The results of the analysis of the questionnaire show that much of the English writing assessments that students are accustomed to and trained for are timed, impromptu essay tests, such as TOEFL and GRE writing tests. The English Placement Test (EPT) that UIUC ESL students take is also a timed, impromptu essay test. Although the UIUC EPT tries to resemble an
ESL writing class with its workshop-based model, students are assessed based on only one writing sample. If portfolio assessment is to be implemented in the ESL courses, it would be beneficial to use portfolio assessment in placement decisions. This could also be connected the previous point made about topic familiarity. If students are given opportunities to present their writings to be considered for placement decisions, it would provide for a much richer assessment of their writing skills and the collections of essays could be used for instructional purposes as well.

Results of the analysis of the reflective journals revealed that students were able to take direction from the prompts by considering areas for improvement and strengths in their essays. Students also succeeded in setting goals for their future assignments. Despite these positive observations, it was also found that most of the reflections students expressed in their journals were based on peer review sessions and/or writing conferences with the teacher. I tried to provide students with as much direction and as many opportunities to improve their writings, but it was difficult to find evidence of self in their journals that revealed that the reflections were based on self-contemplations. The reflections seemed to be recaps of their various review sessions. This raises the question of whether too much direction from teachers or peers could hinder the students’ reflective process.

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. There was a lack of instruction throughout the semester on compiling portfolios for the course. At the beginning of the semester, I explained to the students the purpose of the portfolio and what would be expected of them at the end of the semester. I feel that the instruction at the beginning was not enough to keep students on track and focused on the procedure. Mid-semester checklists or reminders could have helped students
motivated to work on the portfolio throughout the semester. A solution to this issue could be use of electronic portfolios, such as ePortfolio[^3] and Mahara[^4], which can provide easier accessibility to students as well as instructors to view the progress of portfolios. It would also be more convenient for submission and grading purposes. Some of the electronic portfolio software available online provide tools where instructors can provide templates and examples to students. This can allow teachers to extend instruction to the internet to save valuable face-to-face classroom instruction time for in-class activities.

Another limitation was the duration of the portfolio assessment. It might have been useful to analyze students longer with more drafts to see differences and progress in students’ writings. Some of my students in the semester had been enrolled in ESL 500 the previous semester and if the portfolios for students who were required to take ESL 500 and ESL 501 could have extended over a period of two semesters, the instructor and students could get a better understanding of their writing development. If portfolio assessment was to be used in ESL courses, it would be more meaningful to use the method in all courses and design it so that the portfolios from the previous ESL writing classes would be connected to the following courses. A longitudinal study of portfolio assessment is necessary to investigate for long-term washback.

This study looked only at a single proficiency level, a group of graduate students in ESL 501. The effects of portfolio assessment and students’ perceptions of the assessment could be different among various proficiency groups. Future studies could examine how effects could be dependent on proficiency levels and student groups.

[^3]: http://www.eportfolio.org/
[^4]: http://mahara.org/
Suggestions for future research

Future studies could explore the use of e-portfolios and whether the use of electronic solutions could help students view the process of the compilation. A detailed review of the portfolio reflective process and an analysis of the changes that students make on their portfolio could help instructors understand the review and the revision process. An electronic solution could also help instructors provide interventions in forms of templates, checklists, examples, and feedback easier to help students while making the portfolio because mid-semester feedback is difficult to provide with a paper format.

Research into various interventions that instructors can provide could naturally lead to studying the relationship between portfolio assessment and dynamic assessment (DA). As with portfolio assessment, DA is an alternative form of assessment to standardized tests (Anton, 2009). In DA, instructors provide students with appropriate interventions that are designed to assist students notice their mistakes to complete the tasks and show their full capabilities. In portfolio assessment, different forms of feedback could be interventions that instructors could provide students without providing too much information so that the interventions could help students in the self-reflective process. The lack of self-reflections in the current study due to the peer review and writing conferences could take the form of interventions and stimulate students to think more deeply about their writings and areas to improve. More studies that incorporate dynamic assessment and portfolio assessment throughout the semester could be useful in developing a curriculum that could naturally link the course content and assessment.
REFERENCES


Some axioms, some observations, some context. In K. B. Yancey & B. Huot (Eds.),

Assessing writing across the curriculum: Diverse approaches and practices (pp. 7-14).

Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
APPENDIX A

ESL 501 SYLLABUS

ESL 501: Introduction to Academic Writing for International Graduate Students

Required Materials
1. A three-ring binder (for course materials)
2. An email account
3. Access to Moodle

Recommended Materials
2. A good English-English dictionary

Course Objectives
Although this is a four-skill course (reading, writing, speaking, listening) the emphasis will be on academic writing. You will read and discuss materials on various types of topics, and learn how to write academic essays, summaries, and research papers that are well-written, informed, and persuasive.

Specific goals:
1. To develop research and writing skills for various types of academic assignments expected of graduate students at the University of Illinois.
2. To develop critical readings skills that will facilitate the processing of academic texts.
3. To practice listening and speaking in the classroom context.

Course Description
The semester will be divided into 4 units. The semester will end with a final paper and a presentation on a topic related to your field of study in addition to the final portfolio. In addition to the research paper, you will be required to submit three short writing assignments, each of which will be used to assess your understanding of each unit we will have covered. Because this course is designed to improve your academic writing skills, you will become progressively more responsible for evaluating your own work and that of your classmates. At the end of the course, you will be required to submit a portfolio of your work, which will be explained and created during the semester.

Journal
Purpose:
1. The journal is a means of communication between students and teacher regarding class activities. Students are encouraged to comment on, to discuss, and to ask questions about all aspects of the class.
2. Journal entries will not be graded on grammar, organization, mechanics, etc.
3. The journal is to practice fluency in English writing.
4. All journals are confidential.

You will need to turn in 4 journals to me via Moodle by the specified dates. Please write your journals in a Word document and title it “Journal number_Last name_first name” (for example, J1_Chung_Sun Joo)

Journal 1: TBA
Journal 2: TBA
Journal 3: TBA
Journal 4: TBA

**Library Session**
Date: Feb. 12 & 19, 2008
Location: Undergraduate Library 291

**Grading**

Your grade will be made up of the following components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>20 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>10 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major writing assignments</td>
<td>30 pts (10 pts each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (homework, journals, in-class activities)</td>
<td>10 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio</td>
<td>20 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There will be no final exam in this course. Your written assignments will be graded on organization, content, conventions and vocabulary/style. In order to satisfy the ESL 501 requirement, you must pass the course with a “A” or “B” (80% or better). A student who does not pass the course will be required to take it again in order to fulfill English language requirements.

All writing assignments are due by the beginning of the class period assigned. Papers turned in late will be penalized 2 points per 24 hour period. For example, a 10-point paper would become an 8-point paper if the paper were turned in 0-24 hours after the deadline. Assignments will not be accepted later than one class period after the due date. If for some reason you have difficulty completing an assignment on time, please talk to me at least the day before the deadline. Please produce as many preliminary drafts of papers as you wish and discuss them with the instructor prior to turning in your final draft on the due date. However, once the final draft has been turned in, no further revisions may be made.

Homework and reading assignments may be given daily. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss homework and readings. Participation in class discussions and activities is expected and will contribute to the final grade. Some homework assignments will be handed in to be graded—with or without notice! A grade of zero will be given to all work missed due to an unexcused absence. Late homework may not be accepted or will be marked
down.

**Final Portfolio**
A final portfolio that contains the drafts is required at the end of the course. Your major assignments, final research paper, and journals will be compiled in a portfolio. More instruction about the final portfolio will be provided.

**Attendance Policy for ESL Service Courses**
Students are required to attend all classes. If, for some reason, you must be absent please contact the teacher before class. IF ABSENT, YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL NOTES AND ASSIGNMENTS.

1. After two unexcused absences (2 days—4 hours), a student will receive a warning from his or her teacher.
2. After the next two unexcused absences (4 days—8 hours), a student will receive a warning letter and will be called into the DEIL office for a conference. A letter will also be sent to his or her advisor.
3. After two more unexcused absences (6 days—12 hours), a letter will be sent to the student and his or her advisor stating that the student will receive no points for participation, and is therefore in danger of failing the course.

**Tardiness**
Tardiness is disruptive to the classroom atmosphere. Coming to class more than 15 minutes late is equivalent to being absent for that class hour. Two “tardy marks” are equivalent to one unexcused absence.

**Plagiarism**
The work that you turn in for this class MUST BE YOUR OWN. As you know, the consequences of plagiarism are serious. The University of Illinois’ handbook, Code on Campus Affairs and Regulations Applying to All Students, defines plagiarism as “intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise.” Plagiarism is one type of academic dishonesty which may result in a student’s suspension or dismissal from the University.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Diagnostic test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce Portfolios Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td><strong>Unit 1: Writing Process</strong></td>
<td>Assign first assignment:</td>
<td>Assign 1st journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing Process (review)</td>
<td>Revising the diagnostic test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>• Five paragraph essay writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>• Coherence and Unity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>• Purpose, audience and style</td>
<td>1st draft due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Peer evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 8</td>
<td><strong>Unit 2: Source-based writing</strong></td>
<td>1st assignment due</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 9</td>
<td>• Introduction to plagiarism –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is plagiarism?</td>
<td>Assign 2nd assignment:</td>
<td>Assign second journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ways to avoid plagiarism</td>
<td>Source-based essay (summarization)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Paraphrase</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Quotation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Documentation style</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 10</td>
<td>Library Tour (exact date to be announced)</td>
<td>1st draft due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 11</td>
<td>Peer evaluation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 12</td>
<td>Writing conference</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 13</td>
<td>Writing conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 14</td>
<td>Writing conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 15</td>
<td><strong>Unit 3: Critical writing</strong></td>
<td>2nd assignment due</td>
<td>Assign third journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 16</td>
<td>• Introduction to critical writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 17</td>
<td>Assign third assignment: Writing a critique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>• Arguments &amp; counterarguments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>• Critique (Article &amp; Book)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Critical language; hedging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Peer Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td><strong>Unit 4 Research paper</strong></td>
<td>Assign final project</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to research paper – Mini-research paper writing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>• Literature review</td>
<td>Assign 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>• Introduction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>• Methods</td>
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<td>• Results and discussion</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>• Peer evaluation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Presentation Orientation</td>
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APPENDIX B
TEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT 0.4

General Description:
In an academic environment, it is important for ESL writers to know how to express their thoughts and ideas in a formal and academic manner. Students will display their academic writing skills and knowledge by demonstrating their ability to create drafts and to revise their writings.

General Objectives:
Students will compose four types of academic writing: 1) three-part essay, 2) source-based essay (summary), 3) critique, and 4) research paper/literature review. For each type of writing, students will create multiple drafts based on peer evaluation, teacher feedback and personal reflection. At the end of the semester, students will submit a writing portfolio. The writing portfolio will be composed of all the writings a student wants to be considered for the portfolio portion of the grade; including the four major assignments, in-class writing activities, and reflective journals. Students will also submit reflection papers where they can write about features they concentrated on during the writing process and how it developed throughout drafts. In addition, they can reflect on aspects they want to improve on in the following assignments, including grammar and writing styles and talk about what kind of efforts they will put in to develop their writing.

Specific Objectives
1) Three-part essay
   - write a persuasive essay using one or two reading(s)
   - express information and ideas in an organized manner
   - support ideas with ideas from the reading(s)
   - display an attempt at paraphrasing, summarizing, and using quotations
   - write appropriately to address an academic audience
   - express arguments and ideas in a coherent and unified manner
   - follow conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation

2) Source-based essay (Summary)
   - write a source-based essay using an academic article
   - choose source that is informative and academic
   - display paraphrasing, summarizing, and quotation skills (avoiding plagiarism)
   - display knowledge the conventions of citation styles used in the writer’s field/discipline
   - express information in an organized manner
   - write appropriately to address an academic audience
   - follow conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation
   - express arguments and ideas in a coherent and unified manner

3) Critique
   - write a critique based on an academic journal article from the student’s field
   - express information and thoughts in an organized manner
   - display paraphrasing, summarizing, and quotation skills
- write appropriately to address an academic audience
- express thoughts using cautious language (hedging expressions)
- display knowledge of the conventions of citation style used in the writer’s field/discipline
- follow conventions of spelling, grammar and punctuation
- express arguments and ideas in a coherent and unified manner

4-1) Research Paper
- write a research paper on an original study
- express information and ideas using an IMRD structure or a structure used in writer’s field
- display paraphrasing, summarizing, and quotation skills
- write appropriately to address an academic audience
- express thoughts and information using cautious language (hedging expressions)
- display knowledge of the conventions of citation style used in the writer’s field
- follow conventions of spelling and punctuation

4-2) Literature Review
- write a literature review based on an original idea
- use at least six sources from an academic and credible source
- express information and ideas in a structured manner
- display paraphrasing, summarizing, and quotation skills
- write appropriately to address an academic audience
- express thoughts and information using cautious language (hedging expressions)
- display knowledge of the conventions of citation style used in the writer’s field
- follow conventions of spelling and punctuation

Prompt Attributes:
1) Three-part essay
Students will be asked to write a three-part essay based on one or two readings and a question related to the reading(s). Students should be able to display their analysis of topic, with a clear thesis, introduction, body and conclusion. To support ideas, students will use information from given text(s) and personal experience. Students will be asked to express ideas in their own words when using information from the source. Students will write about 400-500 words.

2) Source-based essay (Summary)
Students will be asked to a summary of an academic article. Students should be able to display their analysis and understanding of the article. Students will display knowledge of the conventions of citation style used in the writer’s field/discipline. This assignment is to demonstrate their understanding of source-based writing and skills using quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. Students will write about 500-600 words.

3) Critique
Students will be asked to write a critique on an academic journal article. Students should be able to display their analysis of topic, with a clear thesis, introduction, body and conclusion. This assignment is to demonstrate their analysis of an academic text, use appropriate language and expressions to show criticism in an academic environment. Students will write about 600 words.

4-1) Research Paper
Students will be asked to write a short research paper based on an original idea and data. Students should be able to display their ideas and information in an IMRD structure, or an organization style used in their own field. Students will display knowledge of the conventions of citation style used in the writer’s field/discipline. This assignment is to familiarize students with the process of writing academic research paper and to demonstrate students’ understanding of how to organize a research paper. Students will write about 2500-3000 words.

4-2) Literature Review
Students will be asked to write a literature review based on a topic related to students’ own field. Students should be able to display their analysis of topic, with a clear thesis, introduction, body and conclusion. Students should be able to synthesize ideas from at least 5 academic sources to display their understanding of the topic with a clear thesis, introduction, body and conclusion. This assignment is to demonstrate their analysis of academic tests, use appropriate language and expressions in an academic environment. Students will write about 2500-3000 words.

5) Self-reflective Journals
Students will be asked to write four self-reflective journals after the submission of each assignment. In the self-reflective journals, students will be asked to reflect on the following questions based on their writing experiences:

- What is the strength of the particular piece?
- What are some areas that can be improved in the particular piece?
- What are some areas in your piece that you want to pay more attention to for your next assignment? How will you improve that particular area?

6) Student-teacher Writing Conference
Students will meet with the teacher to discuss strengths/weaknesses of their assignments. The teacher will provide general and specific feedback on the assignment and help students in the self-reflective process. Students can also ask questions on course materials and content.

**Response Attributes:**

1) Three-part essay
Students will write a three-part essay based on a question and related reading(s). The response should be coherent and organized. The essay should be intended for an academic audience.

2) Source-based essay
Students will write a source-based essay on topic of their own choice. The essay should be coherent and organized. The thesis statement should be supported with appropriate evidence from academic and credible sources. The paper will contain relevant information, using academic and formal language.

3) Critique
Students will write a critique based on an academic journal article from their field of study. The critique should be coherent and organized. The students should use cautious expressions to show their ideas and thoughts about the article. The paper will contain relevant information, using academic and formal language.
4-1) Research Paper
Students will write a research paper using original ideas and data. The essay should follow the IMRD model or model used in students’ field. The paper will contain relevant information, using academic and formal language.

4-2) Literature Review
Students will write a literature review. The essay should display their analysis of topic, with a clear thesis, introduction, body and conclusion. The paper will contain relevant information, using academic and formal language.

Sample Item:
1) Three-part essay

1. Read the essay entitled “Beauty and Body Image in the Media.”
2. Write an essay based on the article and on the essay question below. Your essay should include an introduction, body, and conclusion, and should use information from both the article (citing your source correctly) and your own insight and experience.
3. Be sure to take a clear stand either favoring or opposing the view that advertisements impose a negative influence on our self-image and our self-esteem.
4. Support your opinion by using the article and your own ideas to strengthen your main point.
5. When you are finished, look over your essay and correct any errors before you turn it in.

Essay question: Do advertisements impose a negative influence on our self-image and our self-esteem?

The essay will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
- Is the essay persuasive?
- Does the author express information and ideas in an organized manner?
- Does the essay have a clear thesis statement?
- Does the author support ideas with ideas from the reading(s)?
- Does the author write appropriately to address an academic audience?
- Does the author express arguments and ideas in a coherent and unified manner?
- Does the author follow conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation

Article

Beauty and Body Image in the Media

“We don’t need Afghan-style burquas to disappear as women.”
Images of female bodies are everywhere. Women—and their body parts—sell everything from food to cars. Popular film and television actresses are becoming younger, taller and thinner. Some have even been known to faint on the set from lack of food. Women’s magazines are full of articles urging that if they can just lose those last twenty pounds, they’ll have it all—the perfect marriage, loving children, great sex, and a rewarding career.

Why are standards of beauty being imposed on women, the majority of whom are naturally larger and more mature than any of the models? The roots, some analysts say, are economic. By presenting an ideal difficult to achieve and maintain, the cosmetic and diet product industries are assured of growth and profits. And it’s no accident that youth is increasingly promoted, along with thinness, as an essential criterion of beauty. If not all women need to lose weight, for sure they’re all aging, says the Quebec Action Network for Women’s Health in its 2001 report *Changements sociaux en faveur de la diversité des images corporelles*. And, according to the industry, age is a disaster that needs to be dealt with.

The stakes are huge. On the one hand, women who are insecure about their bodies are more likely to buy beauty products, new clothes, and diet aids. It is estimated that the diet industry alone is worth $100 billion (U.S.) a year. On the other hand, research indicates that exposure to images of thin, young, air-brushed female bodies is linked to depression, loss of self-esteem and the development of unhealthy eating habits in women and girls.

The American research group Anorexia Nervosa & Related Eating Disorders, Inc. says that one out of every four college-aged women uses unhealthy methods of weight control—including fasting, skipping meals, excessive exercise, laxative abuse, and self-induced vomiting. And the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute warns that weight control measures are being taken by girls as young as nine. American statistics are similar. In 2003, *Teen* magazine reported that 35 per cent of girls 6 to 12 years old have been on at least one diet, and that 50 to 70 per cent of normal weight girls believe they are overweight.

Media activist Jean Kilbourne concludes that, "Women are sold to the diet industry by the magazines we read and the television programs we watch, almost all of which make us feel anxious about our weight."

**Unattainable Beauty**

Perhaps most disturbing is the fact that media images of female beauty are unattainable for all but a very small number of women. Researchers generating a computer model of a woman with Barbie-doll proportions, for example, found that her back would be too weak to support the weight of her upper body, and her body would be too narrow to contain more than half a liver and a few centimeters of bowel. A real woman built that way would suffer from chronic diarrhea and eventually die from malnutrition.

Still, the number of real life women and girls who seek a similarly underweight body is epidemic, and they can suffer equally devastating health consequences.

**The Culture of Thinness**
Researchers report that women’s magazines have ten and one-half times more ads and articles promoting weight loss than men’s magazines do, and over three-quarters of the covers of women’s magazines include at least one message about how to change a woman’s bodily appearance—by diet, exercise or cosmetic surgery.

Television and movies reinforce the importance of a thin body as a measure of a woman’s worth. Canadian researcher Gregory Fouts reports that over three-quarters of the female characters in TV situation comedies are underweight, and only one in twenty are above average in size. Heavier actresses tend to receive negative comments from male characters about their bodies (“How about wearing a sack?”), and 80 per cent of these negative comments are followed by canned audience laughter.

There have been efforts in the magazine industry to buck the trend. For several years the Quebec magazine Coup de Pouce has consistently included full-sized women in their fashion pages and Châtelaine has pledged not to touch up photos and not to include models less than 25 years of age.

However, advertising rules the marketplace and in advertising thin is "in." Twenty years ago, the average model weighed 8 per cent less than the average woman—but today’s models weigh 23 per cent less. Advertisers believe that thin models sell products. When the Australian magazine New Woman recently included a picture of a heavy-set model on its cover, it received a truckload of letters from grateful readers praising the move. But its advertisers complained and the magazine returned to featuring bone-thin models. Advertising Age International concluded that the incident "made clear the influence wielded by advertisers who remain convinced that only thin models spur the sales of beauty products."

**Self-Improvement or Self-Destruction?**

The barrage of messages about thinness, dieting and beauty tells "ordinary" women that they are always in need of adjustment—and that the female body is an object to be perfected.

Jean Kilbourne argues that the overwhelming presence of media images of painfully thin women means that real women’s bodies have become invisible in the mass media. The real tragedy, Kilbourne concludes, is that many women internalize these stereotypes, and judge themselves by the beauty industry's standards. Women learn to compare themselves to other women, and to compete with them for male attention. This focus on beauty and desirability "effectively destroys any awareness and action that might help to change that climate."


2) Source-based essay (Summary)

This assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of source-based writing and skills using quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. You should be able to use the appropriate conventions
used in your field. Please specify the documentation style in the essay when you submit it.

Topic: Summarize the academic article.

Directions
Write a 500-600 summary (not including the references) on an article.

Your paper should be typed using a 12 point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced. Please set 1 inch margins.

You should be able to display your analysis of your article using the strategies discussed in the course (summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting).

You will be graded on your ability to:
- express information in an organized manner
- display paraphrasing, summarizing, and quotation skills
- write appropriately to address an academic audience
- follow conventions of spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- express arguments and ideas in a coherent and unified manner

3) Critique

This assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of source-based writing and expressing opinions in an academic and formal style. You should be able to use the appropriate conventions used in your field. Please specify the documentation style in the essay when you submit it.

Topic: Write a critical analysis of an academic article.

Direction:
Write a 600 word critique (not including references) on an academic journal article.

Your paper should be typed using a 12 point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced. Please set 1 inch margins.

You should be able to display your knowledge of cautious language (hedging) and critical analysis, with a clear thesis, introduction, body and conclusion.

You will be graded on your ability to:
- express information and thoughts in an organized manner
- display paraphrasing, summarizing, and quotation skills
- write appropriately to address an academic audience
- express thoughts using cautious language (hedging expressions)
- display knowledge of the conventions of citation style used in the writer’s field/discipline
- follow conventions of spelling, grammar and punctuation
- express arguments and ideas in a coherent and unified manner
### 4-1) Research Paper

This assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of research paper writing and conducting an original research. You should use original data to write this research paper. You should be able to use the appropriate conventions used in your field. Please specify the documentation style in the essay when you submit it.

**Topic:** Write a research paper on a topic of your choice. You should use your own, original ideas and data to write this paper.

**Direction:**
Write a 2500-3000 word research paper (not including references) related to a topic of your field.

Your paper should be typed using a 12 point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced. Please set 1 inch margins.

You should be able to display your knowledge of academic writing with a clear structure.

### 4-2) Literature Review

This assignment is to demonstrate your understanding of using multiple sources and expressing opinions in an academic and formal style. You should have a research question in mind and write a literature review based on the topic. You should be able to use the appropriate conventions used in your field. Please specify the documentation style in the essay when you submit it.

**Topic:** Write a literature review on a topic of your choice. You should have a research question in mind and answer the question using various sources.

**Direction:**
Write a 2500-3000 word literature review (not including references) related to a topic of your field.

Your paper should be typed using a 12 point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced. Please set 1 inch margins.

You should be able to display your knowledge of academic writing with a clear structure.
APPENDIX C

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE VERSION 0.2

After you finish compiling your writing portfolio, please take a moment to answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

1. What kind of instruction did you receive for writing in English in your previous schooling?

2. What are some of the difficulties that you have when writing in English?

3. Have you had previous experience with portfolio assessment in writing? If yes, please describe the course briefly.

4. What do you think are the purposes of the writing portfolio in ESL 501?

5. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of using portfolio assessment in ESL 501?

6. Do you think keeping a writing portfolio was helpful to you?
   • If yes, in what way?
   • If no, why not?

7. Have you ever done any reflective writing before?
   • If yes, describe the experience please.

8. Do you think reflection journal was helpful?
   • If yes, in what way?
   • If no, why not?

9. Do you think the portfolio assignment was beneficial to you?
   • If yes, in what way?
   • If no, why not?

10. Are there any other comments you would like to share with me regarding this course and the final portfolio?
APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Division of English as an International Language

You are invited to participate in a study that investigates the essays and reflection papers written by ESL academic writing students. My name is Sun Joo Chung and I am a student in the Division of English as an International Language. This research is supervised by Professor Fred Davidson in the Division of English as an International Language. The goal of this research is to examine ESL students’ writings and their revision processes. The objective of the study is to find the relationship between students’ revisions in drafts and their thoughts shown in the reflection papers.

If you decide to participate, I will examine your drafts on the four major assignments and the reflection papers that you produce this semester for ESL 501. I will also investigate personal notes from the writing conferences and excerpts from the post-interview with the researcher regarding your writing process which will be recorded.

There are no known risks in this study beyond those of ordinary life. However, since I will be recording your speech, it is possible that you might feel uncomfortable. The potential benefit of this research is to deepen our understanding of the writing process of ESL students. No compensation will be made to individuals participating in this study.

Please note that any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. All essays and recordings will be transcribed using pseudonyms so that no personally identifying information is on the cassettes. Audio recordings, photocopies of your work, and other data collected will be used only for teaching and research purposes. I will keep all recordings and data in a secure place.

The participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate in the study. Unwillingness to participate or withdrawing from the study will not affect in any way your grade for the ESL class you are currently taking, or your future relationship with the Division of English as an International Language at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. You are free to (a) discontinue participation in the study at any time, (b) request that the audio-tape recorder be turned off at any time during the interview, and (c) request that the recorded session be destroyed and excluded from the study. If you have any questions, please contact me at schung26@uiuc.edu or (217) 722-1989. Or you can contact the supervisor Fred Davidson at fgd@uiuc.edu or (217) 333-1506. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@uiuc.edu.

No written reports or public presentations of this project will be made until after I receive a copy of this consent form, and I will not receive it until after the grades are submitted for this semester.

I am 18 years of age or older. I understand the above information. By signing this form, I voluntarily consent to participate in the study described above. I have been offered a copy of this consent form.

Participant Signature __________________________ Date ______________

Please answer the following questions by checking off the yes/no responses and by signing your initials:

I give the investigator permission to use excerpts of the written essays at professional meetings and professional publications.

__________ Initials Yes ____________ Initials No
I give the investigator permission to use excerpts of the audio recordings at professional meetings and professional publications.

________ Initials Yes  __________ Initials No