

## Conference Paper

# Students' Perception of the Application of Portfolio Assessment during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract**

The Covid-19 pandemic has widely affected the administration of teaching, assessments, and the learning process at large. Online learning has been used predominantly during the pandemic. While portfolio assessment has empirically demonstrated a couple of positive points, investigations into the use of portfolio assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic can be hardly found. At the Department of English Education of Universitas Muria Kudus (EED UMK), Language Assessment Course administers the portfolio assessment consisting of (1) an individual summary of the language assessment concepts/theories, (2) group work to analyze facial and content validity, (3) group work to analyze test objects (focus tendency (mean, median, median, mode, and standard deviation, difficulty index, distinctive character, distractor effectiveness) and test reliability), and (4) individual work on developing a language test. This study aims to describe students' perceptions of the portfolio assessment at EED UMK during the pandemic. Using an open-ended questionnaire, students will examine the consistency, benefits, and benefits of using portfolio assessment. Through the narrative analysis, the results show that most of the students (86%) express their consent to using Portfolio Scoring for reasons such as compliance with health protocols, process-oriented, active learning, better organization, time flexibility, and self-initiated learning. The results imply that the portfolio assessment made it easier for students to study online while following health protocols during the pandemic. Portfolio assessment also provides flexibility in maintaining the teaching and learning process, which is either synchronous or asynchronous during the pandemic.

**Keywords:** portfolio, assessment, students' perceptions, covid 19 pandemic

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## 1. Introduction

In late 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) initially announced that a viral disease of unknown cause had been found in China, and on February 11, 2020, this organization named the novel coronavirus disease COVID-19. Indonesia claimed the first two COVID-19 cases in March 2020. Campaigns and measures have been advocated to prevent

the spread of the disease. Physical and social distancing, health and sanitary campaign, limitations on access to public places are accordingly imposed widely.

The Covid-19 pandemic has widely affected the administration of the teaching and learning process and assessment. Online learning has been used predominantly during the pandemic. Meanwhile, portfolio assessment has empirically demonstrated a couple of positive points. However, investigation on the use of portfolio assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic can be hardly found. Work from Home (WFH) and Study from Home (SFH) with the use of e-learning, meeting applications have become common practice to avoid the spread of Covid-19. These practices should be of great help to learners and teachers / trainers. Some studies, for example [1], suggested that e-learning led to some ineffectiveness in real-world administrations. There are also concerns about funding and facility constraints, internet connections, and students' motivation.

A portfolio is a systematic compilation of a student's work from the beginning to the end of the course to assess the quality of coursework, learning progress, and academic performance. It also measures the achievement of the learning objectives. It serves as permanent documentation of the academic performance of the students [2].

An assessment of the digital portfolio has been used in the Language Assessment Course at the English Education Department of the Universitas Muria Kudus (EED UMK). The portfolio assessment consists of (1) an individual summary of the language assessment concepts theories. (2) group work on face validity and content validity analysis, (3) group work on analysis of test items (central tendency (mean, median, mode and standard deviation, index of difficulty, power of discrimination, distractor effectiveness and test reliability), and (4) individual work to develop a language test.

Previous studies of students' perceptions of portfolio application were mostly found to be positive before and after the implementation of portfolio assessment. In general, students prefer the portfolio assessment over traditional assessment [3] as it reflects the holistic nature of language development [4]. A qualitative study shows positive backwashing effects of the portfolio evaluation [5]. The superiority of the portfolio method over the conventional evaluation method is also identified by [6]. [7] state that portfolio assessment enables EFL learners to actively participate in class with peers or teachers, and that they can assess their strengths and weaknesses during the teaching-learning process.

Portfolio evaluations were positively perceived as they promote more meaningful and better learning [8]. Portfolio assessment improves performance throughout the process and helps create a positive attitude towards writing in the target language [9, 10].

Among many alternative authentic assessments, a portfolio is one of the recommended types of assessment used by teachers in schools [11]. A portfolio is perceived as an empowering activity and contributes to development of self-regulated learning students [12]. Portfolio assessment in the current curriculum is seen as a response to concerns in the use of traditional assessment [13]. It also provides the opportunity to document individual student growth [14]. It is perceived that the portfolio evaluation motivates the construction of knowledge, authenticity and creativity; thus promoting initiation, compassion, self-discipline and spontaneity in students [15].

Theoretically, some experts mention some positive aspects of the application of the portfolio [16, 17, 18]. It shows the learning process of students, flexible measurements, continuous observation of student progress, can perform all observable skills, processes or content. Portfolio assessment in normal situations has demonstrated good results and positive perceptions of learning [19]. The use of portfolio projects have been widely known to be beneficial for learners to improve students' composition [20, 21]. Portfolio assessments have been positively perceived by the students [3–5, 22–24]. However, investigation on the use of portfolio assessment during the Covid-19 pandemic can be hardly found.

The above discussion suggests there is a need to study the application of portfolio assessment during the covid-19 pandemic. This study is to investigate the students' perceptions of the use of portfolio assessment at EED UMK during the pandemic. It is to discover the students' agreement and advantages concerning the application of portfolio assessment.

## 1.1. The Portfolio Assessment Coverage

The portfolio assessment in Language Assessment class consists of all works (both individual and group) and documents related to the course. It covers mid-term and final-term evaluation.

The mid-term evaluation consists of (1) Individual summary of Language Assessment concepts/theories (teaching and assessment, principles of language assessment, test types, a standardized test of English proficiency, assessing listening, assessing speaking, assessing reading, assessing writing, alternatives in assessment, grading and student evaluation, national assessment policy). These topics are mostly based on [25, 26]. (2) Group Work on Face Validity and Content Validity (Syllabus, Test Papers from Schools), and (3) Group Work on Test Item Analysis (Syllabus, Test paper, Scoring Rubrics, Students' Answer Sheet): (central-tendency: mean, median, median, mode, and

standard deviation, index of difficulty, discriminating power, distractor effectiveness, and test reliability).

The Final Term Evaluation is in the form of an individual task to develop a language test battery containing (a) the selection of relevant syllabus in the curriculum, (b) table of test specification, (c) the test paper, (d) the blank answer sheet, and (e) the scoring rubric/guide.

## 2. Research Method

A narrative inquiry [27], is used in this investigation. It is to describe the lives of individuals, collecting and telling stories about people's lives, and writing narratives of individual experiences. Eighty-six students from three classes of Language Assessment at EED UMK of Odd Semester 2020/2021 participate in this study.

Using an open-ended questionnaire for data collection, it investigates the students' perceptions concerning their agreement and benefits of the application of Portfolio Assessment during the pandemic. A direct clarification is needed when the narration contains some multi interpretation or unclear meaning. The communications are administered through e-mail and WA chats. A qualitative analysis of the written narrations provided by the participants is employed.

## 3. Result and Discussion

Based on qualitative data analysis, 76 (88%) Students indicate positive perceptions, meanwhile, 10 students (12%) imply their disagreement on the application of

Positive perceptions are manifested by the students' agreement with the application of portfolio assessment. Their narrations indicate some reasons for the agreement such as observing health protocols, being a comprehensive assessment, fair process-oriented assessment, active learning, more organized, time flexibility, self-initiated learning, and responsibility.

Some narrations of students' agreement on the application of portfolio assessment are of the following quotations:

- 1. I agree with the Portfolio Assessment because, with this assessment, students have individual or group work experience that makes students do independent learning to measure their ability to understand their subjects.*
- 2. Portfolio assessment makes students more active in learning.*

3. *It is evaluating the results of students and conducting assessments from the beginning to the end of the lesson.*
4. *We can complete (the assessment) individually. I mean we can implement health protocols during the pandemic.*
5. *It can increase the activity in learning during this pandemic and as long as the task does not require us to leave the house or being in the crowd.*
6. *Learning is more organized.*
7. *Despite the pandemic, we can work on the task in the form of a portfolio. In the application of portfolio assessment during the pandemic, students can certainly benefit from this application.*
8. *By making a portfolio, we can study material that was given before. But in this pandemic, there are so many assignments and I'm sad about it.*
9. *I agree because the portfolio assessment during the pandemic can make students more active in-class learning. But it will be a little difficult for students because being active in this pandemic is not possible, let alone the teaching and learning process in an online form.*
10. *The advantage that I felt during this pandemic was of course flexibility in time.*
11. *It is not easily infected with viruses. because there is no physical contact with friends and lecturers.*
12. *Students can do work from home and get a little bit to relax.*
13. *It will improve my ability on understanding the material over time. A student learns how to take responsibility. Student takes an active role in examining what they have done and what they want to accomplish.*
14. *The time in working on portfolio assignment is long, so the process can be paid in installments little by little. Unlike other assignments with tight deadlines.*
15. *I agree because during the pandemics we can't conduct an offline class. So by using portfolio assessment teachers can assess the student's progress indirectly without meeting each other. And also by using portfolio assessment teachers can find out the progress of their students in a more detailed and structured.*
16. *I think the portfolio is a more relaxed assessment, why? because we are given plenty of time to do the task. So we can do the task gradually while doing the other task. We can pour our ideas into the portfolio.*

Students have the portfolio assignments so they can increase their ability to think more although it is in a pandemics situation. They become more involved in classroom learning, and students themselves can easily control their learning.

Some students also express their disagreement on the application of portfolio assessment. Most students' disagreement, however, is much negatively perceived because of the weakness of online communication during the pandemic and is not directly associated with the portfolio assessment itself. The workload when preparing the portfolio assignment becomes the cause of negative perceptions. Another reason is that the students find difficulties when they have to collect data from school and some aspects related to the internet connection, lack of face to face interaction during the pandemic.

Some students' expressions are as follows.

1. *I disagree because during this pandemic I have lacked focus on studying and difficulties understanding some courses.*
2. *There is miscommunication between teachers and students regarding the material being taught.*
3. *I disagree with a portfolio assessment in this pandemic. And it can't be effective because there are teachers who don't have the whole data. Even some teachers are busy with school works and their students. So even when we are about to ask i had a bad feeling of disturbing their time.*
4. *I think I disagree if a portfolio is used in this pandemic situation because it is very risky and I am not very optimistic about my writing.*
5. *I disagree because in the assessment portfolio there are group assignments, so we can't meet face to face with group members directly. because in my opinion, group work is easier face-to-face because you can ask direct questions and have good discussions.*
6. *We as students have a bigger burden with a large number of assignments. because with online classes, there are often many subjects that give assignments to students simultaneously and make students easily stressed.*
7. *We cannot meet our lecture and our friends in the discussion process. we do it virtually, and I think it would be better to have a class discussion like before the pandemic*

8. *There are many assignments from another subject too so we are difficult to divide our time, It feels like the time is too short for each assignment that given by the lecturer.*
9. *Portfolio assessment needs extra work and time-consuming. In this pandemic, it will be a little complicated when we want to collect the portfolio because we have to go to school or college and must do social distancing with other students.*

## 4. Conclusion and Suggestion

Through narrative analysis, this study shows that during the Covid-19 pandemic the application of portfolio assessment is positively perceived by the students. Most students (88) express their agreement on the use of portfolio assessment for various reasons. They get some benefits of the portfolio assessment while observing health protocols like keeping up social distancing and avoiding the crowds. The findings imply that portfolio assessment makes it easier for the students to study online while observing health protocol during the pandemic. Portfolio assessment provides flexibility in maintaining the process of teaching and learning either synchronously and asynchronously commonly done during the pandemic. The growth and development of students' abilities during the course can be easily monitored by the students themselves as well as by the lecturers. It also provides a fair, objective, transparent, and comprehensive assessment of the course.

It suggests that during the pandemic, giving a portfolio assignment is the right way to support students to think critically and implement the material that the lecturer has given. Giving the material only is not sufficient. Giving assignments is essential for students in understanding the material. The portfolio assessment is accordingly recommended during the pandemic. However, it would be better if in applying the portfolio, the lecturer/teacher should always provide attention, direction, and guidance to students especially during the pandemics since students still need good coaching from the lecturers/teachers.

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