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E-PORTFOLIO AS A MULTI-LAYERED ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT IN ENHANCING COLLABORATIVE WRITING SKILLS AMONG SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract:

Alternative assessment is traditionally viewed as a method of evaluating students' performance and as a formal testing method of gauging students' performance. However, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, alternative assessment has influenced the way students learn through collaborative peer learning. This exploratory case study design integrated e-portfolio and oral presentation as an alternative assessment in measuring students' learning performance and concur that alternative assessment provides a pathway to learning through collaborative learning in writing. The sample comprised 25 students who were from a tertiary institution undertaking an English course. By creating an e-portfolio in Google classrooms, students uploaded their written evaluative commentary of the tasks and uploaded their video recording of their oral presentations, in addition to providing their reflection and feedback on their learning experience while undergoing the alternative assessment. The e-portfolio was employed as an alternative assessment in order to measure students' writing skills by facilitating, compiling and archiving their work using an analytical rubric. The tasks were tailored to equip students with reasoning and critical thinking skills along with key toolkits in producing evaluative commentary and group oral presentation. The quantitative data in the form of students raw score and the qualitative data from students' written reflection and feedback were thematically. The findings of the study revealed five themes (boost confidence, enhanced communication skills, encouraged collaborative learning and teamwork and novel learning experience) that support its role as an innovating learning tool among second language learners

of English in enhancing their writing skills. Additionally, students were able to explore their learning by making connections and thinking critically through collaborative learning tasks. The study concludes that e-portfolio as an alternative assessment could potentially lead to deep learning when tasks are effectively integrated in multi-layers to promote learning.

Keywords:

Alternative Assessment, E-portfolio, Collaborative Learning, Writing Skills, Second Language Learner of English

Introduction

Alternative assessment is known to encourage reflective thinking and supporting self-regulated learning (Britland, 2019), which relatively influence students' learning as part of remote learning. In addition to evaluating students' development and demonstrating their accomplishments, assessment is regarded as a way that directs teaching and learning (Finch, 2002; Kinash, McGillivray, & Crane, 2018). Moreover, alternative assessment through collaboration enhances knowledge production and highlights the importance of developing thinking between language learners during online language learning and social engagement (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018; Zou et al., 2018). Therefore, students are able to provide input for improvisation that offer opportunities for learning through the integration of cooperative learning that allow students' learning (Pavo, 2021). This aspect of continuous progress will not be captured if strict assessment criteria and traditional views of assessments were applied (Finch, 2002). Tests should require more complex and challenging mental processes from students. It should be acknowledged more than one approach or one right answer is plausible and, in this manner, more emphasis could be placed on uncoached responses and real products from students.

On the other hand, authentic assessment aims to assist learners to meet their learning outcomes and deal with practical issues that students may face in their professional life later (Vu & Dall'Alba, 2014; Wiewiora & Kowalkiewicz, 2018). Employers are relentless over graduates' performance, which they see as dogmatic, unable to adjust to the needs of the workplace (Plump 2010). Moreover, it was also pointed that they lack fundamental skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills, and the ability to work in a team (Singh, Thambusamy & Ramly, 2014). Also, incorporating realistic tasks that are tied to real-life situations in evaluations can boost students' determination and motivate them to participate in the learning process (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014). In order to reach the desired objectives, authentic assessments necessitate substantial instructional resources for proper implementation (Jopp, 2019). Prior studies (Murphy, Fox, Freeman, & Hughes, 2017; Villarroel, Bloxham, Bruna, Bruna, & Herrera-Seda, 2018) examined the benefits of authentic assessment in higher education and found that authentic assessment fosters transferable skills at the workplace. These studies focus on the dimensions and processes involved in the process of learning that stems from collaborative learning. Presentations, live performances, projects, exhibitions, portfolios, case studies, reflective diaries, interviews, and group work are examples

of authentic evaluation methods and tools (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Sridharan & Mustard, 2015).

Specifically, e-portfolio is used as a method to help students by facilitating, compiling and archiving their works (Banta, 2003; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). It is used as a collective tool that helps students understand the learning objectives to integrate their learning through reflection and exhibit their accomplishments. As such, e-portfolio as an alternative assessment allows students to think critically as well as refine their ideas to provide an evaluative commentary (Piggin, 2011) based on the topics assigned and orally speak their penned thoughts with greater confidence. E-portfolio attracts a considerable amount of interest in showcasing students' work and achievements.

For this study, an electronic method or specifically e-portfolio was employed as a method of alternative assessment to measure students' writing skills in providing an avenue for students to explore their writing ability based on the topics assigned to produce an evaluative commentary using a qualitative approach. Therefore, students would be given the opportunity to explore their learning by making connections to real-life situations. In other words, within the context of this study, e-portfolio attempts to integrate the appropriate assessment tasks as a platform for cooperative learning. Thus, the main objective of this study is explore to what extent e-portfolio as an alternative assessment functions as an innovating learning tool among second language learners of English in enhancing their writing skills.

E-portfolio

A portfolio is a "purposeful, selective collection of learner work and reflective self-assessment that is used to track progress and achievement over time with relation to specific criteria," (Kohonen, Jaatinen, Kaikkonen, & Lehtovaara, 2014, p. 51). When this comes to the impact of evaluation on foreign language or second language competency, researches point to portfolios' significant contribution to the development of the four language skills, notably writing (Lo, 2010; Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002; Lam, 2016). Portfolios, when used appropriately by educators can be potentially a useful tool for enhancing productive skills. According to Bloom and Bacon (1995), portfolio is able to reveal students' strengths and weaknesses and would allow examiners to measure the students that increases the reliability and validity of the assessment. Since portfolios significantly differ from a traditional form of examination, there is a need to address how portfolios are evaluated and judged. Blending authentic assessment such as e-portfolio is beneficial in developing students' employability skills. But crucially, they also develop self-management skills and critical thinking as a result of the learning processes involved (Byrne, 2020). Portfolio provides the opportunity for revision and reflection over multiple attempts and it can be employed to continue as a record of profiling personal development (Farahian et al. 2021). Also, it is commonly used as a reflective tool (Bodle et al., 2017; Campbell & Tran, 2021) to alter learners' approaches in their learning. It thus reinforces employability skills such as coping with uncertainty, working on projects, making plans and thinking strategically, communicating with one another in the team (Andrews & Higson 2008). Sharing similar advantages and benefits to portfolio, an e-portfolio branches out on its own when the collection of work created by students' becomes digital.

E-portfolio as an Assessment and Learning Tool

In addressing the issues related to assessment and evaluation, e-portfolio is a versatile assessment method that could be utilized as pre-assessment, formative as well as summative assessments in classrooms (Campbell & Tran, 2021; Hung, 2012). E-portfolio can be used as

a formative assessment as it seeks to assess students' demonstration of understanding of texts reviewed in order to produce a critical analysis of the issue being examined. Therefore, students can be assessed on their ability to review text as well as to reproduce oral video presentations. Secondly, the incorporation of this approach allows the instructor to gauge students' abilities over a period of time effectively using various alternative assessment methods (Mudau et al., 2021). In writing e-portfolio, students can be asked to produce a short group video commentary to express their opinions and perspectives on the topic investigated as part of their alternative assessment. Thirdly, the instructor could also use the process of e-portfolio in engaging students in collaborative work. The process involve the application of virtual team work, planning and brainstorming, analyzing and evaluating. Therefore, e-portfolio engages students in authentic assessment as students can monitor their own progress and learning as in how and what they are learning and how they are progressing with time in a real-life setting as well. Such innovative methods have moved beyond the standardized examination of writing test, which is not only to students' performance, but it also monitors students' learning by aligning the learning outcomes to assessments. It is ought to be emphasized that standard examinations should not be the all and end all of education. A connection needs to be established to the learning processes to embed humanistic values (Aksu Atac, 2012; Finch, 2002) with authentic learning as alternative assessment bridges learning and captures students' learning processes. E-portfolio makes this connection come true.

Rubrics and alternative assessment

In the context of education, rubric relates to a variety of categories such as assessment criteria, learning evaluation, and learning gradients for a set of instructions (Brookhart, 2013). Analytical rubrics provide useful feedback on students' strengths and weaknesses (Bukhari et al., 2021; Moskal, 2000). An analytic rubric focuses on broad dimensions of writing. However, the dimensions are presented using different categories or levels and each aspect is scored individually. Score scales are assigned to measure individual performance on each dimension where the overall scores are summed. The dimensions in the rubric are weighted based on the importance of each category.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach and used a simple exploratory case design with limited number of students to explore the phenomena of e-portfolio as an assessment and learning tool in among second language speakers of English. When it comes to traditional writing assessments, students tend to focus on achieving a grade instead of improving their writing processes and thinking skills. On the other hand, e-portfolio empowers students, promotes a student-centered classroom environment, and allows them to track their development through the e-portfolio process.

Sample

In attempting these tasks, a total of 25 students participated in creating e-portfolio as part of their alternative assessment in their learning. The data was gathered through a convenience sample technique that included students who were enrolled in a writing course subject. The students undertook a writing skills course as part of fulfilling the requirement of a diploma programme. This cohort of students comprised students from sports science, accounting and applied sciences. The instructor chose the task of creating an e-portfolio as an alternative assessment to allow students to explore authentic texts in the context of real-life situations to understand, analyze and evaluate point of views in the given articles. Five groups were assigned

to five different topics based on the articles distributed to the respective groups. By using Google classroom as their digital space, students showcased their writing skills in Task 1 by uploading their responses to an evaluative commentary for a given article, and were motivated to speak confidently in Task 2 by uploading a video of their oral presentation, before posting their reflection and feedback on their test-taking and learning experience.

By adopting this multi-layered form of alternative assessment, students' argumentative skills such as the ability to identify and provide justification as well as acknowledging opposing viewpoints can be validly measured (Finch, 2002; Piggin, 2011). Argumentation skills (Marttunen et al., 2005) are among the most important cognitive abilities in the twenty-first century that requires thoughtful, balanced reasoning abilities in both written and spoken forms. As such, this assessment was tailored to equip students with reasoning and critical thinking skills along with key toolkits in writing such as writing a thesis statement, reviewing central idea, topic sentences and supporting details in producing evaluative commentary and group oral presentation.

Instrument

Measuring of Students' Learning Outcomes
The main objective of conducting of e-portfolio as an alternative assessment is to integrate key elements of writing skills such as thesis statement, topic sentences and supporting details as well as reflection on the author's tone as part of the components of evaluative commentary. Students were required to provide their own opinions based on the issue analysed. Therefore, students learning outcomes were carefully designed based on two tasks, which were Task 1 and Task 2. Both of these tasks took a total of six weeks to complete using a qualitative approach.

Defining the Tasks to be Assessed
The first stage involved stating the expected learning outcomes for both the tasks. For task 1, the groups of students were expected to produce an evaluative commentary. To fulfil the specific writing skills, students were assessed on their ability to write thesis statement, topic sentences and supporting details. They should also identify the author's tone and form opinions of the issue examined as part of the content of the text. Also, organization such as paragraphing and cohesion of the text were important elements of their evaluative commentary. The category of language was also another dimension of scoring. For Task 2, students were required to prepare a group based oral presentation. This was an extension of Task 1 as students were required to deliver a group-based presentation paying particular focus on expressing their opinions and reflecting on the issue investigated using appropriate tone and intonation.

Defining Criteria using Analytical Rubric
Analytical rubrics were constructed to measure the students' competencies. The key aspects of content, organization and language were measured by adhering to the levels and descriptions of the rubrics for both tasks 1 and 2. The categories such as content, organization, language are three vital aspects used to measure students' learning outcomes. Students were benchmarked based on their competencies such as exemplary, proficient, adequate and weak. For organization, three categories were used namely, good, satisfactory and weak were employed. Language was categorized to four levels such as excellent, good, average and poor. The scales of scores of the mentioned aspects would provide the opportunity for diagnostics and improvement based on different aspects and levels of description employed for these tasks. For

evaluative commentary, in order to measure students' specific levels of performance, three levels of dimensions were delineated. For content, students were scored under four levels of dimensions such as exemplary (10-9), proficient (8-7), adequate (6-5) and incomplete (4-0). In measuring organization, three levels of dimension are used such as good (5-4), satisfactory (3-2), and weak (1-0) as displayed in Figure 1.

Evaluative Commentary (30%)

Group Members: **Topic:** _____

1. _____   **3.** _____
2. _____   **4.** _____

Marks attained	Marks	Description	Comments
		Content	
	10-9	**Exemplary** • Provided a very clear and concise overview of the overall article • Have very clearly stated the author's tone and included all the main points of the argument from the text. • Have clearly stated the supporting details • Have provided very strong evidence i.e. statistics, expert testimony, facts, etc. • Have clearly stated own views (agree/disagree) • Have clearly justified opinions with appropriate reasons • Have clearly included a restatement of opinion and comments related to the issue examined.	
	8-7	**Proficient** • Provided somewhat clear and concise overview of the overall article • Have sufficiently stated the author's tone and included some main points of the argument from the text. • Have thoroughly stated the supporting details • Have provided reasonable evidence i.e. statistics, expert testimony, facts, etc. • Have substantially stated own views (agree/disagree) • Have provided sufficient opinions with reasons • Have substantially included a restatement of opinions of the issue examined.	
	6-5	**Adequate** • Provided a cursory overview of the overall article • Have partially stated the author's tone and included brief main points of the argument from the text.	

		• Have partially stated the supporting details • Have somewhat provided suitable evidence from the texts • Have partially stated own views (agree/disagree) • Have provided basic opinions on the issue • Have partially included a restatement of opinions of the issue examined	
	4-0	**Incomplete** • Provided a superficial overview of the overall article • Have vaguely stated the author's tone and included brief main points of the argument from the text. • Have irrelevant supporting details • Have sketchy evidence from the texts • Have vague/incomplete/absent views (agree/disagree) • Have vague/incomplete/absent provided basic opinions on the issue • Have undeveloped/ absent restatement of opinions of the issue examined.	
Organization			
	5-4	**Good** • Showed a clear unity and evidence of planning Have good paragraphing and coherence to the overall text • Showed a succinct cohesion of ideas through proper use of discourse markers or transitions	
	3-2	**Satisfactory** • Showed some lapses in the unity and displayed some evidence of planning. organization. • Displayed a reasonable amount of cohesion of ideas through acceptable use of discourse markers and transitions.	
	1-0	**Weak** • Showed some lapses in the unity and displayed some evidence of planning. organization. • Displayed a reasonable amount of cohesion of ideas through acceptable use of discourse markers and transitions.	
Language			
	15-12	**Excellent** • No errors found in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure and grammar, meaning is very clearly conveyed.	
	11-8	**Good** • Hardly about 1-3 errors found in overall spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure and grammar, meaning is conveyed.	
	7-4	**Average** • Occasionally about 4-5 errors found in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence	

		structure and grammar, but meaning is not obscured.	
	3-0	**Poor** • Dominated by errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure and grammar; meaning is obscured.	

Figure 1. Rubric for Evaluative Commentary

In Task 2, which involved oral presentation, students were required to make a video recording and uploading them into their Google Drive. The aim of having students to present in groups is to allow students to provide reflections and express their opinions based on the investigated issues. Such a platform would allow students to speak with confidence and express their opinions objectively. This task would require students to understand and provide a strong evaluation of opinions apart from the text examined in the e-portfolio. Therefore, the group oral presentations aimed to measure the relevant aspects namely content, collaboration and presentation skills. Each aspect was graded on three levels excellent, competent, and weak to measure the specific outcomes. Specifically, students were measured on language usage throughout the article and were scored based using four different levels such as excellent (15-12), good (11-8), average (7-4) and poor (3-0) based on the ranking of levels as displayed in Figure 2.

Group Oral Presentation (20%)			
Marks attained	**Marks**	**Description**	**Comments**
		Content	
	10-7	**Excellent** • The presentation is centered around a well-developed thesis, highly reflective of the central idea and showed a well-developed opinion on the issue presented.	
	6-4	**Competent** • The presentation showed a reasonable development of the thesis, appropriate reflection of the central idea central and showed relevant opinion on the issue presented.	
	3-0	**Weak** • The presentation showed limited evidence of thesis development and reflection of central idea and showed limited opinion on the issue presented.	
		Collaboration	
	5-4	**Excellent** • The group members always showed good continuity of ideas from others. It was evident there was equal contribution to the presentation	
	3-2	**Competent** • The group members showed continuity of ideas most of the time. It was evident that	

		there was moderate contribution to the presentation	
	1-0	**Weak** • The group members limited continuity of ideas from others. It seemed as though only a few members contributed to the presentation.	
		Presentation Skills	
	5-4	**Excellent** • Presenters were very confident in delivery and showed evidence of preparation.	
	3-2	**Competent** • The presenters were occasionally found to be confident and preparation was reasonably evident.	
	1-0	**Weak** • Presenters were found to be unconfident and demonstrated little evidence of planning.	

Figure 2. Rubric for Group Oral Presentation

As can be seen in Figure 2, in order to fulfil the specific outcomes of group oral presentations, students were measured on content, collaboration and presentation skills and the dimensions of categories were delineated into three levels labelled as excellent (5-4), competent (3-2) and weak (1-0) for all the three aspects. The cut scores were determined according to the levels of the dimensions and descriptions of task accomplishments were scored based on the group performance. The important aspects of the tasks were listed as part of the criteria for both tasks. Also, the listed descriptions are the key characteristics that would be observed in scoring the students. The performance criteria were ordered sequentially for observation.

Procedure
During the implementation stages of students writing e-portfolio, several steps were involved in conducting this alternative assessment.

Step 1: Guide Sheet
The students worked on their respective topics assigned in the groups using the guided sheets provided for each group. The guided sheets allowed students to evaluate the article based on the questions below. Students were asked to brainstorm in their group using this guide sheet to correspond with the article. A sample of the guide sheet is shown in Figure 3.

Evaluative Commentary Guide Sheet

Evaluate the article by answering the following questions:

• What is the author's argument/point of view?
• What are the key points stated in the article? (Summarise the author's main points and supporting details)
• Is the article clear and well- supported(provide strong evidence e.g. statistics, expert testimony, facts, etc)
• Does the author provide any counter-arguments?
• Do you agree with the author's point of view/ argument? Why?
• What is your stand on this issue? Provide appropriate reasons to support your stand

Figure 3. Guide Sheet

Step 2: Evaluative Commentary Template

Based on the illustration shown in Figure 4, the groups were given an evaluative commentary template (a blank template) (see also Piggin, 2011), where students could provide an overview of the article which includes the central idea of the idea, body paragraphs that contain topic sentences, supporting detail and evidence to substantiate the claim of the author and conclusion. Therefore, students provided their responses based on the guide sheet using the template as an outline to produce an evaluative commentary.

Figure 4: Evaluative Commentary Template

Step 3

At this stage, students were required to produce a write up on the evaluative commentary based on their respective topics. Students were required to expand their content to approximately about 450-550 words. Each group was required to submit one evaluative commentary. Figure 5 shows a sample of a group's evaluative commentary.

The article illustrates that whether sitting could play a role in improving mental health. The author's tone is objective and pessimistic because he explains the facts about the link between sitting and mental health, as well as strategies for improving mental health during pandemics.

Firstly, lack of physical activity results in mental health. People apparently spent more time on sitting or looking at screens than doing exercises. For example, based on survey data showed participants who were meeting the U.S Physical Activity Guidelines (i.e 2.5-5 hours of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week) before the pandemic decrease their physical activity by 32%, on average.

Secondly, the author also argues about the association between sitting and mental health. The people's mental health improve over the eight-week period but those whose sitting times stayed high, their depressive symptoms is on average. However, this relationship is not the same as saying more sitting causes depression as its possible people who were more depressed sat more or that people who sat more became more depressed.

Lastly, the author is optimistic and encourages more people to recognize that even a little bit of movement can improve their mood and mental health even stopping a habit is very difficult. The author recommended people take breaks when sitting for long periods. For example, the people can incorporate that break from sitting by taking a short walk before and after the zoom meeting even they are no longer walking down the hall for in-person meetings. Furthermore, taking a break, it can benefit people physically and mentally while also providing structure to their day.

We strongly agreed with the author that sitting is more linked to increased feelings of depression, anxiety. During the Covid-19 pandemic, most people become more stressed and depressed because some of them may lose their income in business or be unemployed, and some of them have been dismissed from their job due to lack of employee salaries. Therefore, to overcome this situation, people should do physical activities that can keep them aside from thinking so much about their problems that may result in their mental health. These also can be practicing our healthy lifestyle and creating more ways of positive thinking so that people are not too depressed and only can think of committing suicide in the end. People also need more support from their families the most during this time. So, always spend time with the families to foster closer ties among the family.

Figure 5. A Sample of Group's Evaluative Commentary

Step 4
Once the groups have written their evaluative commentary, the next step is to prepare a group oral presentation. Each group had to provide well-developed opinions based on the central idea of the topic. Students were also required to reflect on the issue being examined to provide their opinions. Each member of the group was encouraged to express their thoughts based on their reflections of the topic presented. Each group was given 5-6 minutes for their presentation. Figure 6 illustrates a sample of oral presentation.

Figure 6. A Video Sample for Oral Presentation

Data Analyses
The obtained quantitative data in the form of scores were descriptively narrated, while the qualitative findings from students' written reflection and feedback were thematically analysed using frequency of word count. The analysis process identified, analyzed, and reported patterns generated from the qualitative data. The data analysis entails a step-by-step procedure involving five phases as shown in Figure 7.
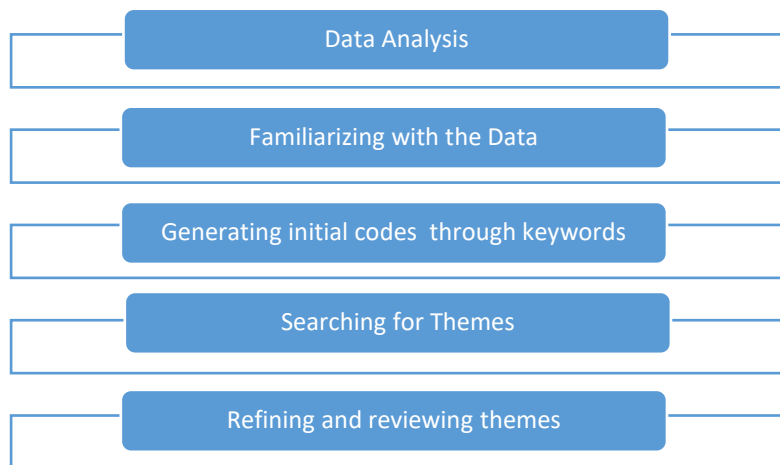
Figure 7: Data Analysis Procedure

Findings and Discussions

Based on students' performance in writing e-portfolio using Google Classroom, it was found that a majority of students were able to produce an evaluative commentary and also deliver their group oral presentations. Marks were scored based on the rubrics that were tailored to meet the requirements of both tasks using an analytical rubric. When it comes to writing evaluative commentary, it was found that out of the four groups, two groups of students attained an overall score of 27 marks for this task. In terms of content, both the groups displayed an exemplary level of work scoring 9 marks as both groups provided very clear and concise overview of the articles reported. The evaluative commentary also included a review of the author's tone and main points, supporting details were consistently evident throughout the texts. Apart from that, strong reasons, justifications and restatement of opinions are important aspects that form the content of evaluative commentary. In addition to that, in the aspect organization, both groups showed good organization scoring 5 marks of in displaying unity and planning to the development of the texts. Therefore, the transition from one point to another were clearly visible through the use of transitional markers. In language aspect, the groups displayed excellent level of language usage each scoring 13 marks. The texts were well written and the groups used appropriate language discourses such as vocabulary, spelling, register and grammatical structure consistently. In other words, these groups fulfilled the requirements of the task. The sample texts in Figure 8 display a sound understanding of the issues probed to produce well written commentaries.

Figure 8: Samples of Evaluative Writing

Group 3 scored 7 marks for content and attained a proficient level in providing clear and concise overview to the overall article. This group was able to sufficiently state the authors tone and included some main points from the text. However, the group provided a substantial amount of reasonable evidence in including their opinions on the issue examined. In the aspect of organization, the group displayed excellent level of mastery scoring 4 marks for unity and planning. In terms of language use, the group scored 9 marks and the language of word choice, spelling, register and grammar used were found to be reasonably good. However, there were instances where the group used informal word choices such as 'okay' that made the commentary appearing less formal and academic. Group 4 attained an overall score of 16 marks and performed at an adequate level. This group scored 6 marks for content and provided a brief overview to the overall article. In stating the author's tone, the group had only partially stated the tone of the author and briefly mentioned the main points and the supporting details of the text. However, when it comes to stating own opinions, only partial and simple opinions were reflected in the text. Therefore, important aspects of evaluation were absent in the commentary writing. In the aspect of organization, the group scored 5 marks and displayed a satisfactory level of paragraphing as there were lapses in unity to the overall text. As a result, it displayed a reasonable amount of cohesion in understanding the commentary. In the aspect of language, this group scored 7 marks, displaying an average language ability. Spelling and grammatical errors were obvious in the word choices and sentence structures but the overall meaning of the text was maintained.

Based on their reflections and feedback given on their learning experience during their test-taking journey, five themes are evident: promotion of learning (S1); boost confidence (S1 and S5), enhanced communication skills (S1), encouraged collaborative learning and teamwork (S1 and S5), and novel learning experience (S8) . Some of students' responses are illustrated as follow:

"Based on my experiences on conducting a group oral speaking is I can increase my level confident to speech. i also can sharpened my communication skills, we also changing our great idea. Group members know how to plan and manage a task, how to manage their time, and how to run a meeting. it is was very helpful many benefits that we can take as a student" (Extract S1)

Yes, it was really helpful for me because I can add my knowledge and learn new things. I also can build my confidence during the presentation. Other than that, I also learned how to do teamwork with other people. The experience was really good for me (Extract S5).

"Based on my experiences about writing an evaluative commentary and conducting a group oral presentation, I would say the experiences gained were helpful, and overall, it's a new experience for me. To be specific by doing the evaluative commentary I discover a new way of writing an argumentative essay and surely it helps broaden my mind to come up with a counter-argument. Before this, if I were to compare my previous essay regarding a debatable topic, I would put the pro-only without countering the cons given" (Extract S8)

"Based on my experiences of writing an evaluative commentary and conducting a group oral presentation, overall my group provide cooperation while doing this tasks. My strengths are I can provide my opinion about the article that I have read. After that, my weakness is I have difficulty to summarize the main points and I also a bit weak in writing" (Extract S12)

The findings of the study showed that, students gained confidence in the process of completing their tasks. When evaluating students' oral presentation, Group 1 scored 12 marks and Group 2 scored 14 marks respectively from the overall total of 20 marks. In the aspect of content, Group 1 displayed a competent level with the score of 5 marks. The presentation showed a reasonable development of the thesis, and reflection of the central idea central. Group 2 scored 7 marks for content and attained an excellent level of mastery for this category displaying a well-developed thesis that showed a reflection of the central idea being presented. Both Groups 1 and 2 were competent in the aspect of collaboration scoring 3 marks as they displayed a reasonable continuity of ideas in viewing the opinions among group members. In the aspect of presentation skills, Group 1 and 2 displayed excellent presentation skills scoring 4 marks respectively therefore they displayed confidence during the oral presentations.

Groups 3 and 4 scored 18 marks and 17 marks respective for this task. The groups displayed excellent content delivery scoring 9 marks each for this aspect. Also, the central ideas were well developed and were highly reflective that strong opinions were presented in relation to the issue being examined. In the aspect of collaboration, the groups displayed excellent levels of flow of ideas from one speaker to another that concluded the presentation effectively. Thereby, Groups 3 and 4 scored 5 marks respectively. Both groups displayed excellent levels of confidence during the presentation, although both groups performed at excellent levels, Group 3 exuded creativity that enhanced their mode of delivery scoring 5 marks and Group 4 scoring 4 marks in the aspect of presentation skills. From both tasks, it was found that groups 1 and 2 that performed well in writing evaluative commentary performed slightly above the average score in group oral presentations and groups 3 and 4 that scored lower in evaluative

commentary performed well in group oral presentations. To further substantiate the findings, some of students' reflections are displayed as follow

"My experience from that work is i can learn about team work, we divide the work to each group's members and we complete that work. I also can hone my skills such as communication skills and writing skills. For me, this work was very helpful because it has many benefits that i gain from it" *(Extract S17)*

"I believe I have good experience in writing evaluative commentary and group assignments. This is due to the fact that all members are very supportive, helpful, and capable of providing good cooperation to the group. Before making any decisions, we have a discussion to ensure that we can all carry out group assignments smoothly" *(Extract S20)*

"The strength is my group members are always willing for communications and always tolerated" *(Extract S23)*

"The strengths of evaluative commentary are it improved my analyzing skills, I am now able to understand the author's tone and improved my ability to justify something . Moreover, since it's a group work I am able to see my friend's perspective and how they interpret an article" *(Extract S25)*

From the tasks given, it could be surmised that were able to employ their productive skills in producing the evaluative commentary and group oral presentation using various digital tools successfully. Students displayed the ability to write an evaluative commentary objectively and included relevant aspects that is required as mentioned in the rubrics. Although some students, performed at an average level, they were able to appreciate the processes involved in producing an evaluative writing commentary although this was an unfamiliar task to them. In other words, such an alternative assessment has enabled students to revisit their work and learn at their own pace (Finch, 2002). Also, it considered students' overall learning that allowed for discussion, planning and drafting at preliminary stages through collaborative learning.

Conclusion

It could be gathered that alternative assessment contributes to students' learning in both receptive and productive skills namely writing and speaking tasks. Also, another advantage in employing an e-portfolio revealed that students were able to work seamlessly using various digital tools (Campbell & Tran, 2021; Mudau et al., 2021and collaborate (Britland, 2019) with their members as a team through remote learning in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. From the students' point of view, they were aware of their strengths and weaknesses of their writing skills in the process of completing the tasks.

Alternative assessment could also be used for diagnostic and intervention in classroom learning to gently help self-identify students own and unique weaknesses in writing (cf., Chostelidou & Manoli, 2020; Marttunen et al., 2002). Studies have pointed out to language being a barrier to students' writing (Marttunen et al., 2002) (cf., Bodle et al., 2017) as they also faced challenges in grammar, vocabulary as well as editing the task as different students had different writing styles. This could be seen as one of the drawbacks as different students will have different language proficiency. Therefore, this would consume time to compile as well as to edit the content of the final work, in addition to reduced motivation to learn. However, in attempting such tasks by adopting collaborative learning (Marttunen et al., 2002), the students' weakness dissipates and no longer becomes a threat to learning due to support from group members and teamwork (Finch, 2002). Additionally, students learn various skills such as working as a team with different personalities (Chostelidou & Manoli, 2020) and accomplishing the task as a unit

as highlighted from this study that explored e-portfolio as an assessment and learning tool among second language speakers of English.

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