

Chapter Six

Discussions of Questionnaire and Interview Data

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the data of questionnaire and interview gained from the present study. Through these data it will be proven that in addition to lingual empowerment, portfolio-based instruction could also empower EFL students in terms of personal empowerment. In many cases, the data of questionnaire and interview were used to confirm the findings of text analyses undertaken in Chapter 5. These two data involve asking questions of the research participants where the goal is “to tap into their knowledge, opinions, ideas and experiences” (Wallace, 1998: 124).

Data from the first interview corroborated with data of questionnaire generally demonstrate students’ response (attitude) towards the teaching program in empowering them as EFL learners. Concerning empowerment in writing, these two kinds of data in general support the findings of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Meanwhile, data from the second interview show that there were, to some extent, weaknesses of using portfolios as a means of instructional approach. Therefore, students provide suggestions for the improvement of the teaching program for further studies.

6.2 Discussions of Data from the First Interview and Questionnaire: How the Program Empowered EFL Learners

The fifteen students were asked to answer a number of reflective questions provided by the researcher as indicated in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.5 after the completion of one selected topic (during the program) and then they were requested to fill in the questionnaire at the end of the course (after the program) to investigate how the teaching program could empower EFL students in writing. The results are indicated in Section 6.2.1 below.

6.2.1 Students’ Response (Attitude) towards the Teaching Program

Table 8: Students’ Response (Attitude) towards the Teaching Program

Statement (By joining the course ...)	Percentage of Agreement (%)	Mean Rating
I improve my English writing skills.	86.7	4.3
I feel easy to develop ideas when I write.	81.3	4.1

I can develop ideas into paragraphs.	82.7	4.1
I can write a topic sentence.	78.7	3.9
I can write supporting sentences.	77.3	3.9
I can express ideas into writing as what I mean.	84.0	4.2
I notice my purpose of writing.	78.7	3.9
I notice my target readers of writing.	69.3	3.5
I improve my grammar knowledge.	78.7	3.9
I can distinguish a sentence and a not-sentence.	84.0	4.1
I understand how to use tenses.	85.3	4.3
I understand how to use S-V Agreement	81.3	4.1
I can use active and passive sentences.	78.7	3.9
I can use count and non-count nouns.	82.7	4.1
I can use pronouns.	86.7	4.3
I can use articles (a, an, the).	82.7	4.1
I understand if a sentence is a run-on or not.	77.3	3.9
I understand how to use regular and irregular verbs.	78.7	3.9
I understand how to use adjectives and adverbs.	78.7	3.9
I can distinguish between a phrase and a clause.	76.0	3.8
I understand simple, compound, and complex sentences.	73.3	3.7
I improve my vocabulary knowledge.	88.0	4.4
I can choose the right word to convey ideas in writing.	74.7	3.7
I can use connective words for adding ideas.	82.7	4.1
I can use connective words for contrasting ideas.	78.7	3.9
I can use connective words for stating cause-effect relations.	81.3	4.1
I can use connective words for stating a time/event order.	81.3	4.1
I improve my spelling and punctuation knowledge.	88.0	4.4
I understand how to use a period, comma, and semi colon.	78.7	3.9
I can use capital and small letters in writing.	92.0	4.6
I increase self confidence when writing.	78.7	3.9
I am motivated to develop my writing potentials.	77.3	3.9
I realize that writing is not a once-finished task, but needs	97.3	4.9
a process/revision.		
I use written sources: newspapers, magazines, etc.	89.3	4.5
in completing my writing tasks.		
I use sources from the internet in completing my writing tasks.	93.3	4.7

I conduct a mini research: asking a resource person or observing an object/phenomena to be written.	80.0	4.0
I realize that readers play a role in improving my writing.	85.3	4.3
I got aided through feedback from peers.	84.0	4.2
I got aided through feedback from the lecture.	93.3	4.7
I realize that reflections upon the process of writing I did are beneficial for my English writing development.	80.0	4.0
I prefer to be assessed based on portfolios rather than written tests, such as UTS/UAS in writing courses.	92.0	4.6

As indicated in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1, personal empowerment to be addressed in the present study was to do with students' response (attitude) towards the teaching program. In this concern, students' response (attitude) involved three components, namely cognition, affection, and performance as reviewed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1. To facilitate understanding the components, the following is the classification of each component of attitude represented by the statements in the questionnaire contained in Table 8.

Table 9: Personal Empowerment Addressed in the Present Study

Cognition	Affection	Performance
I improve my English writing skills.	I increase self confidence when writing.	I use written sources: newspapers, magazines, etc. in completing my writing tasks.
I feel easy to develop ideas when I write.	I am motivated to develop my writing potentials.	I use sources from the internet in completing my writing tasks.
I can develop ideas into paragraphs.	I realize that writing is not a once-finished task, but needs a process/revision.	I conduct a mini research: asking a resource person or observing an object/phenomenon to be written.
I can write a topic sentence.	I realize that readers play a role in improving my writing.	
I can write supporting sentences.	I got aided through feedback from peers.	
I can express ideas into writing as what I mean.	I got aided through feedback from the lecture.	
I notice my purpose of writing.	I realize that reflections upon the process of writing I did are beneficial for my English writing development.	
I notice my target readers of writing.	I prefer to be assessed based on portfolios rather than written tests, such as	
I improve my grammar knowledge.		
I can distinguish a sentence and a not-sentence.		
I understand how to use tenses.		
I understand how to use S-V Agreement		
I can use active and passive sentences.		
I can use count and non-count nouns.		
I can use pronouns.		
I can use articles (a, an, the).		
I understand if a sentence is a run-on or not.		
I understand how to use regular and irregular verbs.		

<p>I understand how to use adjectives and adverbs.</p> <p>I can distinguish between a phrase and a clause.</p> <p>I understand simple, compound, and complex sentence.</p> <p>I improve my vocabulary knowledge.</p> <p>I can choose the right word to convey ideas in writing.</p> <p>I can use connective words for adding ideas.</p> <p>I can use connective words for contrasting ideas.</p> <p>I can use connective words for stating cause-effect relat.</p> <p>I can use connective words for stating a time/event order.</p> <p>I improve my spelling and punctuation knowledge.</p> <p>I understand how to use a period, comma, and semi colon.</p> <p>I can use capital and small letters in writing.</p>	<p>UTS/UAS in writing courses.</p>	
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Paying attention to data depicted in Table 8, it can be recognized that empowerment in writing happened in almost all the items. The lowest score occurs in the statement “I notice my target readers of writing” (69.3%), whereas the highest score results in the statement “I realize that writing is not a once-finished task, but needs a process/revision” (97.3%). Regarding these findings, not all the items in the statements will be included into the discussion. The explanation will only be centered on some particular items, namely those considered influential as the empowerment of EFL students in writing with regard to portfolio-based instruction.

From Table 8 it can be noticed that portfolio-based instruction could empower EFL students in writing in many aspects. Of the many items in the findings, there are a number of items that should be particularly discussed. In this context, through portfolio-based instruction, EFL students: (a) increased their self-confidence and motivation in writing, (b) realized that writing needs a process/revision, (c) used all sources to accomplish their tasks, (d) conducted a small/mini research to complete their writing, (e) realized that feedback from readers were important in improving their writing, and (f) admitted that reflection or self assessment was beneficial for their writing development.

As indicated in Table 8, the majority of students gain confidence (78.7%) and motivation (77.3%) in writing. This confirms the finding of the pilot study of the present study (Permana, 2011) that through portfolio-based instruction students were motivated to

write. Regarding this, Brown (2001: 72) claims that “motivation is the difference between success and failure. If they are motivated, they will learn, and if not, they won’t”. The emergence of confidence and motivation in writing is because students were given an opportunity to practice and revise their texts. Yuni stated:

This course has played a role very much in several aspects. It can increase motivation and self-confidence because we practiced and wrote a lot, so we were motivated and confident when others agreed with our writing [Yuni].

Likewise, concerning the opportunity for revision in writing, Wati shared the similar experience:

Through this course I became brave to write without feeling worried to make mistakes because every mistake I did would be revised to become a better piece of writing [Wati].

The portfolio-based instruction made most of the students (97.3%) aware that writing needs a process/revision as shown in Table 8. In this case, all the students realized that writing was not a once-finished product. This is supported by some of the participants in this study that through the teaching program “I really enjoyed the phases of this writing” (Lala) and “Fortunately, the process of writing helped me very much” (Rita).

Though a portfolio-based instruction, students used all sources, both written (89.3%) and electronic (93.3%) sources in revising their texts. They also conducted research (80.0%) by interviewing and observing the object or phenomenon they were going to write as indicated in Table 8. This made students knowledgeable in developing ideas. Concerning this, Perin (2007: 244) argues that writing has been used “as a means of developing knowledge and extending ideas”. In this line, Brown (2002: 228) notes that portfolios “facilitate self-knowledge among students”. The fact that the teaching program has generated students’ knowledge is corroborated by one of the participants of the present study saying that “I got a lot of knowledge, either about writing or general insights from our pieces of writing” (Lala). Meanwhile, the fact that student conducted research for their writing task is also confirmed by one of the participants admitting that “I asked my uncle and friends about my topic” (Yudi).

The majority of the participants (85.3%) agreed that readers were important in improving their writing. They perceived that they agreed with peer feedback (84.0%) and the lecturer feedback (93.3%) as depicted in Table 8. This is relevant with the finding of the pilot study of this research (Permana, 2011) that feedback, both peer and the lecturer feedback was useful for improving student writing. This is confirmed by the data of interview in this study that through the teaching program students “exchanged ideas to

improve the content of writing” (Lala) and “got inputs and comments from peers and the lecturer” (Rita).

The majority of the students (80.0%) complied that reflection or self-assessment was essential for their writing improvement as indicated in Table 8. Reflection or self-assessment is the core of portfolios (O’Malley & Pierce, 1996: 38; Hamp-Lyons, 2006: 140). This is confirmed by some students that through reflection “I knew what the strengths and weaknesses of my writing were in completing the topic” (Mira) and “I could evaluate every topic I wrote so that I could write better in the future” (Anggi).

6.3 Discussions of Data from the Second Interview: The Difficulties of the Implementation of Portfolio-Based Instruction in Writing

This section will discuss the difficulties of the implementation of portfolio-based instruction in writing as perceived by students and the lecturer. Regarding the difficulties encountered by the lecturer in implementing this approach, students’ opinions about them will also be included. The discussion then will be followed by students’ suggestions for the improvement of the teaching program.

6.3.1 Students’ Difficulties in Attending Portfolio-Based Instruction in Writing

Basically, there are three categories of difficulties in attending a portfolio-based instruction perceived by students. These three categories are concerned with peer-response or feedback, time consumption, and multiple drafting or revision.

Peer-response is theoretically based on the fact that learning, including writing, is a social process (Hyland, 2003: 198; see also Kern, 2000: 206; Williams, 2005: 93). Students are taught to serve as a critical friend and audience for another’s work offering suggestions for revision (National Writing Project of America, 2006: 27). However, according to Hyland (2003: 198), students are rhetorically inexperienced where they tend to focus heavily on sentence level problems rather than ideas and organization. In addition, according to Hyland (2003: 198), peers are not trained teachers whose comments may be vague and unhelpful, even, sometimes, too critical and sarcastic. This is confirmed by some participants of this study, among them, Yuni and Wati, stating that peer-response was not effective because students had limited knowledge to give feedback.

Time consumption also constitutes the issue of the difficulties of a portfolio-based instruction in writing undertaken in the present study. Time is the major impediment to

portfolio development at the classroom level (Gottlieb, 2000: 93; see also Grabe & Kaplan, 1996: 417; Hyland, 2003: 235). Pertinent to the time consumption, one of the participants stated that she had no maximal revision because of the immediate time for every draft (Yuni). Similarly, another participant admitted that he had limited time to do revision and consider his friends' feedback (Yudi).

Multiple drafting is another issue of the difficulties encountered in the present study. Students were asked to write three different texts with a six-time drafting. Regarding this, some participants felt bored with the multiple drafts. This is admitted by one of the participants saying that multiple drafting is "the most obstructive thing; it was too long" (Mira).

6.3.2 The Lecturer's Difficulties in the Implementation of Portfolio-Based Instruction in Writing

Generally, the difficulties encountered by the lecturer are concerned with the classroom management and instructional materials. In relation to classroom management, some respondents (Yuni, Mira, Lala, Rita, Wati, and Yudi) stated that the lecturer got difficulties in managing the class. Yuni, for example, said that the lecturer did not pay more attention to the class when the individual conferencing was taking place. In this case, the lecturer only focused on one particular student. Although the lecturer had asked the class to continue peer-correction, the students seemed that they did not have a job, so they tended to have a conversation among them. Besides, the lecturer was observed less strict to the students, as Mira said, "Sometimes, you had no attention from students, Sir, like that you were ignored although you had given explanation".

The lecturer also found it difficult to treat the late comers while the class had been doing some revisions. In this case, according to Rita (one of the respondents), the lecturer often treated them as equal to the students who had revised several peers' texts while the late comers might just finish revising one text. Here, there was jealousy from students who felt more loaded in doing revisions. This can be seen from an excerpt of interview between the researcher (Rc) and Rita (R) below:

Rc: What are the lecturer's difficulties you observed during the class?

R: When we had peer-correction. Sometimes, there were some students who were absent, right, Sir? For instance, these men were present, that one was absent. Thus, when the others had come to the third draft, he just handed in the paper without any correction from the class. The paper was really clean from correction.

Rc: What were the lecturer's difficulties then?

R: You made us as equal, Sir. Thus, the class seemed to whisper gossiping. She just finished the second draft while the others had to do the fourth draft. We think that it was not fair, Sir. I caught that you were made busy by the late comers. I mean you should actually focus on the students who were doing peer correction.

(Interview with Rita, no date)

Meanwhile, in terms of instructional materials, one student noticed that the lecturer appeared to be doubtful in determining the materials of instructional phases. Mira expressed that “It seemed that you were still doubtful, Sir, such as what the class is going to do today” (Interview with Mira, no date). In this concern, the researcher also admitted that, especially in earlier meetings, he had trouble in preparing the teaching program as noted reflectively in his diary:

I immediately realized that giving feedback to a paper was not always easy. Let alone, at the moment, I did not prepare very much the teaching agenda for the class. Frankly speaking, I did not have much time to check and give feedback to all the students’ drafts before the class. But, what makes me more aware is that I need to read more again about how to give feedback to students’ writing [Based on the reflective diary written by investigator, October 30, 2010].

Data above show that it was perceived by the researcher that giving feedback was difficult to do, particularly at several first meetings. Nevertheless, it did not go long after the researcher was engaged in literature of how to prepare feedback for student writing. In this case, the researcher was not concerned with everything considered as mistakes in the student writing, but undertook “focus correction areas” (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007: 37). This means in giving feedback the writer should be selective to corrections (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007: 37), which ones were deemed as macro or micro levels of mistakes.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an elaboration of the data from student questionnaire and interview achieved in the present study. This elaboration was aimed to exhibit that portfolio-based instruction could empower EFL students in writing with regard to personal empowerment as indicated in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1. In this chapter, it was demonstrated how portfolio-based instruction could empower EF students based on their response (attitude) towards the teaching program conducted in the present study. Moreover, admitting that portfolio-based instruction is not a panacea for solving learning problems, the discussions also included the difficulties of implementing portfolio-based instruction, either the difficulties perceived by students or the lecturer.