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## **The Effect of Using Portfolio on the Development of Students' English Business Writing and their Attitudes towards the course at Sana'a Community College**

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### **Abstract**

The primary focus of this study is to investigate the effect of using portfolio on the development of Students' English business writing course and their attitudes towards it in the Community College-Sana'a, second year students; bachelor and diploma. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted in this study. The sample of the study consisted of 40 female and male students. They were divided into two groups experimental and control. The control group students (N=20) received traditional classroom instruction whereas the experimental group (N=20) received treatment (portfolio assessment on business writing). Data was collected through English business writing test and through a nerve and behavior questionnaire to see their attitudes towards the course. Data analysis was carried out by SPSS statistical computer program. The test and questionnaire scores were analyzed using independent sample t-test, and pair samples t-test. The results revealed that there is a statistical significant difference in business writing improvement according to gender for the sake of female. Also the findings of the post-questionnaire indicated a positive change in the attitude of the sample for the sake of the experimental group attitude towards the course. Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations were stated. One of these recommendations was that portfolio is an effective assessment tool for both students and teachers. Thus, it should be adopted in EFL assessment either in schools or colleges as a complementary alternative along with traditional assessment to shed new light on the process of writing.

**Keywords:** Portfolio, Portfolio assessment, Business Writing skill, Attitude

### **Introduction**

Within the communicative framework of language teaching, the skill of writing enjoys special status. There is no doubt that writing in general and business writing in particular is the most difficult skill for EFL learners to master. With so many conflicting theories concerning writing, the teaching of writing has undergone a great change in the past quarter century. The paradigm shift in writing theory from a focus on writing products to that of writing processes has also resulted in the popularity of portfolios among the educators as an alternative approach both in EFL and in ESL contexts as an instructional tool for preparation of students for examinations. The process of Application Letter, CV, and Meeting (Notice / Agenda/ Minute) are not sufficiently assessed in a one-shot attempt of traditional testing.

Evaluation has become an important factor in the educational process. It has a prominent role in curriculum in case it is an assistant factor for the educational process (teaching and learning). It helps in giving feedback for all the components of the educational process which start from the objectives and end with the evaluation process itself. This leads to the continuous improvement of the educational process through supporting its points of strengths and developing them step by step.

As a result of this, a lot of educational institutions started to reform this process by concentrating on ILOS (Intended Learning Outcomes) instead of inputs (Aseery, 2001) [6]. Such change in evaluation is not shortened on tests only, but it varies. Now evaluation includes a lot of formal and informal strategies according to the intended aims and nature of learners and their abilities for the purpose of showing the learners what they know and what they can do (Trice, 2000) [59]. However, nowadays, the focus is on the learner and teaching a foreign language classes has become students-centered.

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This makes portfolios as a collection of evidence demonstrating how a learner has achieved learning outcomes over time. For those who value good teaching, portfolios offer a means to promote better teaching and to document teaching achievement. In addition, it is as a guide and evaluative tool for the teacher to know his/her points of weakness and address them as soon as possible and a great way to help teachers make their teaching better and to document teaching achievement (West, 2013; and Lovett & Pinda, 2013) <sup>[60, 36]</sup>.

Furthermore, Portfolio became an accepted tool for demonstrating abilities and performances in skill areas such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Portfolio-based assessment of writing is one of the most alternative assessment contexts. Writing courses that use a portfolio-based approach of assessment appear to provide a fertile environment in which teachers and learners can engage in feedback on writing (Hyland, 2006) <sup>[30]</sup>.

Portfolio can be used in evaluation (assessment) through which the activities and achievements of a learner are collected constructionally (calculationally). This shows its development in a specific field at a specific time (Aba Hussien: 2007) <sup>[1]</sup> Therefore, a teacher really needs to develop a portfolio that can be used for both personal development and showcasing his/her teaching abilities. He/she should consider developing a larger, formative portfolio for his/her personal teaching development, Using that will more adequately prepare students and teachers to be engaged in intelligent and insightful discussions about their teaching and learning with review committees (Sithole: 2010) <sup>[53]</sup>. Therefore, teaching or learning a foreign language using Portfolio has been proven as a very useful aid for the learners and teachers as well.

This study tries to use portfolio in teaching English (Business writing course) at the Community College-Sana'a for the sake of creating supportive environment for learning English that may lead to the improvement of students in English Business writing and their attitudes towards it.

### Problem of the Study

This study problem can be summarized in the answer of the following questions:

1. What is the effect of using Portfolio on the development of Students' business writing at the Community college-Sana'a?
2. Is there a statistical significant differences between the means of the achievement of the experimental group business writing test (pr-posttests) according to gender?
3. What is the effect of using Portfolio on the development of students' attitudes towards the English course at the Community College-Sana'a?

### Objectives of the Study

This Study aims at:

1. Investigating the effect of using portfolio on the development of students' business writing at the Community College –Sana'a.
2. Finding out whether there is a statistical significant differences in the achievement between the means of the achievement of the experimental group business writing test (pr-posttests) according to gender.
3. Highlighting the effect of using portfolio on the development of students' attitudes towards the course at the Community College-Sana'a.

### Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is a statistical significant difference between the means of the two groups (Experimental and control) in the test of business writing for the sake of the experimental at the level (0.05).
2. There is a statistical significant difference between the means of the experimental group according to gender in the business writing post-test at level (0.05).
3. There is a statistical significant difference between the means of the two groups (experimental and control) in the questionnaire of their attitudes for the sake of the experimental group at the level (0.05).

### Significance of the study

This study is significant in the sense that it

1. Presents a tool (a close-ended questionnaire) that may help other teachers in the field in measuring the attitudes of their students towards English subject.
2. Provides a good model of how to use portfolio in evaluating English subject especially business writing performance.
3. Is useful for teachers and students which acts as a bond between them and provides ongoing assessment with adequate feedback of the students' business writing and its effect on improving their performance and attitudes towards it.
4. Helps students be responsible for their own learning and be able to make decisions, solve their own problems, work collaboratively and assess their learning as well.
5. Supplies teachers and supervisors with adequate information of the use of portfolio as an assessment tool that may let them adopt this approach.
6. May encourage teachers in schools, colleges and universities to adopt the portfolio assessment approach rather than the traditional approaches.

### Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to:

1. Level two Students, Bachelor degree at the Community College, Sana'a.
2. The academic year 2013-2014-First semester.
3. The English Business writing course.
4. Behavior and nerve questionnaire for measuring the attitude towards the English course in the following sub-fields:
  - o -Students' attitudes towards English. Class and English language.
  - o -Students' attitudes towards English activities and content
5. Business writing test in the following fields:
  - o Application Letter.
  - o CV.
  - o Meeting (Notice / Agenda/ Minute).

### Definitions of Terms

#### 1. Portfolio

A portfolio has different definitions. For instance, in the business world a portfolio refers to investment; in the world of education, it refers to a selection of contributions which show that the students has worked at, understood, and integrated a specific curriculum related to a particular discipline (Parseen, Wilburn, & Roberta, 2004) <sup>[46]</sup>.

Furthermore, portfolio assessment is the process of collecting student work over a period of time and using it to make

conclusions about overall performance. Therefore, portfolio assessment works well with writing skill as students should already be keeping assignments organized in their writing folders. (Hyland K & Hyland F, 2006) <sup>[30]</sup>. According to Archbald and Newmann (1992: 169) <sup>[5]</sup>, “a portfolio is a file or folder containing a variety of information that documents a student’s experiences and accomplishments.”

In the light of the present study, a portfolio is considered to be a collection of students work, progress, and achievement in business writing which includes students' writings, quizzes, unit assessment, home works and assessments, observation checklists, feedback, thinking cards, self-impression on his/her feelings and learning, teachers' notes and impressions on students.

## 2. Business Writing

Educational resource (2013) <sup>[19]</sup> defined it as ‘A written casual language, generally practiced when writing from one business organization to another business organization, or for agreement between such organizations and their buyers, customers and other outside companies.’

In addition, the term “business writing” covers any piece of writing produced in a business context. (Hale, 2012) <sup>[29]</sup>. Thus, business writing includes any correspondence such as memorandums, articles, proposals and other forms of writing which are practiced in business.

It is a purposeful, persuasive, economical and reader oriented which seeks to express rather than impress (Jewelia, 2009) <sup>[32]</sup>.

Furthermore, (Shygon, 2011) <sup>[52]</sup> defined it as a form of expository writing with the purpose of communicating with others in the work place.

Business writing in this study is defined as the formal type of writing in the work place such as CV, application letter, agenda, notice and minute in clear, accurate, purposeful and concise way for the purpose of sending messages for other people working in business.

## 3. Attitude

Longman Dictionary defines attitude as ‘the opinions and feelings that you usually have about something.’

Another definition of attitude is ‘A predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation.’

Throughout high of exposure of the different definitions of attitude, it can be defined as a group of feelings thoughts, and beliefs hold by a student towards a specific topic and which directs his response for situations connected with topic.

In this study, it is the students' attitudes towards the English Business Writing course as: a collection of feelings of the Community College-Sana'a, second level students concluded through the collected data of the close ended questionnaire towards the course mentioned above.

## Literature Review

### Characteristics of Portfolio

**Portfolio assessment is a process characterized by the following recurrent qualities**

- It is continuous and ongoing, providing both formative (i.e., ongoing) and summative (i.e., culminating) opportunities for monitoring students' progress toward achieving essential outcomes.
- It is multidimensional, i.e., reflecting a wide variety of artifacts and processes reflecting various aspects of

students' learning process (es).

- It provides for collaborative reflection, including ways for students to reflect about their own thinking processes and meta cognitive introspection as they monitor their own comprehension, reflect upon their approaches to problem-solving and decision-making, and observe their emerging understanding of subjects and skills. (Cited in George, 1995 <sup>[25]</sup> by Prince George’s Country Public School.

### Effective portfolios contains the following:

- A variety of students works representing an extended period of time, a semester or year.
- A work that represents core or essential curriculum for the given time period.
- Student reflection of the work contained within the portfolio. The reflection should include why certain works were selected to represent the learning that has taken place during the given time period (Ackert, 2009) <sup>[2]</sup>.

### Uses of Portfolio in Education

According to Johnson, R. S., Mims-Cox, S., S., & Nichols, A. D. (2010) <sup>[34]</sup>, and TDU Talk (2009) <sup>[57]</sup>, A portfolio can be as an assessment tool, a tool to raise motivation, to develop interaction, and on-going Process.

### Types of Portfolio

Types of portfolio can be divided into six types

1. *Working Portfolios*  
A working portfolio contains work in progress as well as finished samples of work. Its major purpose is to serve as a holding tank for work that may be selected later for a more permanent assessment or display portfolio (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997) <sup>[15]</sup>.
2. *Display, Showcase or (Best Works Portfolios)*  
The purpose of a display portfolio is to demonstrate the highest level of achievement attained by a student. A display portfolio may be maintained from year to year, with new pieces added each year, documenting growth over time (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997) <sup>[15]</sup>.
3. *Assessment Portfolios*  
The primary function of an assessment portfolio is to document what a student has learned. The content of a curriculum will determine what students select for their portfolios. Their reflective comments will focus on the extent to which they believe the portfolio helps them in their mastery of the curriculum objectives (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997) <sup>[15]</sup>.
4. *Online or e-portfolio*  
Online or e-portfolios is international that is all information and artifacts are somehow accessible online. A number of colleges require students to maintain a virtual portfolio that may include digital, video, or Web-based products (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997) <sup>[15]</sup>.
5. *Process portfolios*  
Process portfolios concentrate more on the journey of learning rather than the final outcome or end products of the learning process. A process reflection may discuss why a particular strategy was used, what was useful or ineffective for the individual in the writing process, and how the student face the difficulty in meeting requirements (Fernsten, 2009) <sup>[21]</sup>.
6. *Teacher Portfolio*

Teacher portfolio is a collection of work produced by a teacher, just as an artist uses a portfolio of collected works to illustrate his or her talents; and to highlight and demonstrate their knowledge and skills in teaching (Doolittle, 1994) [17].

### **The Role of the Student and the Teacher in Portfolio**

#### **Students' Roles:**

- The student's main responsibility in the portfolio process is to create a portfolio of work, making serious decisions about how and why a particular piece fits into a particular section.
- Upon completion, students "rehearse" the portfolio conference with a peer and then with a teacher, discussing the body of work as evidence of learning (Smith, 2001) [54].

#### **Teachers Roles**

Bryant & Timmins (2002) [11] emphasized that the role of the teacher makes a dramatic shift when using portfolio assessment. He/she acts as a facilitator, guide, counselor and mentor. In addition, the teacher has to become more student-centered. He/she has to know each student's needs, strengths and weaknesses.

They also added that teachers need to assess, evaluate, manage, organize, and use information for problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking. Teachers are not just loner information providers, they are information guides.

#### **Previous Studies**

Fahim & Jalili (2013) [20] made a study on a group of thirty eight Iranian EFL learners with the aim of investigating the possible effects of using writing portfolio assessment on developing the ability of editing among Iranian EFL learners. The result indicated that the learners could be trained to use editing in their writing. Editing seems to be an effective way for higher proficiency learners to improve the organization of their writing.

Tavakoli & Amirian (2012) [56] in their study probed the implementation of portfolio assessment in the writing classroom in an attempt to examine its effect(s) on EFL learners "metadiscourse" awareness. The participants were 86 and were distributed into two classes. The results of data analysis revealed that the experimental group has improved more than the control group with regard to the achievement in their overall writing ability. Second, based on chi-square results, participants in the experimental group used meta discourse markers more correctly and efficiently compared with those in the control group.

The Study of Ok (2012) [44] identified the opinions of freshmen at an ELT department, Pamukkale University on using the portfolio process as an assessment tool in an advanced reading-writing course. The Participants were 34 freshmen, 28 female and 6 male, who had been exempted from the prep program on their scores in the proficiency exam. The findings indicate that the students had positive thoughts about the assessment of their assignments over their portfolio. The students' opinions also indicate that the portfolio process leads to a positive change in students' attitude towards the writing skill with respect to the motivation it brings about, and that student's portfolio can be used as an effective assessment tool in a reading-writing course.

The Study of Tabatabaei & Assefi (2012) [55] found out the

effect of portfolio assessment technique as a teaching, learning and assessment tool on writing performance of EFL learners. Writing sub-skills has also been taken into account. To this end, forty EFL learners at English department, Islamic Azad University. The results of statistical analysis indicated that the students in experimental group outperformed the students in control group in their writing performance and its sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary.

The Study of Nakayama (2011) [39] studied how portfolios influence the students' learning and to what extent they can make language learning more visible in teachers' teaching context. In this study, which employs a qualitative ethnographic methodology, the subjects are 26 third- grade students enrolled in a reading course at a private senior high school in Japan. The results of this research showed that portfolios helped to make the language learning process more visible to the teacher and to the learners.

Sharifi & Hassaskhah (2011) [51] investigated the effect of using portfolio assessment technique and reflection activities on students' writings and process writing. A class of 20 students at Shahid Sattari Air University of Iran was the sample of this study. The level of significance in this study was .001 as a result of using repeated measurement and Bonferroni test. Based on the findings achieved in this study, the effectiveness of the treatment was confirmed. Further, the students' responses to questionnaire indicate that their attitude was positive to portfolio-based learning.

Aydin (2010) [7] investigated the contributions of portfolio keeping to the language skills of EFL pre-service teachers and the problems encountered during the process. The sample group of the study consisted of 39 EFL pre-service teachers studying in the English Language Teaching Department (ELT) of the Faculty of Education at Balikesir University. Two main results were obtained from the study: the first is that portfolio keeping in writing in EFL has some significant contributions to the writing skills of foreign language pre-service teachers, and the second result is that there exist some potential problems on portfolio keeping in EFL writing. The study differs from the others as it focuses on the effects of portfolio keeping on the EFL writing of pre-service teachers, instead of EFL learners. Portfolio keeping has both positive and negative effects on the EFL writing of pre-service teachers.

The Study of Caner (2010) [12] aimed at exploring views of prep-school students towards portfolio assessment in their writing courses. It has also intended to find out exam preference of the participants. The participants of the study are 140 Turkish EFL students enrolled in the intermediate and upper intermediate prep classes at the School of Foreign Languages of Anadolu University. The results indicated that the subjects of this study generally prefer to be evaluated by the traditional paper and pencil tests; however, most of the subjects believe that portfolio assessment also contributes to their English learning processes. It was also found out that a number of the subjects have negative attitudes towards portfolio assessment in their writing courses.

The study of Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli & Ansari (2010) [28] found out the impact of portfolio assessment as a process-oriented assessment mechanism on Iranian EFL students' English writing ability. Sixty one students of similar writing ability were chosen as the participants of this study. The results of data analysis revealed that the students in the portfolio assessment group outperformed the students in the

control group in their overall writing ability and in the sub-skills of focus, elaboration, organization and vocabulary. To triangulate the quantitative data, students' views and reflections about portfolio assessment were elicited via semi-structured interviews. The qualitative data underwent thematic analysis and the major extracted themes were discussed. The findings suggest that portfolio assessment empowers students' learning of English writing, hence emphasizing the formative potential of portfolio assessment in EFL classes.

The Study of Nezakatgoo (2010) [40] determined the effect of portfolio assessment on final examination scores of EFL students' writing skill the study is conducted at Allameh Tabtabaie University, Tehran, Iran. 40 university students who enrolled in composition course were initially selected as a sample and divided randomly into two experimental and control groups. The results of the study revealed that those students whose work was evaluated by a portfolio system had improved in their writing and gained higher scores in final examination when compared to those students whose work was evaluated by traditional system.

Sithole (2010) [53] investigated the impact of this innovative new professional development/ assessment system, portfolio, on the professional growth and development of in-service teachers at the University of Botswana's Faculty of Education in May 2010. The findings of the study suggest that although student teachers found portfolio development to be cumbersome and time-consuming, the general consensus was that developing portfolios provided useful and valuable learning experience which enhanced their creativity, reflective practice and continuous professional growth. Overall, students found portfolio development and its assessment and evaluation of a cumulative collection of their creative works to be a better approach for the assessment of teaching than the traditional approach. The study also found out that there was a lack of consistency in the way supervisors assessed students' portfolio.

Davis, Ponnampereuma & Ker (2009) [16] analyzed students' attitudes to the portfolio assessment process over time. The major finding was that students perceived that portfolio building heightened their understanding of the exit learning outcomes and enabled reflection on their work. Student reactions to the portfolio process were initially negative, although they appreciated that senior staff took time to become familiar with their work through reviewing their portfolios. Student attitudes became more positive over the 4 years as the process evolved.

Al-Serhani (2007) [4] investigated the effect of the portfolio assessment strategy to teach and assess writing performance of EFL third year students enrolled at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Secondary School, Skaka (Al-Jouf region). The purpose of the study was to determine whether a specific portfolio assessment model was effective in helping the students to improve their English writing performance in general and writing product skills and writing processes in particular. The findings of the post-administration showed a remarkable improvement in English writing performance of the portfolio group students in general and in their writing product skills in particular as compared with the non-portfolio group. Likewise, findings indicated a statistically significant increase in the students' use of writing processes as a result of the portfolio assessment strategy. Moreover, a positive correlation between the students' (experimental group) scores in the portfolio and their English writing test scores was found.

The study of Ozturk & Cecen (2007) [45] investigated the effects of portfolio keeping on the writing anxiety of students. Two instructors working collaboratively aimed to overcome the writing anxiety of their students. They had a class of fifteen prospective teachers of English who were in their preparatory year in a foundation university, in Istanbul, Turkey. Findings of the study revealed that portfolio keeping is beneficial in terms of overcoming writing anxiety. The results also indicated that the experience with portfolios may affect the participants' future teaching practices positively.

Some other studies related to the effect of portfolio on the development of writing and other courses were reviewed. Some others were on the students' attitudes towards such courses. Those were the study of (Charvade1, Jahandar1, & Khodabandehlou1, (2012) [14]; Hosseini1 & Ghabanchi2, (2014) [23]; OK, 2014 [43]; Fahim & Jalili, 2013 [20]; Sithole, 2010 [53]; Aydin, 2010 [7]; Davis, Ponnampereuma, & Ker, 2008; and Ford, 1991) [14, 24, 43, 20, 53, 7, 16, 23].

### Comments on previous studies

Form the above-mentioned studies, the researcher noticed the following:

- Almost all the studies emphasized the remarkable influence of portfolio assessment on writing skill in general and the sub-skills in particular.
- The previous studies are similar but different. Some of them investigate the attitudes of students, teacher, pre-service, in service teachers and other people towards the use of portfolio as an assessment tool, and others investigate the effects of portfolio on the writing performance in general and some others in particular.
- Those studies were carried out in Arab and western countries.
- The Data collection instruments differ from one study to another one that is, they use questionnaires, observation checklists, interviews, self-reporting questionnaire and tests. However, most of them use t-test in which there were a pre-test and post-test.
- The samples of the studies vary in numbers and quality in each. Moreover, the sample includes teachers, school students, or both, in-service teachers and pre-service. However, few studies include students at the university level.
- Some of the studies followed the descriptive method, but most of the, followed the experimental design.
- Generally, the studies come up with the result that portfolio is an effective tool of assessment in writing either for the students or the teachers.
- Almost all the studies which are carried out to investigate the students' attitude towards portfolio assessment in writing emphasize the positive change of opinions.

The researcher noticed that there is no study carried out in Yemen which investigates the effects of using portfolio on the development of students' business writing and their attitudes towards the English course.

### Methodology and Procedures of the Study

#### First: Sample of the Study

The sample of the study was two groups of second level in the community college-Sana'a selected randomly (40 students for the two groups). Each group consisted of 20 males and females. One of the groups was assigned as the experimental group which consisted of 20 students, 7 female

and 13 male students and was evaluated by means of portfolio. The second group was assigned as the control group which consisted of 20 students, 7 male and 13 female and was evaluated as using the traditional.

**Second: Instruments (tools) of the study**

Two tools were designed for the purpose of achieving the aims of this study:

**1. A pretest – posttest** (to test students’ business writing) and a close-ended.

**a. Designing and Developing the Test:**

The test is divided into two parts:

- Two questions on application letter and CV.
- Two questions on meeting, particularly how to write a notice, an agenda and minute/notice or memo.

**b. Stating the items of the test and Scores of the test:**

The marks were divided as:

**Table 1**

No.	Activity	Mark	Total
1.	Application letters	33	65
2.	CV	32	
3.	Agenda/minutes/notice or memo	35	35

**c. Validity of the test**

- For the purpose of validating the initial form of the test, the researcher showed it to a number of jury experts in English language at Sana’a University in order to validate the instrument and express their opinions regarding clarity, adequacy, level of the difficulty of the test items, and its relevancy to the business writing. In addition, regarding the items of the test if there is any addition, omission, change or correction. However, the researcher took into account their opinions and suggestions and did the needed modifications.

**d. Reliability of the Test**

In order to know the consistency of the tool and determine whether any items in the test needs to be modified, a spilt half method was used in which the test was administrated once and then was divided into two parts. The correlation between the two halves was calculated using Pearson correlation. The results showed that the correlation was significant at level 0.021. This means that there was no statistical significant difference between the first part of the test and the second one. This means that correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**e. Criteria of correcting the pre-posttest and the portfolio:**

Most of the questions were subjective. This was according to the students' level. So, a scoring criteria was followed by the researcher with reference to previous scoring systems as those of Al-Dharehi (2009) [3]. This criteria was prepared as in table (2) below:

**Table 2:** The criteria of Correction Scoring of the Pre-post tests and the Portfolio

Standard	Mark
Clear and correct answer, logically ordered, and the language used is correct	4
Nearly clear answer, but there are some mistakes and there are some mistakes in the language used.	3
Complete answer but not that too much. There is a problem in the logical order of the steps.	2
Incomplete and unclear answer. The steps are not well ordered. The written work is ambiguous.	1
Wrong answer. The text is not understood or the question is not answered.	0

**2. A close-ended questionnaire:** to measure the students’ attitudes towards the English course.

**a. Designing and developing the close-ended questionnaire**

The second data instrument in this study was a close-ended questionnaire. It was developed to gather data about the students’ attitudes towards the English course. For developing the questionnaire, the researcher reviewed the relevant literature related to the attitudes towards the English course and to previous studies. The questionnaire was divided in to two parts. The first was purposed to investigate the students’ attitude towards the English class and language. It contained 12 items. The Second part investigated the attitudes towards the content and the English language activities. It contained 28 items.

**b. Validating the Close-ended Questionnaire**

The close-ended questionnaire was given to a number of experts (validators) to check its suitability and relevance to the research topic and questions. Some items were modified in the light of their validation.

**c. Reliability of the Questionnaire**

In order to know the consistency of the tool and determine whether any item in the questionnaire needed any modifications, it was conducted twice for 40 students from the population of the study; that is, test-re-test. The second time of administrating the questionnaire was after two weeks in order to see the consistency of this tool. The students’ responses on the first administration of the questionnaire were correlated with their responses on the second one using SPSS (Cronbach's Alpha). The reliability rate of the questionnaire was .925%. This means that it was reliable.

**Third: Design of the Study**

The researcher used the experimental method in which the quasi-experimental design is adopted. It contained a pre and post test for both the control group and the experimental one. Besides, a questionnaire to measure the students’ attitudes was distributed for the two groups as well.

**Fourth: Procedures of the Study**

**The following procedures were followed during this study:**

1. A Cooperative teacher (one of the teachers in the same college) was trained on how to use portfolio in evaluating students at the community-college Sana'a (the experimental group). She was supported with a detailed plan on the use of portfolio in evaluating students with the criteria of marks for each activity and a sample of portfolio (readymade portfolio).
2. The experiment started at the beginning of the second semester 2013-2014 and continued till the end of the semester.

3. The test and the questionnaire were administered before the experiment.
4. The experimental group was evaluated by using portfolio and the control one was evaluated in the light of the traditional way of evaluation (assessment).
5. The researcher continued on following the cooperative teacher during the experiment and gave her a lot of instructions.
6. At the end of the experiment, the same test and closed-ended questionnaire that were administered before the experiment were administered again after the experiment.
7. The data was collected and prepared for the statistical analysis.
8. The results were analyzed and discussed. The some recommendations were suggested.

**Fifth: Statistical Analysis**

The data of this study was analyzed statistically by using the SPSS program.

**Findings of the results**

**First: The Results of the First Question (What is the effect of using Portfolio on the development of students' business writing at the Community College, Sana'a?)**

The means, standards deviations, and t-test of the pre and post tests for the two groups (the experimental and the control) were analyzed. The results are shown in the following table:

**Table 3:** Shows the results of the performance of the two groups (experimental and control) in the pre and post tests

	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pretest	Experimental	20	23.00	7.664	-.018	38	.986
	Control	20	23.05	9.698			
Posttest	Experimental	20	39.85	6.046	5.101	38	.000
	Control	20	27.25	9.244			

It is clear from the table above that there was a statistical significant differences between the two groups of the study at level .05 in the posttest for the sake of the experimental groups. This means that the first hypothesis of this study was true. This also means that there is an effect for the use of portfolio on the students' development in English Business Writing.

**Second: The results of the second question (Is there a difference between the achievement in the pre-posttests in the business writing course test between girls and boys in the experimental group?)**

The findings that answer this question are shown in the following table:

**Table 4:** Shows the statistical significant differences of the experimental group sample in the pre and posttests according to gender

	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pretest	Female	7	23.01	7.775	1.15	18	.876
	Male	13	22.08	6.986			
Posttest	Female	7	43.43	5.682	2.112	18	.049
	Male	13	37.92	5.499			

The results shown in the table above also indicate that there is a statistical significant difference between male and female of the experimental group in their performance of the posttest for the sake of female because the mean of male is (37.92) and that of female is bigger than it (43.43). This also ensures the factuality of the second hypothesis of this study.

**Third: The results of the third question (What is the effect of using Portfolio on the development of students' attitude towards the English Business Writing course at the Community College-Sana'a?)**

The results of this question are presented in the following table:

**Table 5:** shows the results related to the effect of using portfolio on Students' attitudes towards the English Business Writing Course

	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Before the experiment (pre-questionnaire)	Experimental	20	3.8938	.67243	1.220	38	.2300
	Control	20	3.6638	.50864			
After the experiment (Post-questionnaire)	Experimental	20	4.964	.3952	3.936	38	.000
	Control	20	3.5835	.45062			

The findings in table (5) above mean that there was an effect for using portfolio on students' attitudes towards the English Business writing Course at level .05. This statistical difference is in favor of the experimental group that was evaluated by means of portfolio. This means that the third hypothesis was achieved.

- Those students who were evaluated by means of portfolio were better than those who were evaluated by using the traditional way in the test given to them.
- There was a statistical significant difference between male and female who were evaluated by means of portfolio for the sake of female.
- The attitude towards the English Business writing course of those students who were evaluated by means of portfolio were better than those who were evaluated by using the traditional way.

**Summary of the Results:**

The results shown in table 1, 2, & 3 above can be summarized in the following lines:

### The Discussion and Interpretation of the Results

The remarkable development shown in the students' business writing concerning the experimental group is an expected result because portfolio gives each student the chance to work in his/her own and different ways. Also, it can be interpreted as what Nezakatgoo (2011)<sup>[40]</sup> said because portfolio encourages learners to shift from playing a passive role in assessment and evaluation to an active role, in which they must engage in more complex thinking and self-evaluation. In addition, students reflect on their work and measure their progress (Huang 2012)<sup>[31]</sup>. Portfolios deepen the assessment process beyond test scores and the value and multiple uses of portfolios have become apparent at all level (Belgrad, Burke & Fogarty, 2007)<sup>[9]</sup>. This result is similar to some studies which proved that portfolio has a remarkable influence in language skills in general and in writing in particular. Some of these studies are the study of Al-Serhani (2007)<sup>[3]</sup>, Aydin (2010)<sup>[7]</sup>, Sithole (2010)<sup>[53]</sup>, Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli & Nejad Ansari (2010)<sup>[27]</sup>, Sharifi & Hassaskhah (2011)<sup>[51]</sup>, Tavakoli & Amirian (2012)<sup>[56]</sup> and Fahim & Jalili (2013)<sup>[20]</sup>.

In relation to the results of the statistical significant difference at the level .049 according to gender of the experimental group, female reacted positively to the assessment using portfolio that male did in which female mean score is 43.43 whereas the male is 37.92. This result could attribute to the fact that females in general are more patient than males and most importantly portfolio needs time and effort to be devoted. Danielson & Abrutyn (1997)<sup>[15]</sup> said that portfolio may be maintained from year to year, with new pieces added each year, documenting growth over time. (Bryant & Timmins, 2002)<sup>[11]</sup> assured that there were also gender differences in its use.

In case of the students' attitude towards the course of business writing, results revealed that the attitudes of those who were evaluated by means of portfolio (experimental group) were higher than those who were not evaluated by the traditional way. This result is due to the fact that portfolio extremely affects the students' attitude positively towards the materials they are studying. However, sometimes the effect is negative initially because of the fact that portfolio takes a long period usually a semester or a year. Thus, if it is conducted in short time, the results might not be the same. The study of Perclov'a (2006)<sup>[48]</sup> emphasizes that both learners and teachers appreciate the use of European language portfolio. In addition, the study of Haung (2012)<sup>[31]</sup> indicated that students' believe that the portfolios process eliminate the negative influence resulting from exam anxiety. Thus, the students' attitude towards the writing skill with respect to the motivation changed positively. This idea is also supported by the studies of Nakayama (2011)<sup>[39]</sup>, Ozturk & Cecen (2007)<sup>[45]</sup>; Caner (2010)<sup>[12]</sup>; and Sharifi & Hassaskhah (2011)<sup>[51]</sup>.

- Portfolio encourages the group and team work specially in writing activities where they collaborate, share ideas, exchange opinions ... etc.
- Portfolio in writing does not merely mean a collection of works, but also a process which allows them to write accurately and perfectly and records their improvement for a period of time.
- Portfolio provides self-evaluation for both teachers and students since it acts as a bond between them.

### Recommendations of the Study

In the light of the findings of the study, some recommendations are illustrated:

- It is recommended that portfolio should be adopted in EFL assessment because it is an effective assessment tool for both students and teachers.
- It is also recommended that teachers need to be well-trained on how to use portfolio and how to guide students during the stages of using portfolio process.
- It is also recommended that curriculum designers should take into account the portfolio assessment as a new approach for teaching and learning EFL.

### Suggestions for Further Research

**In the light of the findings of the current study, the following studies are suggested:**

- A similar study to the current one is needed to investigate the effect of portfolio on other skill areas such as speaking, listening or reading.
- A similar study may be conducted at schools to investigate the students' performance when using portfolio assessment.
- Another area of research could be on the effect of portfolio on students' linguistic competence.
- A survey study could be conducted to find out the teachers' and students' attitudes towards portfolio assessment.
- A study can be conducted to investigate the effect of portfolio on the accuracy of grammar.
- A study could be conducted to find out the effect of portfolio assessment on self-evaluation.

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