

## Reflection in E-Portfolio Assessment

E-Portfolios, an example of online pedagogy and alternative assessment, have been extensively adopted in first and second language education since the turn of the century. Notwithstanding their popularity, the public remains unclear about their major components and classroom applications. E-Portfolios commonly refer to a digital dossier, which helps students document their language learning and celebrate their achievements. They serve both the learning-orientated and grading-orientated assessment purposes concurrently. E-Portfolio components, similar to their print counterparts, comprise collection, curation, reflection, and circulation. Among them, reflection plays a pivotal role in sustaining the e-Portfolio development process.

As Zubizarreta (2004) said, “reflection is central to learning, and the reflective core of sound learning portfolios is what transforms mere accumulated information to meaningful knowledge, ... (p. 43)”. Together with two other elements – evidence and collaboration, reflection enables students to review the past learning, to monitor the current learning, and to plan ahead the future learning via evidence of learning (multimodal artefacts) in collaboration with peers, teachers, and caregivers on any e-Portfolio platforms. These tripartite metacognitive components turn ordinary portfolio compilation processes into dynamic meaning-making experience.

Scholars have long advocated two types of e-Portfolios, one being e-Portfolios as a *process* and the other e-Portfolios as a *product* for classroom-based assessment (Barrett, 2010). The process type views e-Portfolios as a storage and digital workspace where collection and reflection take place regularly. The product type considers e-Portfolios as a showcase where selection, reflection, projection, and presentation occur mostly near the end of a teaching unit or a semester.

Reflection in e-Portfolios as process is regarded as bite-sized learning-orientated events, wherein formative feedback is frequently provided to support student learning throughout a course/term/year. Common classroom activities of this e-Portfolio type entail: online self- and peer-assessment tasks, individual or collaborative reflective journals (typically with guided questions or relevant prompts as scaffolding), box-ticking self-evaluation forms, proofreading exercises highlighting mechanics, etc. E-Portfolios as process facilitate documentation of one’s language learning trajectories over time.

Reflection in e-Portfolios as product is regarded as a holistic evaluation of students’ prior learning in order to demonstrate their culminated knowledge (i.e., learning outcomes) to teachers for the purpose of summative grading. Reflection primarily takes place towards the

end of a course/term/year to showcase students' achievements by way of *retrospective* reflection (looking back to review) and *prospective* reflection (looking forward to thinking ahead future learning against goals/criteria). Common classroom events of this e-Portfolio type include: a cover letter describing past learning experiences and suggesting improvement plans, an end-of-term self-reflective survey, a checklist outlining attainments to basic competencies, or an audio reflection file hyperlinked to one's e-Portfolio, etc. E-Portfolios as product allow students to showcase their achievements and representative works near the end of a school year.

Although reflection is a core component of e-Portfolio assessment, whether and the extent to which students will perform deep self-reflection is another matter. Teachers cannot take for granted that students are willing and able to reflect on their multimodal artefacts independently. The following three classroom implications reveal how teachers can warrant fuller and more substantial student engagement in self-reflective practices in e-Portfolios.

The first implication is that teachers should consider providing fundamental training in collecting, curating, reflecting, and revising artefacts by way of in-person demonstrations, sharing of exemplar e-Portfolio templates, and applications of metacognitive strategies as to which artefacts showcase students' best performances through peer feedback, grades, or upvote counts. The second implication is that teachers need to provide formative feedback for students, particularly of young learners, about the quality of their journal entries, reflective statements, self-assessment forms, or cover letters. This sort of formative feedback may gradually withdraw when students become more and more proficient in completing their reflective entries on e-Portfolios. The third implication is that besides language pedagogy and assessment, e-Portfolios are about technology. Both teachers and students need to attain a basic level of computer literacy in order to fully enjoy this e-Portfolio development journey either as a facilitator/leader or as a portfolio user.

In sum, reflection is a significant pedagogical-cum-evaluative method in e-Portfolios and print portfolios that assist students to enhance their self-efficacy, motivation, engagement, autonomy, as well as to foster a sense of accomplishment in their language learning. While reflection remains a cognitively demanding task, teachers need to encourage students to reflect upon their artefacts frequently (on a daily or at least a weekly basis), meaningfully (beyond robotic box-checking exercises), and as early as possible, say starting from lower primary grades (cf. Lam, 2013). Reflection and e-Portfolios go hand in hand and the former is the soul of the latter.

To this end, the takeaways of this dissemination note are shown below:

- It is necessary for teachers to provide students with initial training in reflection on multimodal artefacts.

- It is imperative for teachers to include reflection as an integral part of existing English curricula and e-Portfolio instruction.
- Reflection in e-Portfolios involves not only ‘looking back’ to review learning but also ‘looking forward’ to create future learning based upon specific goals/benchmarks/success criteria.
- Reflection is not solitary, but social and communal in nature, especially situated in a digital learning environment where speedy dissemination is made possible.
- Since reflection via e-Portfolios may infringe on student privacy, teachers and school administrators should step up cyber security policies and adopt a safer commercial e-Portfolio software tool.

#### Resources related to e-Portfolios

##### Books

- Lam, R., & Moorhouse, B.L. (2022) *Using Digital Portfolios to Develop Students' Writing: A Practical Guide for Language Teachers*. Routledge.
- Renwick, M. (2017). *Digital Portfolios in the Classroom: Showcasing and Assessing Student Work*. ASCD.

##### Websites

- The e-Assessment (eAA) by Cambridge Assessment  
<https://www.e-assessment.com/resources/e-portfolios/>
- A guide to set up a student portfolio  
<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-student-portfolio-ideas-examples.html>

##### References

- Barrett, H. (2010). Balancing the two faces of e-Portfolios. *Educação, Formação & Tecnologias*, 3(1), 6-14.
- Lam, R. (2013). Formative use of summative tests: Using test preparation to promote performance and self-regulation. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 22(1), 69-78.
- Zubizarreta, J. (2004). *The Learning Portfolio: Reflective Practice for Improving Student Learning* (1<sup>st</sup> ed). Jossey-Bass.