



Exploring EFL Students' Perceptions of E-portfolios in the Speaking Classroom: A Critical Review of Three Empirical Studies

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a significant transformation in the pedagogical approaches to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), with a greater focus on enhancing students' speaking abilities through learner-centered methodologies and the integration of technology. Among the emerging technologies gaining traction are electronic speaking portfolios, which provide substantial support for ongoing assessment, self-evaluation, and autonomous learning. This secondary research aims to investigate the effects of using electronic speaking portfolios in EFL classrooms by reviewing three empirical studies conducted in three different countries. The primary objective is to assess the impact of these portfolios on learners' speaking proficiency, while also examining the pedagogical advantages and contextual challenges identified in these studies. The findings highlighted several important advantages of e-portfolios, including a reduction in speaking anxiety, and constructive feedback opportunities, as well as an increase in learner motivation and autonomy. However, variations in assessment frameworks, technological platforms, and perceptions of authenticity across the studies indicate that implementation should be tailored to specific educational contexts. This research provides actionable recommendations for EFL educators and curriculum developers, advocating for the thoughtful integration of electronic portfolios as a dynamic tool to improve speaking skills and foster reflective language learning practices.

Keywords: Assessment, EFL, Electronic Portfolios, Perceptions, Speaking Proficiency

Introduction

Speaking is a fundamental skill and the most important one to be developed and enhanced in the process of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it plays a crucial role in effective communication and real-world language use. Proficiency in speaking is often considered a major benchmark for language success, as it enables learners to engage in meaningful interactions and real-world communication (Richards, 1990). According to Harmer (1991), communication involves a balance between listening and speaking. However, despite its importance, speaking remains one of the most challenging skills to acquire. In many EFL classrooms, the speaking skill is usually neglected due to the traditional language assessment methods that emphasize writing and grammar over oral communication (Luoma, 2004).

With the advancement of the educational technology, digital tools have become integral to modern language learning and assessment. The use of electronic speaking portfolios (e-portfolios) to track, evaluate and enhance student's proficiency has gained attention recently. These digital portfolios allow learners to record, review, and reflect on their speaking performances, thus fostering self-directed learning and promoting metacognitive awareness (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, improving the speaking skill is the key goal, though it is often seen as a challenging aspect of language acquisition. E-portfolios do not promote only self-assessment and encourage metacognitive skills but also provide authentic communication practice, facilitate self-paced learning and give students control over their learning, leading increased motivation and engagement (Yastibas & Cepik, 2015).

This study is secondary in nature and aims to review three empirical studies. The first article titled 'Implementing E-portfolios in English Speaking Assessment: Vietnamese Students' perspectives' was written by Ngo & Luu in 2023. The Second one was authored in 2010 by Huang & Hung; it is entitled 'Implementing Electronic Speaking Portfolios: Perceptions of EFL Students'. The last article was written by Kwak & Yin in 2018 under the title 'Using Electronic Speaking Portfolios for Assessment in the EFL Classroom: Students' Perspectives'. These articles explore EFL student's perceptions of electronic speaking portfolios and their impact on speaking proficiency. Additionally, the study will examine students' attitudes toward using e-portfolios as an assessment tool and their effectiveness in fostering communicative competence.

This study is significant as it highlights how electronic speaking portfolios can enhance EFL learners' speaking proficiency through reflective autonomous learning and offers practical insights for integrating technology into speaking assessment.

1.Theoretical Background

1.1.Traditional and Alternative Methods for Assessing Speaking Skills

In past decades, there has been a significant movement in education from traditional assessment methods to newer assessment methods. Students' knowledge and reasoning answers were primarily measured through traditional techniques such as multiple choice, true or false, and short-answer questions. However, these formats were mainly focused on assessing basic skills and memorized information.

By the 1990s, researchers and educational experts raised concerns about traditional assessment methods, arguing that they were insufficient for accurately measuring diverse learners' needs and their competencies and failed to reflect the full range of student learning progress. In reaction to these limitations, alternative assessment methods started to be used as a means to enhance assessment practice in educational settings by increasing awareness of the impact of testing on curriculum and instruction (Dietel, Herman, & Knuth, 1991).

Alternative assessments, including portfolios, journals, self-assessments, and peer evaluations are more comprehensive and authentic tools to assess student learning. Bailey (1998) argues that traditional assessment methods are indirect and inauthentic, as they are typically standardized, one-time, speed-based, and norm-referenced. Moreover, she criticizes this type of assessment for not offering feedback to learners, being overly individualized, and lacking real-world contexts. However, research undertaken by Lynch (2001), Lynch & Shaw (2005), and Ross (2005) has supported the effectiveness of alternative methods, particularly in providing strong formative assessments that monitor student progress toward proficiency.

According to Smaldino et al. (2000), traditional assessments are concerned with lower-order cognitive skills such as memorization and recall. In contrast, alternative assessments focus on higher-order thinking skills and allow students to demonstrate their learning in more meaningful contexts. These assessments are often ongoing, contextualized, and varied, in which teachers can have a deeper understanding of each student's strengths and weaknesses over time (Law & Eckes, 1995).

After outlining the challenges of traditional assessment methods, the following section represents e-portfolios by exploring their definition, types, and applications in educational contexts.

1.2. E-portfolios

Increasing emphasis on student-centered approaches and formal evaluation in language learning has inspired a change to alternative evaluation methods. Of these, the electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) has been promoted as an effective tool for documentation of the student's progress and improvement of reflective learning. Inherent in constructivist theory, e-portfolio provides a dynamic and versatile approach for e-portfolio assessment.

A portfolio is an organized, purposeful, structured collection of evidence which represents an individual's or organization's progress and achievements in (personal, professional or academic) learning and development (Paulson et al, 1991). Unlike traditional assessments that rely on isolated tests or projects as submissions; portfolios provide a holistic, dynamic image of competence by integrating multiple forms of evidence, including writing, projects, reflections, and feedback (Cambridge, 2010).

Based on the traditional portfolio model, electronic portfolios or e-portfolios apply similar principles in a digital format, providing increased flexibility, accessibility, and interactivity. According to Baston (2011) electronic portfolios are web-based platforms that permit learners to archive, organize, and present their academic and professional growth through multimedia content, frequently utilized for evaluation, career advancement, or accreditation purposes. E-portfolios are primarily framed as learning tools that enhance reflection, metacognition, and self-regulated learning. In educational context e-portfolios typically include a variety of materials such as audio and video recordings, written assignments, and project work. As

Lorenzo & Ittelson (2005) stated, they serve not only as a repository of a learner's output but also as a means of documenting the learning process over time.

Traditional portfolio has been used in educational contexts to gather and show students' learning progresses, achievements and reflections. With the rise of digital technologies, these tasks are now known as electronic portfolio (e-portfolio). E-Portfolio maintains the fundamental goals of traditional portfolio-supporting evaluation, reflection and personal development-while introducing new capabilities capable of digital platforms. These include integration of multimedia elements, such as audio and video recording, interactive feedback, and ability to constantly modify and update the content. Consequently, e-Portfolio provides a more flexible and attractive environment for learners to monitor their growth, display competencies and actively participate in their educational journey. By encouraging metacognition and self-regulation, e-Portfolio has been aligned with learner-centered approaches and has become essential tools in modern language teaching and evaluation practices.

1.3. E-portfolios in the EFL speaking classroom

E-portfolios offer numerous advantages and disadvantages in the EFL speaking classroom. E-portfolios provide a dynamic, multimodal platform for assessing speaking skills in ways that traditional tests cannot. Unlike, one-time oral exams, e-portfolios allow students to record and upload their audio or video recordings of presentations, dialogues or projects, and that permit teachers to assess their speaking abilities; fluency, pronunciation and coherence cross multiple attempts (Lam & Lee, 2010). Similarly, Kabilan and Khan (2012) emphasize that such recordings offer a richer, more accurate representation of learners' oral abilities than traditional written or in-class oral exams.

In addition, e-portfolios facilitate ongoing feedback and dialogue between students and instructors. Alawdat (2013) explains that instructors can review students' recordings and offer specific, timely feedback, helping students make targeted improvements. For example, a student might upload a video presentation and receive comments on pronunciation, pacing, or content organization. This iterative feedback process promotes continuous growth.

Peer feedback is another valuable feature of e-portfolios. As Kollar and Fischer (2010) highlight, students can also evaluate each other's work, encouraging collaborative learning and the development of critical thinking and evaluative skills. Moreover, e-portfolios allow learners to annotate recordings with self-assessment (Little, 2009). This reflective practice helps students better understand their speaking strengths and identify areas for improvement.

Another advantage of e-portfolios is that they encourage students to be more motivated and take an active, independent role in their learning (Chau & Cheng, 2010; Stefani et al., 2007). With the use of e-portfolios, students may take charge of their language learning process and identify learning opportunities outside of the classroom. For example, students' comprehension of the language is enhanced when they reflect on how language is used in authentic situations, like conversations or through media like radio and television.

Despite the benefits of e-portfolios in enhancing speaking competencies, several challenges prevent their effective implementation in EFL speaking classrooms. One major obstacle is the usability and functionality of e-portfolio platforms as many struggle with navigation digital platforms, uploading recordings and managing multimedia content (Barrett, 2007; Lorenzo

Ittelson, 2005). Students usually receive insufficient training on how to use e-portfolios effectively, which makes them unsure of how to use the platforms and upload their speaking samples (Wakimoto & Lewis, 2014). Another issue related to this obstacle is unstable internet access and lack of reliable devices (Abrami & Barrett, 2005). In some regions with limited connectivity, students face significant barriers to participating in e-portfolio activities.

In addition, time consumptions present another considerable challenge. Students spend more time preparing, repeating and revising their speech. Some of the students practice their speech four or five times before recording their tasks (Yeonwoo Kwak & Judy Yin, 2018)

Furthermore, some students are concerned about who has access to their recorded speaking samples and whether their data is securely stored (Buzzetto-More, 2010). From the pedagogical side, educators may delay in giving feedback and responses to their learners regarding their performances which can reduce their motivation and engagement as teachers' feedback plays a crucial role in improving speaking performance (Meyer et al., 2010).

Finally, many EFL learners struggle with self-assessment. They often find it difficult to critically evaluate their own speaking progress without a structured guide (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). In light of the challenges and potential benefits of e-portfolios, previous studies have discussed EFL students' perceptions of their use in the speaking classroom.

1.4. Previous Studies on EFL Students' Perceptions of E-Portfolios in the Speaking Classroom

Few studies have focused on portfolio assessment for speaking skills, as most second language research has examined writing performance (Godwin-Jones 2003; Ho 2003; Hsu et al. 2008; Huang 2015; Shih 2010; Sun 2009). However, some research has explored "voice blogs" or "audio blogs," where students used blogs to practice their speaking abilities over time. This is an approach similar to the e-speaking portfolios used in that learners employed blogs for a long period to either develop or evaluate speaking skills.

Some studies on voice blogs used a teacher's blog as a central platform for students to upload their assignments, functioning more as a submission space than a true portfolio assessment tool. For instance, Sun (2009) investigated the impact of voice blogs in an organized manner by evaluating the speaking skills of EFL students. In the study, participants uploaded 30 blog entries to a teacher's blog site. The results of the study revealed that students developed a range of learning techniques and viewed blogging as a means for learning, self-expression, and social interaction. In a subsequent study, Sun (2012) examined how voice blogging affected improvements in speaking proficiency in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). The results indicated that students generally felt that their speaking performance had improved, whereas, there was no significant change in their language (CAF). According to Hsu (2016), 30 EFL college students in Taiwan participated in a quantitative study on the impact of audio blogging on the growth of L2 speaking CAF. In this case, pupils uploaded 15 audio blog postings using their teacher's blog site rather than their own. The participants in this study improved their speaking complexity, but not their accuracy or fluency, which produced quite disparate findings. Students posted to a single class blog for the entire class to utilize instead of having their individual blogs.

The previous studies used instructor-managed blogs. However, some research allowed students to create and manage their own blogs. As an illustration, Shih (2010) investigated

how voice blogging affected the public speaking skills of EFL students enrolled in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. In this study, students were not required to produce a collection of oral drafts; instead, they were asked to present a single oral draft and a revised version after receiving feedback. Instead of using voice blogging as a tool for portfolio-based assessment, the focus was on examining it as an approach of blended learning. The findings demonstrated that students benefited from posting video recordings of their speeches, revising them based on feedback, and uploading the improved versions to their personal blogs. This study was unique in using video recordings instead of audio files, allowing for more comprehensive feedback and development in speaking skills.

In contrast, Huang (2015) found that voice blogs encouraged students to produce multiple oral drafts, demonstrating their value for blogs as e-speaking portfolios. The study involved EFL learners at a Taiwanese university who summarized or responded to web-based materials in their voice blogs, combining reading and speaking skills. The findings indicated that voice blogging could be effectively integrated into the EFL curriculum for additional practice outside of class. Similarly, Hsu et al. (2008) studied 22 ESL students who recorded oral assignments in their blogs. This study aimed to improve ESL learners' speaking performance and found that both learners and teachers had positive attitudes toward audio blogs with increased student confidence. While neither study was designed as e-speaking portfolios, both suggested that blog sites could be successfully implemented for this purpose.

Hsieh et al. (2015) examined Taiwanese university students' views on e-portfolios. The study involved 30 interviews, 14 e-portfolios, and 281 valid surveys. It identified five key success factors for e-portfolios in Taiwanese higher education: perceived utility, university support, audiences (e.g., instructors, employers, friends), incentives like competitions, and extracurricular activities. The study emphasized the importance of accessibility, interaction, and ownership in e-portfolio creation. It also suggested that these principles could be applied in countries with similar cultural backgrounds.

In another study, Dougherty and Coelho (2017) investigated Arabic-speaking students' views on e-portfolios for language acquisition. The study, which included 71 college students from a Middle Eastern university, found that e-portfolios were positively received as a tool for improving English learning. Students appreciated e-portfolios for organizing tasks, collaborating with peers and instructors, and reflecting on their progress. They also began using e-portfolios for self-reflection and to track their personal learning development. Safari and Koosha (2016) investigated the impact of e-portfolios on the speaking abilities of intermediate and advanced EFL learners. The study, which involved 72 students aged 14-18, found that e-portfolios promoted self-assessment, helping students identify strengths and weaknesses, leading to improved oral communication. The authors emphasized the role of language learning awareness in enhancing speaking proficiency.

Research on e-portfolios for EFL speaking skills is limited but recent research suggest that they can also support speaking development. Early studies used teacher-managed blogs mainly for submitting assignments, while later research showed that student-managed blogs and e-portfolios can enhance speaking practice, reflection, and confidence. However, numerous studies lacked major characteristics such as feedback, multiple drafts, and video integration. Overall, e-portfolios play a great role in developing speaking skills, but their role

in assessment is still establishing.

The following part will cover the review of three empirical studies in order to establish the relationship between EFL students' perceptions of e-portfolios and their use in the speaking classroom.

2. Review of Three Empirical Studies

2.1. Overview of the three studies

The following section provides an overview of the three selected studies regarding their context, participants, methodology and findings.

➤ *Ngo and Luu's Study (2023)*

Ngo and Luu (2023) conducted a quantitative study at a private university in Southern Vietnam to examine Vietnamese students' perspectives on the implementation of e-portfolios for assessing the English speaking skill. The sample consisted of 268 students (127 males and 141 females), aged between 19 and 25 years, who were A2-level English learners in their seventh semester, studying English as a compulsory subject. The researchers collected data using a Google Form questionnaire, which was translated from English into Vietnamese to ensure participants' full understanding. They administered the survey during students' summer classes, allowing participants to complete the 25 Likert-scale items without a time limit. The main instrument in this research was a close-ended questionnaire. The study found that e-portfolios enhanced students' confidence, reduced speaking anxiety, and increased motivation and self-reflection. Peer and instructor feedback supported speaking development while the format encouraged participation and promoted autonomous and self-regulated learning in the Vietnamese EFL context.

➤ *Huang and Hung's Study (2010)*

Huang and Hung (2010) conducted a study at a Taiwanese university to examine the effectiveness of electronic speaking portfolios (e-portfolios) from the point of view of EFL students. The study involved 51 sophomore students from two English conversation classes, all of whom had around six years of formal English education. The researchers used a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative instruments to achieve a thorough understanding of student perceptions. Qualitative data were gathered through six target students' semi-structured interviews, providing rich information on their own experiences and perceptions. Additionally, the e-portfolios were also analysed qualitatively to investigate how students documented and reflected on the development of their oral performance. Quantitatively, a 10 open-ended item questionnaire was used to obtain measurable data regarding students' trends and attitudes. The research in this study generated several important findings regarding the use of e-portfolios in teaching EFL speaking. Students became more aware of their speaking weaknesses and benefited from the flexibility of e-portfolios, which improved fluency and reduced anxiety, especially among shy learners. However, limitations such as the lack of real-time interaction and concerns over performance authenticity were noted. Consequently, students preferred a blended assessment approach that combines traditional and digital speaking evaluations to deal with diverse learning needs.

➤ *Kwak and Yin's Study (2018)*

Kwak and Yin (2018) conducted a study during the spring semester of 2017 in a Basic

English Speaking course at a Korean university, aiming to explore students' perspectives on the use of electronic speaking portfolios as an assessment tool in the EFL classroom. The selected population involved 17 undergraduate students, mostly freshmen with a sophomore majoring in English education. Three class hours per week were allocated to the course for 14 weeks, focusing on improving students' speaking skills, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation through lectures, group discussions, presentations and electronic speaking portfolios. The study adopted a qualitative approach, collecting data through interviews with six vocal students and a content analysis of their portfolio entries. Students recorded weekly video speaking tasks and uploaded them to "Naver Blogs," a platform chosen for its accessibility. Each blog entry was followed by feedback, revision, and reflective journals. Data were analyzed by the constant comparative method, comparing incidents and categories to generate thematic insights. The results indicated a positive impact of portfolios on students' speaking performance, helping them practice and develop their speaking skills over multiple cycles. Major outcomes included reduced speaking anxiety, increased confidence, and improved pronunciation and intonation. The study highlighted that the recursive nature of the portfolio process, combined with targeted feedback and revision, provided a more valid and comprehensive way to assess oral proficiency in EFL learners.

In summary, these overviews presented the main characteristics of the three selected studies. The three studies are compared and contrasted in terms of their findings in the following section.

2.2. Comparison and contrast of the major findings of the three studies

The studies examined; suggested that utilizing e-portfolios affects EFL students speaking proficiency positively. The studies' analysis indicates the extent to which e-portfolios were valuable for speaking skills among students of English as a foreign language. Ngo and Luu's (2023), Huang and Hung's (2010), and Kwak and Yin's (2018) three studies exhibit some common outstanding similarities that reflect the collaborative relationship between e-portfolios and the speaking ability of EFL students.

Firstly, the three studies confirmed that students adapted fairly well to e-portfolio technology despite some differences in their experiences. Vietnamese learners (Ngo and Luu, 2023) had a high level of confidence in using digital tools to create and update their portfolios. Similarly, Korean learners (Kwak and Yin, 2018) became more confident, especially with tools available like smart phones and blogs. Besides, Taiwanese learners (Huang and Hung, 2010) enjoyed the flexibility offered by the technology.

Apart from that, all the studies argued that e-portfolios increased students' fluency in speaking, eased anxiety, and increased motivation. For example, e-portfolios gave students a low-stress environment that invited students and reduced anxiety, particularly among shy or nervous students, in accordance with the studies.

Reflection and feedback were principal components of each study. Vietnamese (Ngo and Luu, 2023) and Korean learners (Kwak and Yin, 2018) especially gained from self-regulated learning strategies, including goal-setting, reflection on feedback, and tracking progress. Taiwanese students (Huang and Hung, 2010) found that listening to their own tapes helped in determining weaknesses, which were primarily in vocabulary and pronunciation.

Finally, all research acknowledged the power of e-portfolios to advance autonomy and self-

regulated learning. Vietnamese and Korean students established goals, checked progress, and controlled practice out of class through learning initiated in the classroom. Despite shared benefits of e-portfolios, the research did reveal some differences in students' perceptions and experiences.

One of them was concerned with students' perceptions of interaction and authenticity in e-portfolio assessment. Vietnamese (Ngo and Luu, 2023) and Korean students (Kwak and Yin, 2018) were more likely to view the e-portfolio format as authentic and helpful to their learning objectives. On the other hand, Taiwanese learners (Huang and Hung, 2010) criticized it for the lack of face-to-face interaction, arguing that the unidirectional speech recording would be unable to record conversational interactions in natural contexts. They preferred a mixed approach combining traditional oral examinations and e-portfolios, criticizing an intrinsic paradox between controlled practice and spontaneous communication.

Furthermore, the focus on self-regulated learning and practical refinements was varied. In Ngo & Luu (2023) and Kwak & Yin (2018) articles', the point of focus was on self-regulated learning strategies under which students were allotted more control in the learning process. Nevertheless, the Taiwanese study (Huang and Hung, 2010) was more focused on practical refinements through oral means of practice, stressing the need for systematic and continuous practice.

The limitations cited in the studies also varied. Both the Vietnamese (Ngo and Luu, 2023) and the Korean (Kwak and Yin, 2018) studies acknowledged the context-dependent character of the results and the requirement for large-scale, longitudinal research to validate the use of e-portfolios across various learning environments. The Korean study (Kwak and Yin, 2018) also emphasized the need for instructor support to support effective reflection and feedback.

In contrast, the Taiwanese study (Huang and Hung, 2010) was more negative in its criticism, pointing out several limitations, including an excessive reliance on rehearsals, lack of adequate conversational exchange, and reporter bias. This made the Taiwanese approach more cautious, suggesting that balanced assessment formats need to be employed to yield closer real-time communication.

Even though the three studies were dissimilar in method and outcome, they all shared the encouraging influence of e-portfolios on EFL learners' speaking development. Through integrating technology, self-regulated learning practices, and reflection strategies; e-portfolios have been revealed to enhance motivation, reduce anxiety, and allow learner autonomy. However, differences in students' perceptions and experiences suggest that controlled practice and actual communication balance, and more structured autonomy development, might be necessary to optimize the use of e-portfolios in EFL speaking tests. The next section is devoted to the discussion of the findings of the three empirical studies in light of studies reviewed in the theoretical background.

2.3. Discussion of the major findings of the three studies

Despite variations in research methods, participants, and data analysis procedures among the three studies conducted by Ngo and Luu (2023), Huang and Hung (2010), and Kwak, Yin (2018) all provided similar findings and evidence on the effectiveness on implementing e-portfolios in EFL speaking classrooms. The findings addressed one major question: "What are the perceptions of EFL students regarding using e-portfolios in speaking classrooms?"

Overall,

the results affirmed the benefits of using e-portfolios.

➤ *Reducing Speaking Anxiety:*

First, the three studies conducted by Ngo and Luu (2023), Huang and Hung (2010), and Kwak and Yin (2018), collectively revealed that electronic speaking portfolios have the capacity to mitigate learners' speaking anxiety. Traditional speaking assessments often require students to perform in front of instructors or peers, a context that many find quite challenging. In contrast, the asynchronous and private nature of e-portfolios provides learners with the opportunity to practice and improve their spoken responses at their own pace before submission, thereby creating a more supportive and less stressful assessment environment. Barrett (2007) strongly emphasized that e-portfolios ensure a more authentic and personal learning experience, hence lowering the effective filters. In the same line of thought, Alawdat (2013) noted that digital portfolios assist students in reflecting on and managing their language performance, thus reducing anxiety, in contrast to traditional testing environments.

In the Taiwanese study carried out by Huang and Hung (2010), the students explicitly reported that the absence of a live audience and the ability of recording themselves at their own pace greatly reduced their anxiety and allowed them to engage more freely in oral language practice. Similarly, Vietnamese students reported increased comfort and confidence in their recorded speech when assessed via e-portfolio rather than traditional oral interviews (Ngo & Luu, 2023).

While the Korean study, carried out by Kwak and Yin (2018), also draws attention to this finding, it further illustrates that repeated engagement with the platform across several recursive cycles helped students become desensitized to self-recording. Therefore, beyond the assessment form itself, the ongoing practice associated with the e-portfolio can be a major contributor to emotional control for anxiety reduction. Together, these insights further elaborated upon in the theoretical background, confirm that e-portfolios afford psychological support for learners in addition to being an assessment tool.

➤ *Enhancing Self-reflection and Feedback, Motivation and Promoting Autonomy:*

Enhancing students' motivation, promoting learners' autonomy, self-reflection and increasing access to peer and instructor feedback are other consistent benefits reported across the studies. These processes are central to the socio cultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Dornyei's Motivation Theory (2005) which view assessment as part of the learning cycle rather than a final process and focus more on the learner stating that through others, we become ourselves.

According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, learning occurs through interaction and collaboration, especially in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The feedback and peer interactions within e-portfolios support students as they move beyond their current level of competence with assistance from more capable peers or instructors. In the Korean and Taiwanese studies, students were involved in peer assessment and reflective tasks in line with this model of interactive and mediated learning. Moreover, reflective feedback loops are the most likely candidates for internalization of skills, which is central around Vygotsky's idea of developing higher psychological functions through social tools.

Dornyei's Motivation theory (2005) also aligns with reported benefits. His framework

stated that learner's motivation is not static, but dynamic, and being influenced by

contextual factors, such as learning autonomy, feedback, and perceived competence. Alawdat (2013) elaborated that instructors can review students' recordings and offer easy, clear and objective feedback, which assists students in making specific improvements. Kolar and Fischer (2010) similarly highlighted that students are also able to evaluate each other's work, encouraging collaborative learning, the development of critical thinking and evaluated skills.

All three studies involved participants who, in one way or another, engaged in some form of reflection, whether through self-assessment feedback comments (Ngo & Luu, 2023), structured reflective journals (Kwak & Yin, 2018) or oral reflections at set intervals (Huang & Hung, 2010).

The Korean students demonstrated a specifically strong trajectory towards autonomy, as they shifted from scripting their speech to using keyphrase notes and developing improvisational abilities over time. This shift shows a maturation of language learning strategies, doubtlessly spurred via the portfolio's iterative nature. Moreover, the Taiwanese students cited growing conduct consisting of wondering in English at some point of spontaneous recordings, indicating an internalization of the learning process that extended past lecture room requirements.

➤ *Challenges of EFL Students While Using E-portfolios in Speaking Classrooms*

Despite the pedagogical advantages of e-portfolios, there are a number of real-world obstacles highlighted in the three studies that may limit their effectiveness and adaptability in various educational settings. The successful use of e-portfolios is significantly hampered by technological limitations, especially in areas that are underdeveloped or rural. Students' capacity to participate fully and fairly in e-portfolio activities may be hindered by problems including inadequate internet access, a shortage of digital devices, and disparities in digital proficiency. Limited connectivity is a significant barrier in numerous domains, making it difficult for students to share information or access online platforms. The absence of dependable gadgets exacerbates this problem even further and could render regular participation impossible. According to Abrami and Barrett (2005), these difficulties are made worse in some places by a lack of reliable internet connectivity and working devices, which makes it harder for students to fully utilize e-portfolio chances and build the computer abilities they require to achieve success in modern education.

Among the major challenges are usability and functionality of e-portfolio systems, as some students struggle with electronic platforms, uploading audio, and managing multimedia materials (Barrett, 2007; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). Moreover, students are often not properly trained to use e-portfolios in a proper way, and students fail to know how to upload their speech samples correctly (Wakimoto & Lewis, 2014). These usability issues create barriers that can undermine the long-term impact of e-portfolios in terms of language acquisition among students. Without addressing these barriers and providing adequate support, the potential of e-portfolios to promote long-term language development and learner autonomy is questionable, as the gains observed may be founded upon short-term engagement and not on sustained progress.

On the other hand, Huang and Hung (2010) were more critical in their reaction, pointing to inherent defects in the design of the e-portfolio. The respondents were critical of the lack of

live interaction, arguing that the absence of face-to-face interaction hindered one from

establishing authentic speaking ability. Although the provision of opportunity to practice and re-record was seen as favourable for fluency, it was seen as very negative for spontaneity and authenticity. This over-reliance on practice questioned whether end-of-course recordings were truly representative of students' speaking ability. In spite of this, the flexibility and self-directed nature of e-portfolios were still considered a strength for the development of learner autonomy and confidence in the long term.

Conclusion

This article reviewed the literature related to assessing the speaking skill exploring definitions, the traditional methods and alternative assessment to assess the speaking skill. It also tackled the advantages and disadvantages of using e-portfolios and examined previous studies on EFL students' perceptions of e-portfolios in the speaking classroom. It then discussed the three selected studies through summarization and analysis. It overviewed Ngo and Luu's (2023), Kwak and Yin's (2018) and Huang and Hung's (2010) studies, and thereafter compared and contrasted the results. The analysis discussed the findings in relation to the theoretical background given in the literature review. These findings supported the research problem by highlighting that, while e-portfolios can enhance the speaking skill of EFL learners, problems such as limited technological access, absence of spontaneity, and contextual constraints must be addressed to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability in diverse learning environments.

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