THE INCORPORATION OF EPORTFOLIOS INTO EFL COURSES:

BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED IN THE DIFFUSION OF TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

Electronic Portfolios[1] (hereafter ePortfolios) were incorporated into courses run by the English Language Centre (ELC) at the City University of Hong Kong from Jan 2009 to Aug 2010. Experience with this innovation constitutes the substance of this report. Major challenges included: 1) Making the ePortfolio platform user-friendly by providing technical support; and 2) Balancing the workload imposed on teachers and students against the aims of developing ePortfolios. Difficulties encountered in the dissemination of the new technology to students and teachers are also discussed.

Findings suggest that the incorporation of ePortfolios into ELC courses has initially been successful in that the ePortfolio platform has been made user-friendly through the availability of ePortfolio templates; uploading videos to YouTube has also successfully resolved the technical problem of overloading a platform. Nonetheless, were students provided with regular and extensive feedback, the imposition on the already heavily impacted teachers' and students' time could constitute a continuing difficulty in making ePortfolio usage a fully successful process.

Background

The student population in this study was essentially Chinese, speaking Cantonese as their first language. Since the late 19th century, students in the Hong Kong (HK) educational system have been required to learn English under British rule. When HK reverted to China in 1997, becoming one of the Special Administrative Regions of China, the English language was continued on the basis that Hong Kong is a global center, and English, as a major world language, remains important for Hong Kong citizens. To date, the English language constitutes one of the two major languages in

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[1] An ePortfolio is often defined as "personalized Web-based collections of work, responses to work, and reflections that are used to demonstrate key skills and accomplishments for a variety of contexts and time periods". This collection can be comprised of text-based, graphic or multimedia elements archived on a Web site or on other electronic media. (Lorenzo and Ittelson, 2005, p. 2). Yancy (2009) highlights four activities involved with the use of ePortfolios – creating, evidencing, connecting, and reflecting (p.28).

use (Chinese and English) in Hong Kong, and students need to learn English not only for their academic life but also for their future working life.

Students enrolling in the language courses conducted by the English Language Centre (ELC) at City University of Hong Kong had demonstrated a low level of English proficiency. The determination of the English proficiency level of students was based on the student participants' examination results in the subject Use of English in the Hong Kong A-level Examinations. Grade A is the highest grade along the scale A, B, C, D, E, F, and U, where "U" stands for "unclassified", and the worst grade is F. The students in this study had scored Grade D/E in the Hong Kong A-level Examinations in the subject of English.

From Jan 2009 to Aug 2010, to enhance learning, electronic portfolios (hereafter ePortfolios) were incorporated in five EFL courses in the English Language Centre (ELC) at City University of Hong Kong. The five courses are Written Language (Regular module), Written Language (Business Module), Spoken Language, Foundation English and Presentation Skills (See Appendix A for details). Basically, students were required to engage in about ten hours of independent learning through the completion of an ePortfolio. The common skills required in the ePortfolio segments of these courses involved such critical thinking skills as evaluating the learning resources students had used in terms of achieving the learning goals they set for their learning plans. Through reflecting on their learning process, students were expected to become better independent learners able to monitor their own learning and to improve their English proficiency.

Reflection – a major mental activity in which ELC students were required to engage when completing their learning ePortfolios – constitutes one example of the various abilities ePortfolio programs in general aim to foster among students. The role reflection plays in enhancing student learning has been a significant topic of interest in ePortfolio research (Barrett, 2007; Brandes & Boskic, 2008; Hallam & Creagh, 2010; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005; Miller & Morgaine, 2009; Yancy 2009).

Although ePortfolios have been used at universities in the United States, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and in parts of Asia over the last decade, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no study investigating the efficacy of reflections on a scale as large as one involving some 1500 students taking five EFL courses in the Hong Kong setting. In Hong Kong, several universities had used ePortfolios to enhance learning during the period between January 2009 to August 2010, but those ePortfolio

programs were not implemented on a scale as large as that of this study. Among those ePortfolio initiatives, Chau and Cheng (2010) noted in their study of the use of ePortfolios at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University that ePortfolio use often leads to confusion and even frustration in practice, although in theory ePortfolios are believed to enhance student learning. The present study aims to contribute to the body of ePortfolio literature by examining how teachers and students feel about the process of creating ePortfolios, as required by the ePortfolio components of their courses, and whether students have improved on such higher-order thinking skills as critical thinking through reflecting on their learning processes.

Challenges faced in the process of incorporating ePortfolios in ELC courses

Challenge 1: Solving the capacity problem of the ePortfolio platforms in use
Although videos constitute a more interesting way to showcase a student's learning than do word documents, videos occupy comparatively greater memory space. The first ePortfolio platform in use during the period between Jan 2009 and August 2010 was the Blackboard Personal Portfolio (hereafter: *The Bb ePortfolio platform*), which was brought to the verge of collapse after a single semester of use, because the platform's capacity was virtually exhausted after more than 1,000 videos were uploaded by students from all of the various ELC courses using the element of ePortfolios. The overloading problem occurred because of the technical difficulty in deleting the videos from the Bb system, according to the Education Development office[2](EDO), which provided technical support to the ELC in matters related to the incorporation of ePortfolios in ELC courses. In an attempt to solve the space problem, it was suggested to the EDO that students could upload their videos to YouTube and just paste the URLs of their videos to their ePortfolios in Bb, because an URL would take up only a little space. However, the EDO continued to urge the ELC to switch to another platform for fear that the Bb system would still be heavily burdened if a large number of students were to upload their videos directly to the Bb system for the sake of convenience; furthermore, the EDO was also worried that the uploading of personal photos, a common practice for ELC ePortfolio projects, might also take up a great deal of memory space of the Bb system, especially if this act was performed by thousands of students. As a consequence, another ePortfolio platform – the Google Sites – was used for all ELC courses in the following academic year to align with the ePortfolio platform the EDO was promoting during that period. To avoid potentially overloading the second ePortfolio platform with thousands of videos, students were

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[2] The Education Development Office has been restructured and renamed, and the function has been known as Office of Education Development and General Education (EDGE) since April 2010.

instructed to upload their videos to YouTube and then to paste only the URLs of their videos to their ePortfolios. No evidence of technical problems resulting from overloading the ePortfolio platform has yet been reported.

Challenge 2: Preparing a detailed user manual tailored to ELC courses
Both the Bb Personal Portfolios and the Google Sites did not provide detailed user guides tailored to the needs of students in the ELC courses. Because some students might experience extensive difficulties in fulfilling the requirements of the ePortfolio projects were they left to determine how to use the ePortfolio platforms by themselves, one of the major tasks in the implementation of ePortfolios in ELC courses was the production of a self-explanatory user guide detailing all the steps needed to fulfill the ePortfolio requirements of an ELC course.

Despite the fact that technical advice was available from the EDO, in the process of producing such a comprehensive user guide targeted at both ELC teachers and students, many technical problems were encountered. The user guide, written in English understandable to students, was eventually completed after numerous revisions. However, the process of updating the user guide was never ending, because there were often minor changes related to the Google Sites and the use of YouTube in relation to the process for uploading videos and other related skills. Worse still, these changes often were unnoticed until ELC teachers and students discovered them, because Google and YouTube had no obligation to inform the ELC of the changes in interfaces concerning uploading videos and in other related matters. It was also unrealistic to expect the staff member responsible for writing the user guide to check the timeliness of the user guide on a daily basis. As a result, the user guide often had to be hastily revised every time a mismatch appeared between the written instructions and the computer interfaces. This unpredictability put enormous pressure on the ePortfolio coordinator who wrote the instruction manual, because outdated instructions would baffle teachers and students who needed exact instructions regarding how to perform any given act.

Challenge 3: Establishing a technical support team in the ELC
Another major problem was related to establishing a technical support team in the ELC where teachers and students could seek face-to-face technical support from staff within the ELC. Before the technical support team was formed, teachers and students had had to email the EDO for technical assistance, using English as the language of communication. However, there was a common difficulty in describing technical problems and in understanding guiding instructions by email – EDO staff

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spoke in technical jargon while teachers and students were not fluent users of that jargon. In view of this communication gap, the establishment of a technical support team was regarded as a necessary condition for the successful implementation of the use of ePortfolios in ELC courses. The technical support team was comprised of the ePortfolio Cooridinator (an ELC teacher with computer expertise), a technician and a group of student helpers. The technician was responsible for providing technical assistance to teachers, and the ePortfolio Student Helpers were expected to answer students' queries by email or through face-to-face consultation. The ePortfolio Help Desk was in service four hours every day, Monday through Friday, throughout the full semester.

The dissemination of technical knowledge concerning ePortfolio platforms initially occurred within the technical support team; that is, the ePortfolio Coordinator transmitted the knowledge to the other members of the technical support team and the team members spread the knowledge to students and teachers. The transmission of knowledge at all levels required the use of the English language. The ePortfolio Coordinator was also responsible for spreading the knowledge to all ELC teachers by means of organizing and delivering several workshops and ePortfolio induction meetings. After attending workshops and/or induction meetings, teachers could, in addition, contact the ELC technician or the ePortfolio Student Helpers with individual questions or for one-to-one coaching sessions. Within the technical support team, the training was largely accomplished through self-access; that is, the team members were required to produce a dummy ePortfolio by following the instructions in the user guide. In addition, workshops were organized to check team members' understanding and to assure that important skills had been mastered.

Challenge 4: Handling resistance from participating teachers
Generally speaking, the necessity of familiarizing themselves with the ePortfolio platforms worried some ELC teachers. Their worries were threefold: First, some of them regarded the learning of related skills as an additional burden on their already heavy workload; second, some of them dreaded the possibility that unexpected technical problems might appear while they were doing their demonstrations in class, resulting in embarrassment; third, they were worried that their failure to help their students with the technical aspect might cause students to lower their rating in the end-of-course evaluation, despite the fact that the students had been informed on several occasions that classroom teachers were not responsible for teaching the technical aspect of using the ePortfolio platform. Further, the reason for setting aside one lesson for the whole class to set up their ePortfolio frameworks was

precisely so that such a session would provide an opportunity for students to help each other if they had problems following the user guide. As a matter of fact, classroom teachers were only required to demonstrate the steps for sharing one's ePortfolio with people involved with the course (e.g., one's classmates), and for collecting students' Gmail addresses so that students could simply copy and paste the class list into the sharing box. These anxieties caused a small number of teachers, especially some part-timers, to use such tactics as avoidance to handle the situation. For example, some teachers did not attend the optional training sessions without informing the organizer of the session whether they had completed the training on their own by following the user guide. This group of teachers had to be pursued persistently to make sure that they had learned the skills required of teachers. Individual emails were sent to the recalcitrant teachers offering to provide one-to-one coaching if they thought such assistance would help them to master the necessary skills. In rare cases – in fact, upon the request of one or two part-timers -- ePortfolio Student Helpers had to be sent to their classes to provide the demonstration for them. However, those teachers were informed that, on financial grounds, such services would not in the future be available.

Another way to minimize resistance from teachers and students was to simplify the technical skills that teachers and students had to learn. The simplification was achieved in two ways:

> 1) The most difficult technical skills were simply removed; for example, in the Presentation Skills course, students were relieved of the need to perform the act of using Windows Movie Makers to cut off a part of a video clip;
> 2) An ePortfolio course template was created for each course.

Each template included the portfolio pages that students were required to create, so that students could directly upload a word document or a video to a particular page without first having to create those portfolio pages. In addition, various links were inserted into the template to teach students how to use the ePortfolio platform through written instructions (e.g., the complete user guide tailored to ELC courses) and through demonstration videos (e.g., how to use Window Movies Maker to produce a digital story and how to upload a video to YouTube and to the ePortfolio platform).

Challenge 5: Motivating students to produce quality ePortfolios

Intra-class and Inter-class outstanding ePortfolio Awards were established to reward students who made the effort to reflect on their learning process and to use technology to produce an ePortfolio that was both reflective in content and attractive in layout. Class teachers had the autonomy to decide on the winner of the Intra-class

Outstanding ePortfolio Award for each of their classes; class teachers were also given the choice of opting out if, in their opinion, no student's work deserved the award. The winners of the Intra-class Outstanding ePortfolio Award were eligible to be considered for the competition for the Inter-class Outstanding ePortfolio Award. The judges for that competition comprised Course Coordinators and the ePortfolio Coordinator.

The Intra-class Outstanding ePortfolio Award was meant to provide an incentive by rewarding those students who spent a great deal of time on their ePortfolios. However, only about 20% to 30% of class teachers nominated any of their students to receive this award. There were two possible reasons for this. First, none of the ePortfolios produced by their students were good enough to deserve the award based on the criteria for winning the award (see Appendix B); second, it is possible that class teachers did not bother to nominate their students because they themselves were not interested in the award or did not see the value of this award. The low rate of nominations for students winning the award might be an indicator of the lukewarm, or even indifferent attitude of teachers and students towards the process of completing ePortfolios.

Challenge 6: Using the ePortfolio platform as a channel for ongoing peer comments and teacher comments

It was hoped that student-student interaction and teacher-student interaction could be extended beyond class time through the use of the ePortfolio platform. Actually, allowing students to interact with one another outside of class was one of the major functions of ePortfolios. As Brandes & Boskic (2008) note,

> ePortfolios provide a tool and structure for students to document events, research ideas, reflect, and analyze these ideas, use the analysis to inform the next steps, and then share their ideas with others. In our experience, peer and instructor's feedback, as well as various scaffolding tasks that are built into the construction of the ePortfolio, all contribute to the move from description to analysis. (p.12)

For example, for the Spoken Language course, students were required to comment on the suitability of their classmates' proposed learning activities with respect to the learning goals they had set. To achieve this purpose, a built-in comment form (actually a Google document) was created in the ePortfolio template for each course. To ensure that students would use the comment form to feedback on each other's

work, peer comments were made compulsory. Although their comments were not assessed for quality, students were required to write their comments on the comment form (see Appendix C for the ePortfolio Content Guidelines for the course Spoken Language).

However, after one semester, teachers suggested that they be relieved of the responsibility to check whether students had commented on each other's work on the grounds of time constraints – i.e., because their busy teaching and marking workload would not allow them to do the checking conscientiously. Teachers also expressed the concern that it would be too time-consuming for them to monitor students' progress in independent learning by constantly having to check what students had put on their ePortfolio comment forms, not to mention needing to write comments on each ePortfolio. Such feedback led to the termination of the compulsory use of the comment form and resulted in the use of ePortfolios exclusively for displaying one's work.

Evaluation of the use of ePortfolios in enhancing student learning
Teacher and student feedback on the process of preparing an ePortfolio to enhance learning was collected at the end of each semester through an End-of-Course ePortfolio Questionnaire (see Appendix D for a sample of the questionnaire)

Result of End-of-course ePortfolio Survey for Semester A 09-10[3]
Online questionnaires were used in Semester A in lieu of the paper version in use in previous years in order to minimize the use of paper and to minimize the possible interruption of class teaching. The teacher response rates were:

- Foundation English (I): 6/10= 60%
- Spoken English: 10/34=29%
- Written English (Business module): 11/20=55%

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[3] **Sem B 09-10:** Since students were not required to produce ePortfolios during this period, no ePortfolio survey was conducted.

Summer 09-10: The data involving the Presentation Skills students and teachers using the new ePortfolio platform (i.e., Google Sites) were collected, but the analysis was to be performed by the new ePortfolio Coordinator, who was scheduled to assume duties starting from September 2010.

The response rates were relatively low; however, the student response rates were also very low, perhaps because the questionnaire, sent via email, was to be completed on a voluntary basis.   The student response rates were:

- Foundation English (I): 60/200=30%
- Spoken English: 64/948=7%
- Written English (Business module): 14/397=3.5%

In the summary of the survey findings regarding teacher data[4], note that only the findings that showed a majority response (i.e., only responses from over 50% of respondents) have been reported.   The rationale of not reporting all responses was twofold.   First, responses from less than 50% of participating teachers were not considered by the present researcher to be representative; second, reporting all responses for the three courses, regardless of how representative they actually were, would render the part of findings unnecessarily long, yet failing to provide a clear picture of major patterns of findings.

The findings concerning teachers teaching the three courses -- that is, Spoken Language, Written Language (Business module), and Foundation English (I) -- are summarized in Table 1.

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[4] Since the return rate of student questionnaires was rather low (i.e., between 3.5% to 30%), the data were considered to be unrepresentative and therefore are not reported.

Table 1: Findings of the End-of-Course ePortfolio Questionnaires

Questions on the 5-point scale end-of-course ePortfolio questionnaires (1=Totally disagree 3=Neutral 5=Totally agree)	Percentage of respondents agreeing* to the statements on the left		
	SL	WL (B)	FE (I)
1. The ePortfolio project helped students become more aware of the need to produce better coursework	54.5%	**	54.5%
2. The process of developing ePortfolios helped students become more aware of the need to reflect critically on their learning.	60%	**	**
3. The process of developing ePortfolios helped students become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in English	50%	**	**
4. The process of developing ePortfolios helped students become more aware of their progress and what they had achieved	50%	**	**
5. The process of developing ePortfolios helped students reflect critically on their learning during the course.	50%	**	**
6. The process of doing ePortfolios helped students organize their work	54.5%	54.5%	54.5%
7. The Bb ePortfolio platform was user-friendly.	64%	60%	64%
8. Students' workload was reasonable.	81.8%	72.7%	81.8%
9. Teachers' workload was reasonable	100%	100%	100%
10. Students benefited from doing the ePortfolio project.	54.5%	54.5%	54.5%

* "Agreeing" is defined as choosing the rating of "4" from the 5-point scale.

** Less than 50% of the respondents chose the rating of "4".

SL – Spoken Language; WL (B) – Written Language (business module);

FE (I) – Foundation English (I)

Meaning of results

The findings suggest that the incorporation of ePortfolios into the three ELC courses has achieved some success in three aspects:

- **Providing a user-friendly platform**

  Although teachers were not the primary users of the ePortfolio platform, they were also considered to be the users of the platform because they needed to view all the artifacts uploaded to students' ePortfolios by using the ePortfolio platform. Since they had to view about 20 students' ePortfolios for each class and since most teachers had more than one class, it was important that teachers could access students' ePortfolios easily without having to seek technical assistance. The old ePortfolio platforms in use prior to the adoption of Google Sites had some inherent problems with the uploading of videos – that is, videos had to be reduced to a small size before they could be uploaded to the ePortfolio platforms. However, students often did not bother to reduce the size of their videos or did not know how to perform this technical step or being unwilling to spend time to seek technical assistance from ePortfolio helpers. As a result, quite often teachers at the time when those old ePortfolio platforms were in use had experienced frustration in being unable to open their students' videos and in having to chase students up to have the problems fixed. One of the major advantages of the new measure of uploading a video to YouTube and then pasting the URL to a student's ePortfolio in Google Sites was that there was no need for students to perform any transformation to their videos, which in turn benefited teachers indirectly. That is, teachers were spared the trouble of having to deal with videos that could not open.
- Managing the workload, making it reasonable for students and teachers;
- helping students organize their work.

On the whole, teachers seemed to view the process of developing ePortfolios as having benefited students.

However, the process of developing of an ePortfolio does not seem to be a particularly useful tool in helping students to:
- Become more aware of the need to reflect critically on their learning
- Become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in English;
- Become more aware of their progress and of what they had achieved;
- Reflect critically on their learning during the course;

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The above-mentioned observations can be supported by the findings shown in Table 1. As can be seen from Table 1, less than 50% of teachers agreed to the Statements 2, 3, 4 and 5 for the course WL (B) and FE (I), although 50% of the respondents teaching SL agreed to the statements, possibly due to the reflective nature of the tasks to be completed in the ePortfolios (see Appendix C).

(The skills identified here will be referred to as "higher-order study skills" in the discussion.)

Discussion

The relatively neutral findings about the use of ePortfolios to develop higher-order study skills might be due to the lack of ongoing feedback from class teachers and from peers. This speculation is in agreement with Brandes and Boskic (2008)'s comment:

> "....in such a community of inquiry that is developed within online learning spaces, the instructor and peers have an important role in enhancing reflection. They provide scaffolding necessary to move from description to analysis within a safe environment". (p.14)

Although the documents and videos to be uploaded to students' ePortfolios involve higher-order study skills, students might have needed more guidance to be aware of these study skills and to develop these skills further. ELC teachers' workload is quite heavy, and it would have been unreasonable to expect them to follow each student's progress on a regular basis.

Another reason for the neutral findings about the use of ePortfolios to develop higher-order study skills might be that, for an ePortfolio project, far too much has been assumed by the ELC – that is, the objectives set for an ePortfolio project have exceeded what it could be by itself expected to achieve. The higher-order study skills an ePortfolio project aims to foster among students, such as those listed in Table 1, are, to a certain extent, what one might expect of the achievements of a whole faculty. An ePortfolio project can only lend some electronic support to what a faculty is doing; it cannot replace the faculty. The whole foundation of higher education is designed to help students learn to monitor their own intellectual growth through reflecting on their learning processes and develop higher-order studying skills. It may be unrealistic to believe that these processes can be accomplished through the use of an electron platform alone. In short, it seems that the objectives set for an ePortfolio project must

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be more modest. If one expects too much of a program, it is inevitable that the program will not be deemed successful. Admittedly, part of the difficulty arises because the human participants are too busy and do not have the time to invest in a new and untested program, but the disappointment with the outcome of the ePortfolio program cannot be entirely blamed on the faculty work. Reducing their loads would surely help, but the adjustment of the workload is not a panacea. Given the real restrictions on the teachers, it is unreasonable and unrealistic to blame them for not jumping gladly into the new program.

In addition to the discussion of the quantitative findings, it has been observed that the incorporation of ePortfolios into ELC courses has achieved some success in the following aspects, although the achievements of such a program have not been sufficiently studied.

1) ePortfolios serve as an all-in-one site for students to display their work – both written documents and videos -- thus facilitating class teachers, classmates and course administrators access to their work for assessment and for administrative purposes.

2) Students have been made to reflect on their experience of independent learning through the mechanism of incorporating reflections into the assessment criteria.

3) ePortfolios provide a channel for students to feedback to each other through the use of the built-in comment form.

Although, since Semester A 2010-11, peer comments have not been compulsory, the sharing function of the ePortfolio platform has not totally disappeared, since students can still view each other's ePortfolios. The wider readership, in turn, may motivate students to produce quality ePortfolios. Future research could investigate further whether students have benefited from sharing their ePortfolios with their classmates.

Limitations

It is important to note that the responses from teacher participants in this study are too limited to produce any significance. The teaching activity on which this paper has reported was not designed to be a research activity, since the present researcher did not have control of the course design or of the in-process changes; consequently, the comments reported in this paper cannot be regarded as structured research; rather they represent the observations of the person charged with running the teaching project together with a group of teachers who were not expecting to be research subjects. This limitation in research design does not invalidate their views — or the reactions of the student participants — but it does preclude drawing significant conclusions; rather

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what has been reported is a set of careful observations. In view of the limitations discussed, this project is inconclusive and additional research needs to be undertaken to collect participants' feedback on a larger scale.

Conclusion

The major achievement in the incorporation of ePortfolios into ELC courses, though not yet sufficiently studied, is the establishment of a more user-friendly ePortfolio platform, as evidenced in the findings shown in Table 1 (64% of SL teachers, 60% of WL(B) teachers and 64% of FE(I) teachers agreed that the platform was user-friendly). This in turn might be due to the following: a) the establishment of a technical support team within the ELC; b) the simplification of the content of the ePortfolio project for each course and the identification of technical skills required.

However, as can be seen from the small number of class teachers having nominated any of their students to the Outstanding ePortfolio Awards (only about 20% to 30%), the establishment of the Intra-class and Inter-class Outstanding ePortfolio Awards does not seem to be successful in motivating students at large to produce quality ePortfolios. The awards do not seem to be successful either in changing the negative opinions teachers might have formed when using the old ePortfolio platforms in earlier days; that is, before the Bb ePortofolio Platform and the Google Sites were used.

Furthermore, the effect of using ePortfolios as a tool for cultivating higher-order thinking skills has been less than satisfactory. Teacher respondents did not perceive that students had been able to use this learning tool to improve their higher-order study skills. This perception may be due to the lack of ongoing teacher feedback and peer feedback, despite the availability of a built-in comment form. The lack of ongoing feedback appears to be an inevitable result of the heavy demand on teachers' and students' time, were the teachers and students required to give regular quality feedback. Given the constraints on time, it would be realistic to set the goal of using ePortfolios merely as a platform for displaying one's language work, which might increase student motivation to produce quality work because of the expectation of a wider audience.

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Appendix A   Courses incorporating ePortfolios/paper portfolios (September 2009- August 2010)

In Semester A 09=10, ePortfolios were incorporated into three ELC courses – Written Language (Business module), Spoken Language, and Foundation English (I) - to enhance learning and teaching.   In Semester B, in 2009-2010, paper portfolios in lieu of electronic portfolios were developed by students, because of the platform in use - Bb Personal Portfolio - was reported by the Education Development Office to be on verge of collapsing due to reaching the capacity limit.   In Summer 2010, a new ePortfolio platform – the Google Sites – was used.

See below for the details concerning the number of classes using ePortfolios and for the number of eportfolios created:

Semester A 09-10 (ePortfolios, using the platform "Bb Personal ePortfolio")

	No. of Classes	No. of Students/Portfolios created
SL	48	948
WL (B)	26	397
FE I	11	200

*SL – Spoken Language; WL (B) – Written Language (Business module);
 FE (I) – Foundation English (I)

Semester B 09-10 (paper portfolios)

SL	36	548
PS	29	456
WL	43	673
FE I	11	199

*PS – Presentation Skills

Summer 09-10 (ePortfolios, using Google Sites)

PS	29	458

Appendix B   Criteria for the Intra-class Outstanding ePortfolio Award

Dear SL, WL and FE I Teachers,

In order to encourage students to produce quality paper portfolios, the ELC has set up the "Outstanding Portfolio Award" for each class. A certificate (both the paper version and the e-version) will be awarded to the outstanding portfolio in each class. Attached please find the sample of the certificate to be awarded to the student whose paper portfolio has been judged *by you* to be outstanding. You could show the sample of the certificate to your students.

The purpose of the award is meant to provide a small incentive to students to produce quality portfolios and to recognize their effort in producing portfolios.

Although students will be notified of this award by an email sent via the General Office of the ELC, I would appreciate it if you could help promote this award to your students.

Suggestions for criteria for the award of certificates:

The "outstanding" portfolio in each class should satisfy the following requirements:

1) Having demonstrated growth through the exercises chosen and through his/her reflection of the learning process, and

2) Having made an effort to organize the materials in the portfolio and to make the portfolio presentable.

Remarks: Teachers do not need to award the certificate to any students in their classes if no one can produce a portfolio that can be considered to satisfy the above-suggested criteria.

Justification for the criteria

The collection of a portfolio is intended to provide students with a variety of opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning process. Based on this view, students who demonstrate growth ought to be rewarded.

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It is important to engage teachers in thinking about the quality of their students' work. Teachers' opinions are important, and teachers should be encouraged to choose quality work performed by their students and consequently to recognize growth.

Work involved for a class teacher:

1) Inform his/her students of the award and the criteria, and

2) Give the name of the winner to the General Office of the ELC after s/he has chosen the winner.

The General Office will do the follow-up work, including informing the winners to come to collect the paper version of the certificate from the General Office and sending them the e-version of the certificate.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Cordially,

ePortfolio Manager

Appendix C   Sample of the ePortfolio Content Guidelines (for the course Spoken Language)

Spoken Language   *e-Portfolio Guidelines*

Your ePortfolio should contain the following three compulsory portfolio pages. You may create more ePortfolio pages and/or upload additional materials if you think those elements can enhance the quality of your ePortfolio.

Page	Page Title	Content
1	**Introducing Myself**	▪ An original piece of writing written by you introducing yourself (about 100 words) *In addition to the piece of writing, you might also choose to upload your photo.*
2	**My Learning Plan**	▪ Your learning plan Your classmates and/or your teacher will give you feedback on the language activities you have planned to use. Please refer to the built-in Comment Form in your ePortfolio for their comments and modify your learning plans accordingly, if you find their suggestions useful.
3	**My Digital Story**	▪ Your digital story reflecting on your learning experience with reference to the Independent Learning Project. Your digital story should start with a section reporting the following: ▪ What your learning goals are ▪ Why you have set these goals ▪ What language learning activities you have chosen to achieve these goals The second section of your digital story should cover your reflections regarding whether you have achieved the learning goals you have set for your Independent Learning

		Project. In your reflections, you could evaluate the following: • The learning materials/learning activities you completed • Your learning strategies

<u>Your ePortfolio will NOT be assessed unless you include the following compulsory element:</u>

● Your comments on at least TWO of your classmates' Independent Learning Projects.   Your comments should focus on the *language activities* planned by your classmates to achieve their learning goals.   For example, do you think that the language exercises to be used by your classmates would be effective for achieving their learning goals?   What learning resources would you recommend to your classmates?

Appendix D   Sample of the End-of-Course ePortfolio Questionnaire

ePortfolio Research Questionnaire

Teacher Version

Would you please take a few minutes to answer the following questions?

My Course: Spoken Language

Read the questions below and indicate your opinion by <u>circling</u> the appropriate number:

	1=Totally disagree		3=Neutral		5=Totally agree
1. During the experience of developing their ePortfolios, my students have become more aware of:					
a) the intended learning outcomes of this course	1	2	3	4	5
b) the need to reflect critically on their learning	1	2	3	4	5
c) the need to produce better coursework	1	2	3	4	5
d) their strengths and weaknesses in English	1	2	3	4	5
e) their progress and what they have achieved	1	2	3	4	5
f) what they could have done better	1	2	3	4	5

2. The process of developing an ePortfolio helped my students to

		1=Totally disagree	3=Neutral	5=Totally agree

a) organize their work   1   2   3   4   5

b) reflect critically on their learning during the course   1   2   3   4   5

c) set goals and decide how to achieve them   1   2   3   4   5

d) use the ePortfolio process to record feedback from their classmates and/or their teacher   1   2   3   4   5

3. Technical skills   (Please indicate your opinion by underlining your choice.)

a) Is the ePortform platform user-friendly?
☐ Yes.   The ePortfolio platform is user-friendly.
☐ No.   The ePortfolio is not user-friendly.
☐ Other (please specify): _____

b) Have you sought assistance from the ELC technician designated to help with ePortfolios?
☐ Yes.   The assistance provided was useful.
☐ Yes.   But the assistance provided was not useful.
☐ No
☐ Other (please specify): _____

c) Have you used the hard-copy instruction handouts?

☐ Yes. The instruction handouts were useful.

☐ Yes. But the instructional handouts were not useful.

☐ No

☐ Other (please specify): _____

d) Have you used the animated guide?

☐ Yes. The animated guide was useful.

☐ Yes. But the animated guide was not useful.

☐ No

☐ Other (please specify): _____

4. **Overall evaluation**   (Please indicate your opinion by underlining your choice.)

☐ The student workload involved with developing ePortfolios is reasonable.

☐ The student workload involved with developing ePortfolios is excessive.

☐ Other (please specify): _____

☐ The teacher workload involved with the ePortfolio project is reasonable.

☐ The teacher workload involved with the ePortfolio project is excessive.

☐ Other (please specify): _____

☐   I think my students have benefited from doing the ePortfolio project.

☐   I do not think that my students have benefited from doing the ePortfolio project.

☐ Other (please specify): _____

Please provide any further comments and suggestions below.   Thank you!