

The language portfolio as an educational technology

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A brief history of European Language Portfolios

- * Teachers and learners have been working with Language Portfolios since the mid 1990s, and between 1998 and 2000 various ELP models were piloted in Europe.

There has been much literature written about them and there are lots of interesting examples. In the year 2001, which was also the European Year of Languages, The Council of Europe launched ELPs throughout Europe.

Many adult and young learner course books now contain features of language portfolios such as passport activities and learner checklists while many classrooms have learner portfolios stored on their shelves.



What are Language Portfolios?

Portfolios are a popular and effective way of motivating young learners, providing a fun way to review language and helping them to reflect on their own objectives, ways of learning and success.

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of selective significant samples of student work accompanied by clear criteria for performance which evidence student effort, progress or achievement.

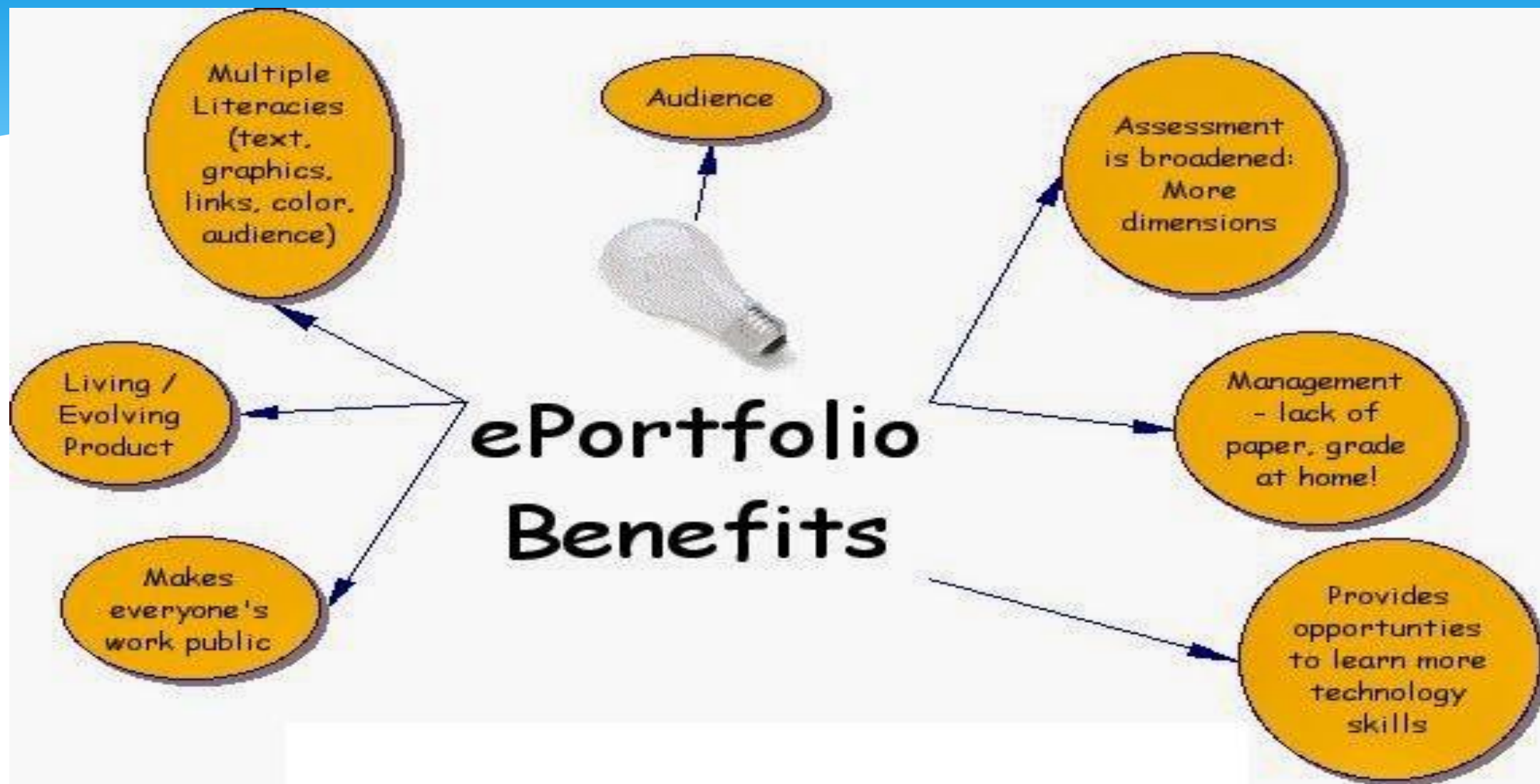


Advantages of using them.

- o Explicit guidelines for selection
- o Comprehensible criteria
- o Clear objectives
- o Selective and significant pieces
- o Students' self-reflection pieces
- o Evidence of student participation in selection of content

A portfolio can exhibit the student's progress, and achievement in several areas. The list below illustrates some of the items which might be housed in a student's foreign language portfolio to give a complete view of what the student knows and is able to do.





Language Portfolios are made up of three parts:

* 1. The Passport

This contains factual information about the language learner. It gives a history of the learners' language learning experiences which in this case refer to learning English. It may also contain any certificates or qualifications which show the learners' level in an internationally transparent manner. For our young learners this may mean a certificate they received from a summer camp they attended or a qualification they got from taking an English exam at school or in any other English language center. It may also include a ticket to a theatre production in English, a film they saw or a trip abroad to an English-speaking country.

* 2. The Language Biography

This is a personal history of the learners' language learning experience. For example it may include a short narrative about the summer camp which they went on and for which they have included the certificate in their passport section. It also includes self-assessment materials, such as the learner checklists and any aims that learners have for the future. These aims might be passing a specific exam, attending a course and feeling well prepared for it or being able to speak English to a visitor.

* 3. The Dossier

This is a collection of course work which shows learners' level of English. It may include corrected class or homework, tests and exams or any other piece of work which illustrates where the learner is at. In this part of an LP, a learner may include voice or video recordings or any part of project work which they have done.

Guidelines for Using Portfolios

- ⇒ Identify purpose
 - ⇒ Select objectives
 - ⇒ Think about the kinds of entries that will best match instructional outcomes
 - ⇒ Decide how much to include, how to organize the portfolio, where to keep it and when to access Assessment, articulation and accountability
 - ⇒ Decide who selects the entries (the student, the teacher, both)
 - ⇒ Set the criteria for judging the work (rating scales, rubrics, checklists) and make sure students understand the criteria.
 - ⇒ Review the student's progress
- Hold portfolio conferences with students to discuss their progress

What is the student's role?

The students' level of participation in the portfolio will be largely responsible for the success of the portfolio. For this reason, students must be actively involved in the choice of entries and in the rationale for selecting those entries.

o Selecting

The students' first role is in selecting some of the items to be part of the portfolio. Some teachers give students a checklist for making choices. Others leave students utmost freedom in selecting their entries. At any rate students should include their best and favorite pieces of work along with those showing growth and process.

o Reflecting and self-assessing

An essential component of self assessment involves the students in reflecting about their own work. At the beginning, students might not know what to say so teachers will need to model the kind of reflection expected from students.

What is the parents' role?

Parents should be informed early and often about the purpose, procedures, and benefits of portfolios and about the progress students are making. Some teachers send a letter home to parents to explain the new assessment and to outline students and parents' responsibilities. Some of the outlined responsibilities may include participating in student-led portfolio conferences, giving feedback to their child, and providing support for their child's effort and interest.



When Portfolios do not work when:

- * they do not belong to the student
- * the content is made exclusively by the teacher.
- * students do not evaluate their work
- * students do not have an opportunity to justify their contents
- * they are used infrequently.



Conclusion

- * In sum, portfolio assessment provides more authentic and valid assessment of students` achievement and comprehensive views of students` performances in contexts, and encourage students to develop independent and self-directed learners, and enhances communication among teacher, student and parents.

A meme featuring three yellow Minions from the movie 'Despicable Me'. They are all smiling widely, showing their teeth. The Minion on the left has one large eye, the middle one has two eyes, and the right one has two eyes and is holding a small notepad. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting an indoor setting.

THANKS

FOR YOUR ATTENTION