



UNIVERSITY OF PIRAEUS
Department of Digital Systems

LANGUAGE ePORTFOLIO-SELF DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

**(Language ePortfolio-Promoting Self-Direction in Language
Learning & Enhancing Intercultural Competence)**

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ABSTRACT

Although the provision of eLearning opportunities constitutes a rapidly expanding area of education and training, attracting the most research and development funding, little is known within the research community about the effect an online context can cast on nurturing the self-directed language learning skills of adult learners. Concomitantly, there is even less evidence in support of the effectiveness of an online context on the enrichment of adult learners' intercultural competence.

Given the above context, this dissertation thesis is principally aimed at stimulating interest and providing a clear and sharp insight into the way the synthesis of prospective or already settled in the destination country adult highly-educated, digitally-skilled migrants' language ePortfolios, facilitated through an online course, designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory and supported by a website, can develop their self-direction in learning the language of the receiving society and enhance their intercultural competence.

Within this framework, heuristic evaluation methods have been employed in an attempt to evaluate "My Electronic Language Portfolio" website as regards the level at which its content can promote self-direction in language learning and enhance intercultural competence. In agreement with the procedure's outcomes, the language ePortfolio is satisfactory in terms of its appearance, its operational features, the evidence it can support, the extension of learning it can promote and the external outcomes- an indispensable component of an individual's intercultural competence- it may encourage. However, the reflection, self-management, self-monitoring as well as the attitudes indicators were proven to be the weakest ones regarding the designed ePortfolio, pointing to further improvement potentially required. At this point, it is also worth mentioning that the output of the results data has been supplemented with a set of comments submitted by the evaluators, regarding the overall usability of the website.

Finally, this study provides theoretical implications and recommendations for further research. It is envisaged that these recommendations will assist future researchers focus their research design and further comprehend how to help migrant learners develop their self-directed language learning skills and intercultural competence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

ALTE	:	Association of Language Testers in Europe
BBC	:	British Broadcasting Company
BECTA	:	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
CAPTCHA	:	Completely Automatic Public Turing Test to Tell Computers and Humans Apart
CASLS	:	Center for Applied Second Language Studies
CBP	:	Common Basic Principle
CD	:	Compact Disk
CDCC	:	Council For Cultural Co-Operation
CEF	:	Common European Framework
CEFR	:	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CETIS	:	Centre for Educational Technology and Interoperability Standards
CMS	:	Content Management System
CORI	:	Concept Oriented Reading Instruction
CRA	:	Centre for Recording Achievement
CSS	:	Cascading Style Sheet
DfES	:	Department for Education and Skills
DIALANG	:	Diagnostic Online System for Languages
DK	:	Denmark
DPP	:	Dynamic Personal Portal
DUPC	:	University of Denver Portfolio Community
EAQUALS	:	Evaluation & Accreditation of Quality in Language Services
eCPD	:	e-Learning Continuing Professional Development
ed.	:	edition
Ed.	:	Editor
Eds.	:	Editors
eELP	:	Electronic European Language Portfolio
e.g.	:	exempli gratia
EIFEL	:	European Institute for E-Learning
ELC	:	European Language Council
ELI	:	EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative
ELP	:	European Language Portfolio
EPAC	:	Electronic Portfolio Action and Communication Community of Practice
Community of Practice	:	Practice
EPICC	:	European Portfolio Initiative Coordinating Committee
ES	:	Spain
etc.	:	et cetera
ETP	:	Europees Taalportfolio
EU	:	European Union
FI	:	Finland
FIT	:	Fast Track into Information Technology
FZHB	:	Fremdsprachenzentrum
GIMP	:	GNU Image Manipulation Program
GNU	:	Gujarat National University
GUI	:	Graphical User Interface
HTML	:	Hyper Text Markup Language

ICT	: Information Communications Technologies
i.e.	: id est
IEC	: Institute for Educational Cybernetics
IfL	: Institute for Learning
IFLL	: Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning
Inc.	: Incorporated
Intelec	: Integrated eLearning Campus
IT	: Information Technology
IT	: Italy
JISC	: Joint Information Systems Committee
JRC-IPTS	: Joint Research Centre - Institute for Prospective Technological Studies
L1	: Native Language
L2	: Second Language
LOLIPOP	: Language On Line Portfolio Project
LSIS	: Learning and Skills Improvement Service
MOSEP	: More Self-Esteem with my ePortfolio
MySQL	: My Structured Query Language
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
NLII	: National Learning Infrastructure Initiative
ODL	: Open and Distance Learning
OECD	: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OED	: Oxford English Dictionary
OSPI	: Open Source Portfolio Initiative
Pan-EU	: Pan-European
PC	: Personal Computer
PDF	: Portable Document Format
PDP	: Personal Development Portfolio
PDP	: Policy-related Development Plan
PHP	: Hypertext Preprocessor
pp.	: Pages
PRO	: Personal Responsibility Orientation
QCA	: Qualifications and Curriculum Agency
SDL	: Self-Directed Learning
SDLRS	: Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale
SE	: Sweden
SEO	: Search Engine Optimization
SIL	: Summer Institute of Linguistics
SSDL	: Staged Self-Directed Learning Model
TDL	: Teacher-Directed Learning
UK	: United Kingdom
UN	: United Nations
UNESCO	: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
URL	: Uniform Resource Locator
USA	: United States of America
VUE	: Visual Understanding Environment
XHTML	: eXtensible HyperText Markup Language

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Every country has its own multilingualism composed of '*traditional*' languages which form part of its cultural heritage. These include the national language(s) and its varieties, minority languages, regional languages or dialects. Such '*endogenous multilingualism*' may, in certain contexts, be the object not just of rejection but also of open hostility to even recognizing it, in order to preserve the position of national languages. In addition to this '*ordinary*', heritage multilingualism, contemporary societies are exposed to greater linguistic diversity because of increased economic and professional mobility. Thus, new forms of '*exogenous multilingualism*' inevitably develop increasingly through globalization and the opening-up of frontiers (Cavalli Coste, Crişan, & Van de Ven, 2009).

Economic or professional mobility can be of different kinds: some are due to the proximity of the countries concerned to other countries situated on the same continent or even on the other side of a shared border, and may only be temporary; while others are the result of forced departures from countries and cultures which are much more distant. In this context, diversity is becoming not only the norm but also more complex and recognizing the multilingualism of societies and the plurilingualism of individual speakers as commonplace necessitate acknowledging the everyday nature of these phenomena. This implies becoming aware of, and accepting that linguistic plurality and diversity are together part of everyday reality and of everybody's daily experience and that, quite simply, they are to be found on every street corner (Cavalli et al., 2009).

The abovementioned types of mobility, present to how linguistic and cultural diversity are taken into account in social inclusion and the valorization of the cultural and linguistic capital that migrant people bring with them, have put a considerable pressure on many European nation states with regard to concepts such as social cohesion, integration, citizenship, identity, culture and language. This interacts with a change in perception regarding immigration and integration.

Migration, always being a challenge to European countries and contributing to the history of peoples and the enrichment and development of civilizations throughout history, is also a human and economic reality that has to be managed by governments in keeping with the values shared by the Council of Europe's member states, among which human rights and democratic citizenship hold pride of place. The Council of Europe as an international body developed a migration management strategy in order to assist countries in meeting this challenge. Among the basic principles of this strategy are the cooperation between the countries of origin and the receiving countries and the establishment of a climate favoring the integration of migrants into the host society (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008). As stated in Resolution 1437 (2005), I.4 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2005), the notion of integration as a two-way process is important and is considered an essential element in ensuring sustainable results.

In the process of integration both sides, migrants and the receiving country, are open to creating new common ground for living together, respecting the already formed identity. This gives migrants a chance to make use of resources they bring with them and to expand their identity, via acquiring new concepts and a new language; at the same time, the receiving country will see migrants as people filling

gaps in the labor market and helping counteract the damaging effects of an ageing population; migrants stimulate creativity and dynamism in economic and cultural life, make a major contribution to global economic development through remittances to their home countries (McNair, 2009) and enrich a country's linguistic and cultural dimensions (Krumm & Plutzer, 2008).

To support the integration process it is not enough for the receiving country to provide special integration programmes which have to be attended within a very short period following immigration. It is necessary to change and adapt all kinds of public services, admission to the labor market and education programmes to the needs of immigrants, as pointed out in the second edition of the *Handbook on Integration* (European Commission, 2007). Integration aims at giving the immigrants an opportunity to take part in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their new country – so that at the end of such a process they can live under the same legal, social and financial conditions as natives of that country (Krumm & Plutzer, 2008).

It is a generally accepted view that the ability to speak the language(s) of the receiving society usually plays an important part in the process of integration, because it is a precondition for participation (Krumm & Plutzer, 2008). Language learning is an inevitable step towards integration. Tackling the need to provide courses on the host country language to adult migrants was one of goals set by the Common Basic Principles on integration and is becoming a priority for European Member States. Several EU Member States have actually introduced compulsory language requirements for migrants, and a major effort is underway by a large number of stakeholders to help migrants enhance their second language proficiency, even where no binding requirements exist (Kluzer, Ferrari, & Centeno, 2011).

Recourse to the use of ICT to help adult migrants learn the language of the destination country forms part of at least three policy areas at EU level: immigration and integration policy; information society policy, and education and training policies for lifelong learning. ICT is now being used in this context and is attracting increasing interest as it constitutes part of the everyday life of most migrants, offering the opportunity to tackle many of the shortcomings faced in their language education (Codagnone & Kluzer, 2011). A brief description and links to websites of initiatives from a host of European countries plus Pan-European initiatives, adapted from the policy report on *Language Learning by Adult Migrants: Policy Challenges and ICT Responses* by the Joint Research Centre and the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (JRC-IPTS) of the European Commission (Kluzer et al., 2011), are appended as Appendix A.

However, mastery of the language is not enough; it is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition. In the immigration-integration policy domain, the fourth Common Basic Principle (CBP) on integration states: “Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration”. Culture, an integral aspect of language learning, sometimes fades into the background while the emphasis tends to be placed on the development of the basic language skills abiding by the “teaching language first and introducing culture later” approach discussed by Omaggio (1993).

Language is communication, but not without an understanding of the culture. Understanding the role of culture in language and therefore in language teaching have undergone a fundamental shift in direction and emphasis involving significant re-conceptualization. At the core of this re-conceptualization is the notion that “language cannot be separated from its social and cultural contexts of use” (Liddicoat,

Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003) and that every attempt to communicate with the speaker of another language is a cultural act (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000). The basis of what has come to be called intercultural language teaching and learning involves recognition of the importance and centrality of culture: “Culture shapes what we say, when we say it, and how we say it from the simplest language we use to the most complex. It is fundamental to the way we speak, write, listen, and read” (Liddicoat, 2002b). In contrast to the static view which treats culture as facts or artefacts to be learned, intercultural language teaching involves a dynamic view of culture.

The Common European Framework introduces the ‘*intercultural dimension*’ into the aims of language teaching. Its essence is to help learners interact with speakers of other languages on equal terms and to be aware of their own identities and those of their interlocutors in the hope that language learners will be successful not only in communicating information but also in developing a human relationship with people of other language and cultures (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). Thus, enhancing the intercultural dimension in language teaching involves recognizing that the aims are to give learners intercultural competence as well as linguistic competence, to prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures, to enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors and to help them see that such interaction is an enriching experience (Mukherjee, 2007). Once again, the introduction of the intercultural dimension into the aims of language teaching could be heavily assisted through recourse to the ever-growing power of information technology.

These invaluable insights can only be deeply explored and developed through integrating such perspectives with the study of another language. Intercultural knowledge and understanding has now been incorporated into curriculum documents in Australia and in many other OECD countries, reflecting an increasingly globalizing perspective on education and the need to develop students with intercultural competence who are well equipped to participate in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world (Fernandez, 2008). It is, therefore, suggested that the conceptualization of education as determined by values such as those proposed by the Council of Europe, aiming at the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence and also the broadening of the linguistic and discursive repertoire of the learner, being at the same time a preparation for lifelong learning, should be part and parcel of each and every country’s growth plan and development agenda.

The escalation of the process of adult migrants becoming more knowledgeable of the language and culture of the receiving society, which is ultimately considered as a basic precondition for successful integration and active participation in the destination community, can be tremendously boosted through the development of a sense of self-direction in their learning. Thanks to the revolution in information technology, people have greater access to gaining education in any field of interest through distance education and online study programs. However, undertaking such study requires learners to be sufficiently self-directed and motivated.

A self-directed learner controls aspects of learning and information gathering and initiates his/her learning experience in a particular field with minimal or no help from institutions. Learners engage in self-directed learning by making their own decisions about what and how they are going to learn (Lowry, 1989). When learners take on a self-directed learning project, they gain more than new skills or knowledge. They also develop motivation, independence, discipline, and confidence (Abdullah, 2001). In the case of language learning, the self-directed learner can be helped by understanding basic principles about language and the language learning process, and by

understanding one's own learning style and how that may affect the way one goes about language learning (SIL, 2012).

Given the above context, and inspired by the increasing uptake of technologies for both learning and integration purposes, this study aims at understanding the benefits and opportunities derived by participation in an online course intended for enabling prospective - or already settled in the destination country - adult, highly-educated, digitally-skilled migrants to develop their self-direction in learning the language of the receiving society and enhance their intercultural competence via composing their own language ePortfolios.

1.2 Problem Statement

The study of online learning has attracted much attention from scholars and practitioners (Hill, Wiley, Nelson, & Han, 2003; Hofmann, 2002) and a plethora of studies have extensively explored its benefits - such as convenience (Poole, 2000) and flexibility (Chizmar & Walbert, 1999) - as well as the challenges it poses (Song, Singleton, Hill, & Koh, 2004). However, very little is known about the effect an online context can cast on nurturing the self-directed language learning skills of adult learners, that is their ability to guide and direct their own learning (Hartley & Bendixen, 2001). At the same time, while research demonstrates the benefits of using computer technology for intercultural learning (Belz, 2002; 2003; Furstenberg, et al., 2001; O'Dowd, 2003; Thorne, 2003; Warschauer & Kern, 2000), there is even less evidence in support of the effectiveness of an online context on adult learners' enrichment of their intercultural competence.

Thus, the problem to which this study has been directed to is closely related to the way an online course, focusing on the synthesis of learners' own language ePortfolios, can impact the provision of a supportive atmosphere for enhancing adult, highly-educated and digitally-skilled migrants' intercultural competence and self-directed skills in terms of learning the language of the destination country.

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study is aimed at presenting and delineating the synthesis of adult migrants' language ePortfolios facilitated through an online course, designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory and supported by a website, titled "My Electronic Language Portfolio". Thus, through this online course adult, highly-educated and digitally-skilled migrants, who have already settled in the destination country or are bound to leave the country they reside in, are guided into composing their own language ePortfolios in a manner that enhances their intercultural competence and their self-directed skills in terms of learning the language of the destination country. Within this context, the views and attitudes of a group of eLearning experts that have been selected to try and evaluate "My Electronic Language Portfolio" both in terms of a set of general ePortfolio evaluation criteria and whether its content can promote self-direction in language learning and enhance intercultural competence, are demonstrated and discussed.

1.4 Research Questions

In this framework, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Which are the eLearning experts' views on "My Electronic Language Portfolio", in terms of its:
 - Appearance (looking well),
 - Operational Features (functioning well),
 - Reflection (integration of underlying personal message),
 - Evidence (integration of academic and personal evidence)?
- Which are the eLearning experts' views on the activities encompassed in the "Electronic Language Portfolio", designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory, in support of promoting self-direction in language learning?
- Which are the eLearning experts' views on the activities encompassed in the "Electronic Language Portfolio", designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory, in support of enhancing intercultural competence?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Migration is a principal dimension of globalization, entailing major challenges and opportunities for both the countries of origin and destination, and the migrants themselves in terms of casting a decisive effect on their access to central positions and resources within the host society and their participation in decision-making processes. Language is central to many of the challenges posed by migration, and as a requirement for integration and the maintenance of social cohesion, it has become a key component of several countries' immigration and integration policies, designed to:

- Allow migrants to realize their personal, economic, and social potentials;
- Ensure that the human rights of migrants are protected;
- Reduce levels of alienation and marginalization, and thereby contribute to national security;
- Help establish and maintain social cohesion and harmony (Koser & Rolph, 2010).

Successful integration also depends to a large extent on the ability of both migrants and members of the receiving society to learn how to get along with each other and to develop mutual understanding. This skill does not only demand tolerance and the willingness to engage with what is foreign, but also the ability to act appropriately in intercultural interactions (Casper-Hehne, 2008).

The language competences and cultural skills of migrants that can heavily influence their integration into the host country were taken into account to add value to the present study; in addition, thoughtful consideration was shown for the importance of encouraging student control over the learning process, through promoting learner agency and autonomy. The global learning landscape of the 21st century, being transformed and shaped by the uptake of digital communication tools and being highly incongruent with the control culture of education, indicates that digital-age students need an active learning experience that is supported by rich media; concomitantly, it needs to be participatory, process-based, anchored in learners' interests, supportive of personal life goals and needs (Brown & Adler, 2008), and have the potential to cultivate independent learning.

Therefore, the significance of the present study rests in the exploitation of advances in information and communications technologies as a first step in promoting successful integration processes and developing the self-directed language learning skills of adult, highly-educated, digitally-literate migrants; towards this direction, this study revolves around stimulating interest and providing a clear and sharp insight into the way an adult migrant's intercultural competence and self-directed skills in terms of learning the language of the host community can be enhanced by means of participation in an online course, assisting and focusing on the synthesis of his/her own language ePortfolio.

1.6 Chapter Overview

This study is organized into the following five chapters:

- **Chapter 1:** This chapter lays the ground for the research by describing the background to the study, the problem that motivated the research, the aim of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study and the way the latter has been organized.

- **Chapter 2:** This chapter reviews the existing, relevant literature as regards three distinct areas: eportfolios, language learning portfolios and self-directed learning. First, the origin of ePortfolios, definitions of the ePortfolio concept, types and purposes of an ePortfolio, its perceived benefits and issues related to its use, process of ePortfolio creation as well as ongoing ePortfolio policies, initiatives and tool types are being discussed. In the next section, language portfolios in general and the European Language Portfolio in particular are being expounded on, accompanied by a thorough presentation of existing ePortfolio approaches and systems in language learning. In the final section, the focus is placed upon self-directed learning, its development in the ever-changing course of time, various self-directed learning perspectives and the benefits it entails. Within the same context, self-directed learning is being approached as a 21st century skill and as a spectrum. At the same time, areas of interest that encompass teachers' contribution to the enhancement of learners' self-directed learning skills, self-directed language learning and self-direction in ePortfolios are brought into attention.

- **Chapter 3:** This chapter begins with a reminder of the aim of the study and the research questions. Reference to operational terms recurrently used is encompassed, too. This chapter also provides a description of the research method, the statistical indicators, the evaluators, the materials and the research tools used for data collection within the present study. In the remainder of the chapter, the process of developing a language ePortfolio within the context of an online course as well as the experimental procedure are extensively covered.

- **Chapter 4:** Chapter 4 discusses the data collected and interprets it.

- **Chapter 5:** This chapter concludes the study with an overview and discussion over the results derived by the data collected and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Electronic Portfolios

Etymologically, the word portfolio is made of the combination of the Latin words '*portare*' (to carry) and '*folium*' (paper, sheet) into the Italian word '*portafoglio*', and then transferred to English as '*portfolio*' (OED, 2007). Together, they suggest a collection of papers (evidence) that are portable (Poehnell & Amunsdon, 2001).

The use of portfolios in daily life is far from new. Artists have maintained portfolios that included their best work for years, either using their collection for seeking further employment or for simply demonstrating their creativity. Financial portfolios encompassed a comprehensive record of fiscal transactions and investment holdings, representing a person's monetary worth (Barrett, 2001) while the financial services industry employed portfolios to help manage the value of investments. Portfolios were introduced in the field of education as an instructional tool in the 1970s (Reckase, 1995; Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997; Underwood & Murphy, 1998; Callahan, 1999; Lawrenz, Huffman & Welch, 2000; Briscoe & Wells, 2002). Since then, their use has become indispensable in teaching.

The term '*electronic portfolio*' has been coined since the early 1990s, recognizing the primary role of information and communications technologies in describing the '*e*'. The ePortfolio started its life as an unsophisticated object, gradually exceeding in effect the traditional paper-based, usually in manila folders, three ring notebooks or large containers storage format and enhancing the interaction between learners and teachers. With the inclusion of e-learning tools and virtual environments, the platform of learning has expanded and become computer mediated (Benson, 2009), preparing learners for the new knowledge age in need of citizens who do not only survive but also thrive in the rapidly increasing global community. Thus, the physical objects once submitted by students for pedagogical purposes have given way to technological and digital end-products (Markham & Hurst, 2009) and ePortfolios are now acknowledged as the "great fit between" portfolio and the web (Kimball, 2003).

2.1.1 Definitions of ePortfolios

The term electronic portfolio indicates that some or all evidence is collected in digital form (Beetham, 2005). Within the broad context of education, there are different terms that relate to the concept of ePortfolios: primary and secondary teachers often use terms such as '*digital portfolios*' and '*digital learning portfolios*'; higher education practitioners prefer '*electronic portfolios*', '*e-portfolios*', '*webfolio*' and '*efolio*'. In communication and papers, the term e-portfolio or ePortfolio prevails while in the corporate sector terms such as '*performance management tools*', '*career management tools*' and '*personal development planning records*' refer to similar systems and processes (Hallam & Creagh, 2010).

The literature abounds with '*ePortfolio*' definitions; it can be argued that the various definitions encompass similar attributes, but there is no single, collectively accepted definition. Definitions are frequently dependent on the context where the ePortfolio is developed, the audience to whom it is presented, its purpose, the technology utilized, the pedagogic understanding of the tool, the agents that use it and

the planning for the future. The following descriptions are intended to provide guidance to the existent, typical range of terminology for electronic portfolios.

Reflecting a technical direction, Cambridge (2003) defines an e-portfolio as: “what is produced when persons collect, select, reflectively interpret, and/or present their own evidence to support their assertions about what they have learned, know and can or should do; a selection of ‘products’ of learning, reflections or interpretations on those products, and representations of relationships between and among the products and interpretations. These relationships may need to be verifiable with some third-party authority and be non-revocable; for our purposes, the set of products, interpretations, and relationships presented to a particular audience. Multiple e-portfolios may be constructed using the same data within an e-portfolio system”.

According to the National Learning Infrastructure Initiative (NLII)¹, an ePortfolio is “a collection of authentic and diverse evidence, drawn from a larger archive representing what a person or organization has learned over time on which the person or organization has reflected, and designed for presentation to one or more audiences for a particular rhetorical purpose” (NLII, 2003). In this definition, the ePortfolio is used to collect, reflect on and present information about learning. It is composed of the *repository* (archive) which is generally only accessible by the ePortfolio owner and the *views* (presentations) that are built from the contents of the repository and are accessible to target audiences. What is implicit in this definition is that the ePortfolio belongs to its owner, who enjoys complete control over contents and access.

Banks (2004) refers to ePortfolios as: “An e-portfolio is an electronic format for learners to record their work, their achievements and their goals, to reflect on their learning, and to share and be supported in this. It enables learners to represent the information in different formats and to take the information with them as they move between institutions”. Banks’ definition talks of the ePortfolio showing achievements and providing evidence of the learner’s progress against clearly stated objectives. Therefore, an ePortfolio is more than a random collection of work, stored electronically; it rather enables learners to talk about their goals and reflect on their learning; it also refers to the opportunities learners have with technology to present information in a variety of formats. Finally, the importance of students being able to take their information with them when moving off to another school is pinpointed.

Dr Helen Barrett (2004; 2005), one of the most prolific writers in the area of electronic portfolios, states that: “An electronic portfolio uses technologies as the container, allowing students/teachers to collect and organize artefacts in many media types, (audio, video, graphic, text); and using hypertext links to organise the material, connecting evidence to appropriate outcomes, goals or standards. The learner’s reflections are the rationale that specific artifacts are evidence of achieving the stated standards or goals. An electronic portfolio is a reflective tool that demonstrates growth over time”.

Abrami & Barrett (2005) suggest that an electronic portfolio is a: “digital container capable of storing visual and auditory content including text, images, video and sound ... they are designed to support a variety of pedagogical processes and assessment purposes”. In 2005, Scott Wilson² added his ePortfolio definition describing it as: “a

¹ Presently, the National Learning Infrastructure Initiative (NLII) has a new focus and name, the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI). ELI, a strategic initiative of EDUCAUSE, is a community of higher education institutions and organizations committed to advancing learning through information technology innovation.

² Scott Wilson is an Assistant Director of JISC CETIS (Centre for Educational Technology and Interoperability Standards) and IEC (Institute for Educational Cybernetics). JISC CETIS provides

repository of information about a particular learner provided by the learner and by other people and organisations, including products in a range of media that the learner has created or helped to create alongside formal documents from authoritative sources, such as transcripts of assessed achievement, which the learner has chosen to retain” (Wilson, 2005).

As stated in Sutherland & Powell (2007) “An e-portfolio is a purposeful aggregation of digital items - ideas, evidence, reflections, feedback etc. which 'presents' a selected audience with evidence of a person's learning and/or ability” while The JISC³ (2008) definition of an ePortfolio, attempting to conceptually connect the process and product roles of ePortfolios, pertains to: “An ePortfolio is the product, created by the learner, a collection of digital artefacts articulating experiences, achievements and learning. Behind any product or presentation, lie rich and complex processes of planning, synthesizing, sharing, discussing, reflecting, giving, receiving and responding to feedback. These processes referred to here as - ePortfolio-based learning- are the focus of increasing attention, since the process of learning can be as important as the end product”.

For EIFEL⁴, the true nature of an ePortfolio is a digital identity, and from this point of view, the following definition is proposed: An ePortfolio is “a multidimensional digital representation (identity) of a reflective individual providing access to personalised services – e.g. learning and development, assessment, employment and personal development planning. Individuals can have multiple ePortfolios (identities) that are privately owned and can be shared with other individuals, communities and organisations, to exploit and value their assets – e.g. competencies, knowledge and personal networks – and contribute to their development”.

The attempt to outline the overarching features of an ePortfolio as exemplified in the preceding descriptions, postulated the adoption of a definition of the ePortfolio as voiced by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)⁵. This definition expounds on the general characteristics of an ePortfolio; the latter is depicted as:

- a ‘repository’ for ‘artefacts’;
- a means of accessing personal information, perhaps held in distributed databases;
- a means of presenting oneself and one’s skills, qualities and achievements to others;
- a means of collecting and selecting assessment evidence;
- a guidance tool to support review and choice;
- a means of sharing and collaborating;
- a means of encouraging a sense of personal identity (Ward & Grant, 2007).

advice to the UK Higher and Post-16 Education sectors on educational technology and standards. The mission of IEC is to develop a better understanding of how information and communication technologies affect the organisation of education from individual learning to the global system.

³ JISC (formerly the Joint Information Systems Committee) is a United Kingdom non-departmental public body whose role is to support post-16 and higher education and research by providing leadership in the use of ICT in learning, teaching, research and administration.

⁴ EIFEL (European Institute for E-Learning) is an independent, not-for-profit European professional association whose mission is to support organisations, communities and individuals in building a knowledge economy and a learning society through innovative and reflective practice, continuing professional development and the use of knowledge, information and learning technologies.

⁵ The Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) is a network organisation, registered educational charity and Associate Partner of the Higher Education Academy (UK). Through a programme of leadership, consultancy and support it seeks to develop and demonstrate the value of recording achievement and action planning processes as an important element in improving learning and progression throughout the world of education, training and employment.

2.1.2 Types and Purposes of ePortfolios

The preponderance of purposes for ePortfolio use yields an obscured landscape. Six key purposes have been identified for ePortfolios (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Hallam, Harper, McCowan, Hauville, McAllister, & Creagh, 2008; Ward & Grant, 2007, Zeichner & Wray, 2001). Each of these purposes supports facets of reflective practice and cumulative chronological development. The collection and selection of artifacts require a process of active, engaged evaluation and reasoning as to why an artifact is suitable for inclusion in an ePortfolio. Another factor that the six types of ePortfolio, listed below, emphasize is the need to be aware of an audience (Butler, 2006).

A comprehensive description of the major ePortfolio purposes is provided by the IMS Global Learning Consortium, an association to support standards and best practice in the areas of learning and educational technology in its ePortfolio specification (IMS, 2005) (see Table 1):

ePortfolio Purposes	Description
Assessment ePortfolios	Used to demonstrate achievement to some authority by relating evidence within the ePortfolio to performance standards defined by that authority.
Presentation ePortfolios	Employed to evidence learning or achievement to an audience in a persuasive way. They often contain instructions about how their contents should be rendered.
Learning ePortfolios	The type in question is used to document, guide, and advance learning over time. They often have a prominent reflective component and may be used to promote meta-cognition, to plan learning, or for the integration of diverse learning experiences.
Personal development ePortfolios	An ePortfolio for personal development planning contains records of learning, performance, and achievement which can be reflected on, and outcomes of that reflection, including plans for future development. This could include a learning ePortfolio, but goes beyond that, as it is often related to professional development.
Multiple-owner ePortfolios	Such ePortfolios are used to allow more than one individual to participate in the development of content and presentation. A multiple owner ePortfolio might combine elements of the aforementioned portfolio types.
Working ePortfolios	This type of ePortfolios combines elements of all of the preceding types. They often include multiple views, each of which may be analogous to an assessment, presentation, learning, or development ePortfolio. The whole of a working ePortfolio is generally accessible only to its subject, while views are made accessible to other individuals and groups.

Table 1: Comprehensive Description of the Major ePortfolio Purposes as Identified by the IMS Global Learning Consortium

2.1.3 Benefits and Issues related to the Use of ePortfolios

The benefits of adopting ePortfolios have been much lauded by educational experts. After considerable research and reflection, FuturEd has concluded that the

ePortfolio represents the single greatest innovation in the use of learning technologies for the following reasons.

- The ePortfolio is the best, least complicated, most appropriate use of ICT for learning on an individual and a societal basis.
- It is an elegant use of inelegant technologies.
- It is a learning leveler – it can be made accessible to each and every person.
- It focuses on archiving and showcasing what a person knows and can do.
- It can become a complete description of a person's '*human capital*', incorporating learning from formal, informal or incidental learning environments.
- For teaching purposes, it builds on best practices in designing, delivering and assessing skills and knowledge.
- People of all ages can use it as a personal knowledge management tool, recording achievements or targeting new learning requirements.
- An ePortfolio system can do what computers do best – sorting and matching.
- The ePortfolio, creates a unique balance between structured and unstructured learning (Barker, 2006).

Love & Cooper (2007) have also identified the pedagogic benefits entailed by the use of electronic portfolios as:

- authentic learning, where learning is more meaningful when linked to real world experiences;
- experiential learning, where students '*learn by doing*';
- competency-based education, where instruction is outcome-based using ePortfolios as part of student learning outcome-based performance assessment where assessment may include higher order skills;
- lifelong learning, where learning is directed by the individual and guided by the individual's interests;
- autodidacticism, where learning is self-taught and self motivated;
- self-directed learning, where students take responsibility for their own learning.

For relevant literature on ePortfolio benefits see Appendix B.

Nonetheless, a number of issues and challenges arise with the use of ePortfolios. Abrami & Barrett (2005) discuss the challenges to assessment that electronic portfolios pose. Their concern pertains to the difficulty of authenticating the evidence in ePortfolios. Besides, the technical knowledge required to create a portfolio may also unfairly disadvantage some students, and the danger is that students will end in being assessed on their technology skills. Finally, they mention the difficulty for evaluators in judging the quantity and quality of evidence in a digital environment.

Both Heath (2005) and Pecheone, Pigg, Chung, & Souviney (2005) agree that electronic portfolio construction is time-consuming, that students need technology skills or adequate training to gain those skills, and that technical problems with software or equipment can be frustrating. Heath (2005) adds that provided that equipment needs upgrading to take full advantage of electronic portfolios, the process can also be very expensive. Tosh, Light, Fleming, & Haywood (2005) provide a timely warning of the problems to be encountered in ePortfolio implementation, if the needs and attitudes of student users are not taken into consideration. Their research shows that students need to see good examples of electronic portfolios, comprehend their benefits, and know how the latter will assist them in developing as learners.

2.1.4 Process of ePortfolio Creation

Regardless of the specific purpose for the ePortfolio and of the actual software platform or the type of tool used, there are a number of typical activities involved in the process of developing an ePortfolios often referred to as a '*Plan-Do-Review*' cycle (Pallister, 2007), reflecting the theories of Kolb's Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and the theories of action learning (McGill & Brockbank, 2004).

A relatively simple framework for creating an ePortfolio, based on Danielson & Abrutyn (1997), comprises:

- The **collection** process, constituting the primary activity of a working portfolio. The portfolio's purpose, audience and future use of artifacts will determine what is collected at this stage.
- The **selection** phase, during which the portfolio developer examines what has been collected to decide what should be moved to a more permanent assessment or display portfolio. The selection criteria should reflect the learning objectives that the portfolio is demonstrating.
- The **reflection** stage. In the course of this phase portfolio developers articulate their thinking about each piece in their portfolio.
- The **projection** or direction stage. Portfolio developers review their reflections on their learning, taking the opportunity to look ahead and set goals for the future.

As stated in Barrett (2002) an ePortfolio development process usually covers the following stages:

- **Decide/Assess:** When developing an electronic portfolio, the focus is on the audience for the portfolio, and the learner goals that the portfolio should be demonstrating. This stage should identify and describe the assessment context.
- **Design/Plan:** When developing an electronic portfolio, the focus is also on describing the audience(s) for the portfolio, determining the content of portfolio, the type of evidence to be collected and the software tools most appropriate for the portfolio context.
- **Develop:** While in this stage, students record their self-reflections on their own work and achievement of the goals/standards. Teachers record feedback on student work and achievement of goals/standards. The final part of this stage is to organize the material between goals/standards, student work samples, rubrics and assessments.
- **Implement:** In this stage, the portfolio is recorded to appropriate presentation and storage medium. It is also presented to an appropriate audience.
- **Evaluate:** In the final stage of electronic portfolio development, the portfolio effectiveness is evaluated in light of its purpose and the assessment context; portfolio evidence is also employed to make instruction/learning decisions.

2.1.5 ePortfolio Tool Types

Even a cursory search of the web for ePortfolio software or tools results in an array of resources, highlighting the assortment of products and systems available. The landscape is in a constant state of flux with brand new services being launched. Efforts made to categorize the diverse types of ePortfolio tools led to a dichotomy occurring between institutionally hosted systems and individually developed tools.

Barrett (2007) maintains a website where she categorizes the types of ePortfolio tools and provides links to the developers' sites. Barrett's categories include:

- content management systems (CMS);
- commercial systems (higher education and teacher education);
- in-house developed systems;
- free website builders with free web space;
- open source tools;
- blog software and Web 2.0 tools.

Stefani, Mason, & Pegler (2007) have refined the range of categories, distinguishing among four types of ePortfolio systems currently being used:

- commercial software (which includes CMS with an ePortfolio module);
- proprietary systems (often designed by universities);
- open source ePortfolio software;
- open source common tools (such as web authoring tools).

Darren Cambridge⁶ provides a comprehensive classification of the plethora of software types and productivity tools used for the development of electronic portfolios in his presentation entitled: “*ePortfolio Technologies: Options and Futures*” (2007). In alignment with his suggestion, commonly used tools for ePortfolio development are ascribed to the following categories:

- **Generic Tools:** Generic tools include word processing, HTML editors, multimedia authoring tools, Portable Document Format (PDF), and other commonly used productivity tool software (Barrett, 2002). Examples of different generic tools (Cambridge, 2007) can be found below:
 - **Web Design Tools:** Adobe Dreamweaver, Nvu
 - **Graphics Tools:** Adobe Photoshop, GIMP
 - **Concept Mapping Software:** Cmap Tools, Visual Understanding Environment (VUE)
 - **Audio and Video Tools:** iMovie, Audacity
 - **Print Design Tools:** Adobe Acrobat
- **Commercial Tools:** Commercial products can be advantageous to users due to ease of use, options and features available, and the benefit of having the product hosted by the vendor, typically including low cost technical support and upgrade. In addition, a number of commercial tools can be integrated with other systems. A growing list of commercial products is provided below:
 - **Digication** is an e-Portfolio provider for K-12 and Higher Education schools across the US. Digication e-Portfolio is tailored to meet the needs of individual teachers and students, departments, and campuses.
 - **eFolioWorld** can help users organize and manage educational and career information in a dynamic, portable online format to assist in job searches and career advancement.
 - **Foliotek** offers a standalone ePortfolio option to students. This product is for anyone who wishes to build and distribute their own ePortfolio without having to be a member of a school who subscribes to Foliotek services.
 - **Epsilon** offers a global learning management system, lifelong ePortfolios, and fully integrated, collaborative networking.
 - **LiveText** is available in student (individual) licenses.
 - **Taskstream** offers a hosted, online solution.

⁶ Darren Cambridge has been working as an Assistant Professor at the Internet Studies and Information Literacy Department, New Century College, George Mason University, Fairfax, since 2004.

- **Open-Source Tools:** Open-source ePortfolio software provides an opportunity for custom production, development and modification of an existing end-product source code to meet the needs of the end-user(s).
 - **Elgg, Mahara, Sakai and Moodle** are only few examples of open-source ePortfolio software.
- **Homegrown Tools:** Homegrown tools are typically those created and hosted in-house and supported by a team with an established infrastructure. Quite frequently, homegrown applications are built to meet the diverse needs of an institution or organization, and are created through input from within their local community. The following examples are provided by Cambridge (2007):
 - **Digital Diagnostic Portfolio** (Alverno College)
 - **Learning Record Online** (University of Texas at Austin)
 - **Portfolio Community** (University of Denver)
 - **Catalyst Portfolio** (University of Washington)
- **Social Blogs & Wikis:** Social blogging is a popular concept of communicating for people who wish to express their activities and share their common interests. It has emerged through the advances in social networking and web-blogging. Examples of commercial, open source, or homegrown blogging & wiki software include:
 - **Blogs, WordPress, Drupal, Wikis, Confluence, GoogleApps**
- **Hybrid Tools:** A hybrid ePortfolio is created when two or more different tools or applications are blended, or used in concert, to create a custom platform for unique needs or purposes. An institution choosing to add a social blogging tool to their existing course management system to promote and capture student reflection on their learning is a vivid instantiation of a hybrid ePortfolio.

An exhaustive list of ePortfolio related tools along with a detailed record of educational institutions having adopted specific ePortfolio systems/platforms and key criteria cited by such educational institutions while considering ePortfolio systems/platforms are provided in Tables 16, 17, 18-Appendices D, E, F respectively.

2.1.5.1 ePortfolio Tool Selection Criteria

Siemens (2004) argues that artefacts and their content, encompassed in an ePortfolio “should have a purpose — they should demonstrate a skill, an attribute, and learning acquired from experience”. Siemens (2004) also discusses the attributes of ‘*an ideal ePortfolio system*’, which should allow for flexibility in input, organisation, retrieval and display of content and artefacts to support the needs of learners, teachers and academic managers. Hence, the selection of a case-appropriate ePortfolio tool rests on its being sufficiently versatile to ensure that all four functions meet the needs of potential stakeholders.

Ali Jafari (2004), Professor of Computer and Information Technology and Director of the CyberLab at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, acknowledges the existence of factors contributing to a successful ePortfolio project. Jafari (2004) mentions an ePortfolio Success Algorithm which pertains to a combination of several attributes that can cast a decisive effect upon the development and implementation of a successful ePortfolio project. The ePortfolio Success Algorithm, employing a scale numbered from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least successful ePortfolio project and 5 being the most successful, is constructed as follows:

Successful ePortfolio Project = I + J + K + L + M + N + O, where:

- I** = ease of use,
- J** = sustainable business plan,
- K** = advanced features,
- L** = robust integrated technology architecture,
- M** = lifelong support,
- N** = standards and transportability, and
- O** = X

This algorithm highlights the fact that the success of an ePortfolio project does not merely depend on the mechanical development of computer source code. It is wrong to assume that once source code has been developed and made available to the public, participating stakeholders are ready to deploy a successful ePortfolio system. Indeed, the source code—or the *robust integrated technology architecture*, as attribute L is labeled in the ePortfolio Success Algorithm the ePortfolio Success Algorithm—is but one of many crucial attributes necessary for a successful ePortfolio project.

Delving deeper into the ePortfolio Success Algorithm postulates a solid understanding of the attributes it comprises, that is:

- **Ease of Use**

In a successful ePortfolio project, the software environment must offer an attractive and simple interface with minimal or no training required. Although today's students and faculty are more technologically savvy, they display an increasing expectation for an easy- and fast-to-navigate environment. Cross-transportability of modules and electronic files among learning-management and ePortfolio systems should also be effortless and immediate provided that users are known to quickly become frustrated and abandon a confusing application; therefore, it is only logical that the human aspects should be heeded such that the management of each ePortfolio system tool is consistent with and applicable to other tools within that environment.

- **Sustainable Business Plan**

The ePortfolio is a new service, mandating budgets for software building and licensing, software maintenance and updates, user support and help desk, and faculty development. The success of an ePortfolio project thus depends on a long-term, sustainable business plan. As a proof-of-concept model of an ePortfolio system applying this approach, the Epsilon Project developed by the Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis CyberLab uses a patent-pending method known as the Dynamic Personal Portal to dynamically and automatically create and maintain a personal lifelong portfolio Web site address for each new student and faculty member of an institution. The DPP method offers an incentive to graduating students to maintain their alumni membership—so that they can continue to take advantage of their personal ePortfolio sites after they have graduated.

- **Advanced Features**

To encourage users to try new Web services such as an ePortfolio, institutions must demonstrate advanced features, and such features must be attractive, unique, flexible, and interactive. Thus, the conceptual architects of ePortfolio projects must include interesting, desirable services not conveniently available elsewhere. As the specifications for the next generation of teaching and learning software environments are being conceptualized, the forthcoming educational software systems are expected to be capable of offering advanced intelligent services.

- **Robust Integrated Technology Architecture**

For any piece of software, technology must offer a robust software environment. This is a technological rather than a human-computer interaction usability expectation. There are currently two conceptual architectures that offer ePortfolio services: (1) architecture featuring ePortfolio add-on components and services to existing learning-management software, or (2) architecture featuring a standalone ePortfolio software system with its own, independently developed tools. The challenges faced within both architectures are the integration of services and the transportability of resources across environments. Building services of this type requires tools that provide effective transportability among different learning-management systems and databases.

- **Lifelong Support**

A lifelong ePortfolio system refers to an ePortfolio program that promises access and maintenance beyond graduation. Building a lifelong ePortfolio system promotes additional incentives for users to create and maintain their ePortfolios, and any advancement of system use certainly contributes to the business success of an ePortfolio project.

- **Standards and Transportability**

A host of consortia are trying to define and refine standards for the various learning technology systems, and most have determined two types of standards needed. The first standard for interoperability is analogous to making sure that ‘*the pipes fit one another*’, meaning that the design technology modules must speak common languages and follow certain protocols and communication standards so that the modules can connect with each other to facilitate the flow of data. The second standard for transportability is that systems should have common functional requirements.

- **The X—or Other—Attribute**

The final attribute of the ePortfolio Success Algorithm is referred to as ‘X’ indicating other important unknown attributes that may contribute to the success of an ePortfolio project. The X attribute may differ depending on the ePortfolio type and the method of implementation at an institution.

2.1.6 ePortfolio Policies

The “*Report on ePortfolio Readiness and State of the Art in Technology and Practice*” (ElfEL, 2009), aims at providing an overview on the actual development of ePortfolios in Europe and the state of the art in ePortfolio practice. The report constitutes a comprehensive guide to local, regional and nationwide ePortfolio policies. Notable exemplars of the latter are illustrated in Table 2. Also, see Appendix C: Territorial ePortfolio Approaches in the Field of Education.

Nationwide ePortfolio Policies	Description
Wales (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Had the vision of developing a system that would provide access to an ePortfolio to every of its 3 million citizens.
Netherlands (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Committee for participation in the labour market made a series of recommendations to improve the functioning of labour market making the proposal of an ePortfolio for each employee. ▪ Voted a law relative to continuous evaluation and self-evaluation

	of professional development of teachers. To support this process the Dutch Association for Quality encourages teachers to collect evidence of their professional development in an online ePortfolio.
UK (1997-2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dearing Report (1997) recommended that institutions should encourage students to record, reflect and build on their successes in a more systematic manner. ▪ The Widening Participation agenda (DfES, 2003) aimed at increasing participation post-16 by promoting the recognition of formal and informal learning. ▪ The British Ministry of Education (DfES) published Harnessing Technologies, a report in which a number of priorities and technologies converging towards a digital portfolio were indicated.
Norway (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed an ePortfolio vision where each learner was seen as an active producer of knowledge that would be shared through the ePortfolio with peers.
Austria (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up a consortium of schools, universities and departments to develop a national policy for the ePortfolio.

Table 2: Notable Examples of Nationwide ePortfolio Policies

In addition, several major organisations have made policy decisions to adopt ePortfolios to support learning and career development. Some examples are presented in Table 3.

Institutions	Policy Decisions for the Adoption of ePortfolios
Higher Education Institutions (UK)	<p>Strong national expectations toward the use of ePortfolios across the educational spectrum have led to wide implementation and use of ePortfolios.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The British Educational Communication and Technology Agency (BECTA)⁷ commissioned a team of learning sciences researchers from the University of Nottingham to investigate the potential of ePortfolios to support learning. ▪ Newcastle University has developed and implemented a generic ePortfolio to support the evidencing of learning outcomes and to facilitate personal development planning. ▪ Queen Margaret University promotes and supports the use of ePortfolios to its students to record their lifelong learning in support of their career development.
Higher Education Institutions (USA)	<p>Currently in the US, the bulk of ePortfolio development is occurring in higher education with primary emphasis in Education and the Health Sciences. One area of increasing activity in the use and research of ePortfolios is in teacher education programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The University of Minnesota has implemented an open-source portfolio system that was developed by the University for its approximately 34,000 students. Meanwhile, eFolioMinnesota is provided as a free resource for all Minnesota residents.

⁷ BECTA was the government agency leading the national drive to ensure the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning. It was established in 1997 and closed on 31 March 2011.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The University of Iowa uses ePortfolios to evaluate candidates in teacher education. ▪ Virginia Tech University uses a campus-wide ePortfolio initiative in academic programmes to assess student learning.
Higher Education Institutions (Australia)	<p>While there is no formal government policy on ePortfolios in Australia, the country has made significant strides in its effort to utilize ePortfolios in health, teaching and engineering professions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The University of South Australia uses ePortfolios in its first-year undergraduate law programme. ▪ Queensland University of Technology initiated a university-wide student ePortfolio in 2004. ▪ University of Wollongong has been developing and trialing ePortfolio tools and projects since 2002. Recently, a University of Wollongong ePortfolio Community has been launched to share the diversity of ePortfolio approaches.

Table 3: Higher Education Institutions Promoting ePortfolio Use across Europe, USA and Australia

2.1.7 ePortfolio Initiatives

A host of significant collaborative initiatives to move the concept of ePortfolios forward can be identified both in Europe and the USA. Examples of such initiatives are presented in Table 4.

ePortfolio Initiatives	Description
Europortfolio Initiative (Europe)	Its mission is to promote the use of ePortfolios as one of the foundations of a learning economy and society across Europe. The founding members (EifEL, European Schoolnet, CETIS, and IMS in Europe) do represent key players in the European e-learning world.
EPICC (Europe)	The European Portfolio Initiative Coordinating Committee (EPICC) ⁸ sponsored by the European Institute for eLearning (EifEL) aims to provide access to ePortfolios to all European citizens. The initiative encompasses educational and learning environments from childhood through ongoing adult learning.
Eport Consortium (USA)	Collaboration of higher education and IT institutions to develop electronic portfolio software environment and management systems. A goal is to achieve consistency and interoperability between approaches and systems at a conceptual and technical level.

Table 4: Collaborative ePortfolio Initiatives across Europe and the USA

2.2 Language Portfolios

The twin goals of learner-centered language curricula discussed by Nunan (1988) allude to: (1) learning communication and (2) developing a critical awareness of language learning. The promotion of these two goals calls for language teachers'

⁸ The European Portfolio Initiatives Coordination Committee was an eLearning project funded by the European Commission to define an interoperability framework for ePortfolios. EPICC's work is now continued under the remit of Europortfolio, the European Consortium for the ePortfolio.

consideration of the ways in which the learning tasks are set up and monitored in their language classes. While designing the tasks for these twin purposes teachers need to pay attention both to (1) the *content*, i.e., what kinds of tasks and materials the student works with, and to (2) the learning *process*: how the student is guided to work on the tasks (Candlin, 1987). Instructional decisions can be reached so as to combine the language learning aims and the educational goals in the learning process.

Portfolios mean different things in different contexts. In general, a language portfolio can be defined as a “systematic collection of student work, analyzed to show progress over time with regard to instructional objectives” (Kohonen & Westhoff, 2003). To emphasize the abovementioned twin goals in language teaching, it is customary to distinguish between two basic types of portfolios in language learning, the *process-oriented learning* (‘working’) portfolios and the *product-oriented reporting* (‘showcase’) portfolios.

The *learning portfolio* can incorporate diverse kinds of process-related materials: action plans, learning logs, drafts of work, comments by the teacher and peers, student reflections, submitted assignments, evaluation criteria and checklists to evaluate progress with regard to explicit learning objectives. The *reporting portfolio*, on the other hand, is used to document language learning outcomes for a variety of purposes: for giving marks in schools or institutions; or for the purpose of documenting language skills when applying for a job. Depending on the purpose, the student selects relevant language documents from his or her learning portfolio and submits them for review (Smolen, Newman, Wathen, & Lee, 1995; O’Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996; Kohonen, 1999).

As suggested, the use of the general term *language portfolio* in current literature emphasizes reflective language learning, self-assessment and the reporting of the communicative skills with the support of authentic documents that are evaluated on the basis of some criterion-referenced scaling system. However, the term must be distinguished from the Council of Europe’s concept of the *European Language Portfolio*, underscoring a reflective, autobiographical approach in language learning aimed at fostering learner autonomy and learning to learn.

2.2.1 Main Concepts of ePortfolio Use in Language Classes

In language education, the ePortfolio is generally associated with the notions of:

- **Plurilingualism:**

Plurilingualism is defined as communicative language competencies in a number of languages, in which the languages interrelate and interact (Council of Europe, 2004). From a plurilingual perspective, the individual language repertory evolves by building on direct, personal experience, in which skills in one language may outweigh skills in others. From this viewpoint, the ePortfolio is perceived as a good support for plurilingual competence, as it constitutes a fully personalizable on-line identity that can realistically reflect individual pathways in the development of plurilinguistic competence.

- **Self-regulated learning:**

Self-regulation is defined as the process in which individuals pay attention to all their own needs, emotions, and thought, and figure out how to take care of them in order to meet personal objectives (Boekaerts, 1999). In this regard, the ePortfolio fosters language education by providing a space where learners can review previous learning, identify their learning needs, and anticipate future pathways. In terms of Zimmerman, Bonner, & Kovach’s (1996) model of self-related learning, the

ePortfolio can be used to self-monitor language-related communication competence, set objectives for specific aspects of this competence, and assess shortfalls between set objectives and actual outcomes.

2.2.2 Pedagogical Use of Portfolios in Language Classes

Delett, Barnhardt, & Kevorkian (2001) outline the advantages of portfolio-based language learning:

- as “flexible tools that allow for frequent opportunities to practise and demonstrate authentic language use in relevant contexts and for specific purposes”;
- as a way of documenting language development, “the process of trial and error”, which may include “progress using a new language structure or inducing a rule”;
- the potential of a portfolio to foster and document “a complex set of thinking skills”, through self-assessment and goal-setting activities, and
- the capacity of portfolios to capture “the multifaceted nature of language development”, including both the holistic nature of communicative competence as well as the acquisition of discrete skills. As Zubizarreta (2009) remarks, in his wide-ranging review of the learning portfolio, “the portfolio is both an intellectually stimulating process and a product with keen utilitarian properties”.

The use of portfolios in the language classroom is increasingly well-documented as practitioners seek ways of encouraging the type of critical reflection that portfolios seem to generate (Carson, 2011). Williams, Chan, & Cheung (2009) describe the process of implementing an English language e-portfolio at City University in Hong Kong. They conclude their account by acknowledging that, whilst they is much left to learn about the role of portfolio learning in helping “promote and document English language learning”, “students benefit from the reflection, organization, documentation, and mentoring that go into the development of e-portfolios”.

Within a European context, Nunes (2004) reports on a study of implementation of portfolio-based language learning with a group of 10th grade English students in Portugal. She presents data to support her argument that using portfolios in the English language classroom helped learners reflect on their learning in a dialogic manner. She argues that this type of dialogue enhances learning in three key ways:

- it creates the opportunity for “a more personal and comprehensive relationship between students and teacher”;
- it creates insights for learners, who can know their strengths and weaknesses;
- it provides ways for learners to relate their opinions to those of others, and “even construct, widen and reconstruct their own knowledge”, which is consistent with Little’s (2004) emphasis, within a language learner autonomy context, on both the social nature of learning, our “social interdependence”, and on constructivist understandings of knowledge acquisition, “new knowledge and skills can only ever be acquired on the basis of what we already know and can do”.

Hence, the portfolio produces a platform for three types of interconnected dialogue, creating the conditions for internal dialogue by learners or “inner speech” (Vygotsky, 1986; Little, 2004; Morin, 2009), dialogue between teacher and learners, and dialogue between learners and other learners/interlocutors.

The appraisal by Nunes (2004) is consistent with the type of relationships visibly fostered in Thomsen's and Gabrielsen's (1991) accounts of "co-operative teaching and learning". Thomsen (2000) creates opportunities for learners to work together on tasks which are mediated by and stored in a learner portfolio, and which involve the three types of dialogue outlined above.

2.2.3 The European Language Portfolio (ELP)

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is interrelated with the Common European Framework (CEF, 2001) as a pedagogical language learning and reporting instrument. It enables students to maintain a record of their language learning experience, both formal and informal. As part of the Framework, the general purpose of the ELP is to deepen mutual understanding among European citizens, respecting the diversity of cultures and ways of life. To facilitate mobility within the European community, it provides a clear description of language competence and qualifications according to a criterion-referenced system of proficiency descriptors. Language competence in the model is described in terms of three levels of proficiency, with two sub-levels at each of these levels (CEF, 2001; Christ, Schärer, Debyser, & Dobson, 1996; Schärer, 1999).

Conforming to the *Principles and Guidelines* accepted by the Educational Committee of the Council of Europe, the ELP specifically displays the subsequent properties (Principles, 2000):

- It is a tool to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism.
- It is the property of the learner.
- It values the full range of the learner's language and intercultural competence and experience regardless of whether acquired within or outside formal education.
- It is a tool to promote learner autonomy.
- It has both a pedagogic function to guide and support the learner in the process of language learning and a reporting function to record proficiency in languages.
- It is based on the Common European Framework of Reference with explicit reference to the levels of competence specified in the model.
- It encourages the learner's self-assessment and assessment by educational authorities and examination bodies.
- It incorporates a minimum of common features which make it recognizable and comprehensible across Europe.

2.2.3.1 Overarching Principles and Aims of the ELP

The ELP ought to be treated as a recent addition to the Council of Europe's projects in the field of modern languages. Therefore, every ELP should reflect the overarching aims of the Council of Europe in the field of modern languages, in particular:

- the deepening of mutual understanding among citizens in Europe;
- respect for diversity of cultures and ways of life;
- the protection and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity;
- the development of plurilingualism as a life-long process;
- the development of the language learner;
- the development of the capacity for independent language learning;

- transparency and coherence in language learning programmes (Schneider & Lenz, 2001).

2.2.3.2 Aims and Functions of an ELP

According to the *Principles and Guidelines* adopted by the Education Committee of the Council of Europe, the ELP project has two main aims:

- a) to motivate learners by acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language skills at all levels;
- b) to provide a record of the linguistic and cultural skills they have acquired.

Points **a)** and **b)** refer to the two basic functions of the European Language Portfolio:

a) The pedagogic function:

- Enhance the motivation of the learners to improve their ability to communicate in different languages, learn additional languages and seek new intercultural experiences.
- Incite and help learners to reflect on their objectives, ways of and success in language learning, plan their learning and learn autonomously.
- Encourage learners to enhance their plurilingual and intercultural experience through contacts and visits, reading, use of the media, projects.

b) The documentation and reporting function:

The ELP aims to document its holder's plurilingual language proficiency and experiences in other languages in a comprehensive, informative, transparent and reliable way. The instruments contained in the ELP help learners to take stock of the levels of competence they have reached in their learning of one or several foreign languages in order to enable them to inform others in a detailed and internationally comparable manner. In order to be reliable, all information must be documented in a transparent manner, it should be related to a reference system such as the *Common Reference Levels* in the CEF and a common language of description should be used.

2.2.3.3 European Language Portfolio Components

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) consists of three parts:

- the **Language Passport** section which provides an overview of the individual's proficiency in different languages at a given point of time, evaluated according to the skills and the levels of proficiency in the Common European Framework. It is also used to record formal qualifications, language competences and significant language and intercultural experiences. It includes information on partial and specific competence. It allows for self-assessment, teacher assessment and assessment by educational institutions and examination boards (Principles, 2000).
- the **Language Biography** section which facilitates the student's involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing his or her learning process and progress. It encourages the learner to state what he or she can do in each language and to include information on linguistic and cultural experiences gained in and outside formal educational contexts. It is also organized to promote plurilingualism, i.e. the development of an underlying unified competence in a number of languages.

- the **Dossier** section which offers the student the opportunity to select materials to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the Language Passport or Biography (Principles, 2000).

2.2.3.4 Increasing Visibility of Language Learning through Portfolio-Oriented Pedagogy

Language learning inherently involves a number of personal properties and process-related learning outcomes that are educationally valuable language learning goals in language curricula. It is crucial to note that students inevitably bring their personal histories to class, involving personal properties, beliefs and assumptions of language and (language) learning they have acquired as part of their learning histories. These features evolve, in connection with the affective, social and cognitive processes of language learning (Jaatinen, 2000). They impinge indirectly on the student's observable language performance. While they may remain largely invisible, they include a number of properties (Kohonen, 2000), essential for the development of language competence and learning motivation:

- Commitment to and ownership of one's language learning.
- Tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty in communicative situations and learning. Willingness to take risks in order to cope with communicative tasks.
- Understanding of oneself as a language learner user in terms of beliefs about language use and one's role as a learner.
- Understanding of one's cultural identity and what it means to be an intercultural person and language user.
- Attitudes for socially responsible, negotiated learning and language use.
- Plurilingualism, involving a reflective awareness and appreciation of language phenomena and language learning, as well as assuming respect for and appreciation of cultural diversity and otherness.
- Learning skills and strategies necessary for continuous, increasingly independent language learning, conducted in the social community of learners and in interaction with other learners and the teacher.
- A reflective basic orientation to language learning, with abilities for critical self-assessment and peer reflection.

Such properties complement pedagogical learning processes in any language class and are crucial for promoting learner autonomy, and the student's personal development (Framework, 1996; CDCC Recommendations, 2000; Byram & Fleming, 1997; Arnold, 1999; Kaikkonen, 2000; Kohonen, 1999; 2000a, b). Frequently, they can be inferred only indirectly from the student's linguistic output data, remaining consciously inaccessible to the participants in the learning process. They, thus, constitute the so-called invisible curriculum of which participants have a peripheral awareness. However, without an awareness of what learning to learn means for them in their own contexts, students may have difficulties in undertaking a conscious reflection and assessment of their language learning. Similarly, teachers may find it difficult to conceptualize their role as facilitators of student learning.

Kohonen (2001) has pointed out the significance of making language learning more visible through portfolio-oriented foreign-language pedagogy. The latter suggests a wide range of possibilities for promoting language learning in terms of both the learning processes (the pedagogical function of the ELP) and the learning outcomes (the reporting function of the ELP). It is suggested that portfolio-oriented foreign-language pedagogy can open significant avenues for enhancing learning

outcomes in language education and is as a means of making some of the outcomes more visible to students, teachers and other stakeholders of learning.

2.2.3.5 The ELP and Learner Autonomy

The concept of learner autonomy has been central to the Council of Europe's thinking about language teaching and learning since 1979, when Henri Holec wrote *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning* (Holec, 1981). Holec (1981) began by defining learner autonomy as the "ability to take charge of one's own learning", noting that this ability "is not inborn but must be acquired either by 'natural' means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way", and pointing out that "to take charge of one's learning is to have [...] the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning [...]".

We take our first step towards developing the ability to take charge of our own learning when we accept full responsibility for the learning process, acknowledging that success in learning depends on ourselves. This acceptance of responsibility entails that we set out to learn, "in a systematic, deliberate way" (Holec, 1981), the skills of reflection and analysis that enable us to plan, monitor and evaluate our learning. Yet, accepting responsibility for our own learning is not only a matter of gradually developing meta-cognitive mastery of the learning process. It has an equally important affective dimension: in their commitment to self-management and their generally proactive approach, autonomous learners are motivated learners. What is more, Holec's definition entails that autonomous learners can freely apply their knowledge and skills outside the immediate context of learning.

As reported by Little (2007) the development of learner autonomy is central to the ELP's pedagogical function. In formal educational contexts learners become autonomous to the extent that they develop and exercise the capacity to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning. In the case of second/foreign languages, learner autonomy also embraces target language use due to the pivotal role that language use plays in the development of communicative proficiency.

Language teachers who aspire to promote the development of learner autonomy should:

- involve their learners in their own learning, facilitating their ownership of learning objectives and the learning process;
- get their learners to reflect about learning and the target language. Self-assessment plays a key role, for unless reasonably accurate judgments about our knowledge and capacities against stated criteria are made, our planning, monitoring and evaluation are bound to be haphazard and uncertain;
- engage their learners in appropriate target language use, which includes the language of reflection and self-assessment. This entails that they model and scaffold the different kinds of discourse in which their learners need to become proficient.

The development of autonomy in language learning is governed by these things, summarized as the pedagogical principles of *learner involvement*, *learner reflection* and *appropriate target language use*. The three principles encapsulate three perspectives on the same phenomenon, and each principle implies the other two.

According to the *Principles and Guidelines* that define the ELP and its functions (Council of Europe, 2000; 2004), the ELP reflects the Council of Europe's concern with "the development of the language learner", which by implication includes the development of learning skills, and "the development of the capacity for independent

language learning”; the ELP, in other words, “is a tool to promote learner autonomy”. The *Principles and Guidelines* insist that the ELP is the property of the individual learner, which in itself implies learner autonomy. Learners exercise their ownership not simply through physical possession, but by using the ELP to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. In this, self-assessment plays a central role: the ongoing, formative self-assessment that is supported by the “Can do” checklists attached to the language biography, and the periodic, summative self-assessment of the language passport, which is related to the so-called self-assessment grid in the CEF (Council of Europe, 2001).

2.2.3.6 Gaining a Holistic View of Foreign Language Education through the ELP

Kohonen (2007) purports that autonomous language learning is promoted by a holistic, experiential learning approach as a broad theoretical orientation to foreign language education. The student is seen as a self-directed, intentional person who can be guided to develop his or her competences in three inter-related areas of knowledge, skills and awareness:

- **Personal awareness and self-direction** which develops in learning processes throughout the life cycle. The development is facilitated in language education by designing learning environments so that they foster the student’s healthy and realistic personal growth. This is a question of working towards a kind of learning community in which students feel safe to explore the uncertainties involved in language learning and communication. In this process, language learning expands beyond the notion of communicative competence towards intercultural competence: relating to otherness in human encounters.
- **Awareness of language and communication.** An important part of foreign language learning obviously takes place in informal contexts. However, the language classroom still provides a powerful environment for learning. It allows language, communication and learning to be made explicit, with the teacher as a professional guide and organizer of the learning opportunities.
- **Awareness of the learning processes** that assists language learners in monitoring their learning towards increasingly self-directed, negotiated language learning and self-assessment. This involves knowledge about learning and communication strategies. At a higher level of abstraction, the meta-cognitive knowledge of learning helps learners evaluate and improve the ways they plan and organise their learning processes.

To promote more independent work, the learning tasks should be open enough to leave space for real choices, as appropriate with respect to the students’ age, learning skills and the level of proficiency in the given language. Seeing options, making choices, reflecting on the consequences and making new action plans are essential elements for the development of increasingly autonomous learning (Little, Hodel, Kohonen, & Perclová, 2007). Therefore, both teachers and students need to develop a common language and concrete tools for the pedagogic tutoring, monitoring and reflection of language learning. The European Language Portfolio provides significant new concepts and tools for language teachers and students to proceed towards such a holistic view of foreign language education (Kohonen, & Westhoff, 2001).

2.2.4 ePortfolios in Language Learning: Existing Approaches and Systems

- Compared to the huge number of accredited paper-based language portfolios there are rather few electronic portfolios for language learning until now. Some of the quite well-known **ePortfolio Européen des Langues– e-Pel**. (Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, France) (e-Pel, 2009).
 - **Demonstrate**. Upload of language documents: text, rich media. (Michigan State University)
 - **European Language Portfolio for professional purposes – Prof-ELP**. One of rather a few language ePortfolios for employees. (EU project, coordinator: Employment Service of Navarre, Spain)
 - **European Language Portfolio for the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired – Deaf Port**. (Twelve European partners: NGOs, academia)
- are briefly described in the sections to follow.

2.2.4.1 The Electronic European Language Portfolio (eELP)

This project has been carried out with the support of the European Community within the framework of the Minerva Programme. This Minerva proposal aims at the implementation of a European Language Portfolio (ELP) in a digital format, useful for learners of foreign languages.

At present, a plethora of European institutions have already accepted the suggestions given by the Framework, including the ELP. So far, several ELPs have already been validated and published in hardcopy format. Nevertheless, these existing hardcopy editions present some limits that an electronic ELP would successfully overcome. This could simultaneously bring advantages in terms of Open and Distance Learning (ODL), such as tracing the students' language learning process over the years (Schneider & Lenz, 2003).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CUP, 2001) underlines the need for the European citizen to have a personal document describing all his/her linguistic experiences and certifications. Schneider & Lenz (2003), the authors of the official ELP guide for developers, acknowledged the importance of having a digital ELP suggesting that an electronic version of the ELP would entail specific innovations:

- A digital ELP is easy to update: during their language learning process, students can update and expand their ELP with no need to buy new hardcopies or to add extra photocopied pages. If a paper copy is needed, it is easy to print either the whole digital version of the ELP or part of it.
- All the information of the digital ELP can be stored in a data base, which can be used by the institutions for longitudinal studies on the language learning process. On the other hand, the students themselves can have access to their ELP in progress to see the evolution of their language learning process in a graphical user-friendly form.
- Once implemented, the ELP is freely accessible on line by the students and easy updatable.
- A digital ELP is personalizable in accordance to the users' language level (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) thanks to a selective access to the evaluation grids and to digital links among its different parts.

- Considering that the ELP in its textual part is a plurilingual document, the digital structure would permit the coexistence of many languages avoiding graphical overload.
- A digital version makes it possible to have a multimedia ELP: in the Dossier the student can collect audio and video samples of his work except for paper documents.
- A further innovation is that a digital ELP is easy to send by e-mail and it is quicker to fill up than with a pen and paper procedure (Barrett, 1994).

The pedagogical approaches of the eELP Project concern some key points of foreign language learning and teaching:

- A digital ELP is an easier format to get and update than a hardcopy ELP. It implies that students will freely download the ELP and will update it more frequently and with no fear of making errors.
- The data base underlying the digital ELP is an important instrument to get longitudinal information on the language learning process. This may bring about considerable pedagogical innovations to evaluation as it based on a dynamic - not static - concept of language learning.

2.2.4.2 Diagnostic Online System for Languages – DIALANG

One of the predecessors of ePortfolios in language learning is DIALANG. The DIALANG language assessment system is an application of the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001). Since 1996, the system had been developed by about 25 European universities and other educational institutions in a Socrates/Lingua 2 project. It free, online, and provides objective test facilities as well as self-assessment tools for 14 languages and five skills (reading, writing, listening, grammar, and vocabulary). The multilingual web-based system uses the CEFR as a foundation for developing its own test sets, but does not consider oral communication and deals only partly with writing skills. DIALANG is not an ePortfolio in a strict sense as the testing is focused more on single skills than on a holistic use of language in context (Alderson, 2005).

2.2.4.3 EAQUALS-ALTE lectronic European Language Portfolio – e ELP

Two organisations in the field of language quality assurance, EAQUALS⁹ and ALTE¹⁰ jointly developed a digital version of the ELP in an EU funded Socrates/Minerva project. The e-ELP has been delivered in 2005. It is the very first electronic ELP to be accredited by the Council of Europe and is based on the paper ELP version.

⁹ EAQUALS (Evaluation & Accreditation of Quality in Language Services) is an international association of institutions and organisations involved in language education. Its aim is to promote and guarantee high quality in language teaching and learning. To achieve this aim, EAQUALS has created and published a demanding set of criteria to verify the quality offered by its Accredited Members-schools offering courses in a wide variety of languages in 25 countries.

¹⁰ Recognizing the need for a coherent approach to language testing, ALTE was established in 1989 by the Universities of Cambridge and Salamanca. The initial aim was to establish common standards for language testing across Europe, thereby supporting multilingualism and helping preserve the rich linguistic heritage of Europe. It was also vital that individual test takers gained a language qualification that was a fair and accurate assessment of their linguistic ability, one which was recognized around the world, and which could be accurately compared to qualifications in other languages. ALTE now has 33 members, including some of the world's leading language assessment bodies, and 40 institutional affiliates as well as several hundred individual affiliates.

Its concept includes the idea of reflecting the learners' educational process and supporting their autonomy. The system can be installed on a local PC and does not offer communication facilities for group work of learners or feedback from teachers. It is specifically connected to the products of the coordinating organisations (EAQUALS-ALTE, n.d.).

2.2.4.4 EPOS – The Bremen ePortfolio System for Language Learning

EPOS was developed at the “Fremdsprachenzentrum” (FZHB) and at the ‘Landesinstitut für Schule’ in Bremen, as a common web-based platform for language learning in schools, universities and further education. It contains the descriptors of the ELC-ELP and offers all parts of the ELP in educationally structured learning environments. It has been welcomed by all prominent political and economic institutions as a means of enhancing plurilingualism and encouraging autonomous language learning.

A project that uses EPOS as a core instrument is the tutorial program at the Foreign Languages Centre of Universities in Bremen or Fremdsprachenzentrum (FZHB). The tutorial program was implemented at the FZHB in October 2007 to enhance plurilingualism and to encourage autonomous language learning. This program aims at combining language classes, autonomous language learning with EPOS, tutorial advisory service, expert advisory service and feedback as well as peer and project-based learning (EMOLAN, 2011).

2.2.4.5 Europees Taalportfolio (European Language Portfolio) – ETP

In the Netherlands there is a very active ePortfolio community, particularly in Higher Education (Europees Taalportfolio, 2004; Van Nieuwenhoven et al., 2008). The ETP is a web application based on a sound pedagogical concept and developed since 2003. Besides the traditional parts of an ELP (Passport, Biography, Dossier) it offers a fourth component: ‘*language progress*’. This part supports the student’s aims to improve his/her language competence. The ETP is going to be further developed provided that there are interesting ideas for improving the dissemination of the system in schools and universities, e. g. by intensive cooperation with educational publishers. Future plans for the development of the system can also be brought into effect by considering authentic language use, e.g. by connecting the ePortfolio to social networks, integrating a new form of user-created content.

2.2.4.6 Language On Line Portfolio Project – LOLIPOP

A partnership of twelve higher education institutions throughout Europe, most of them universities, jointly developed the LOLIPOP system (2004 to 2007), an on-line interactive version of the European Language Portfolio with enhanced intercultural dimension. This innovative language-learning tool supports the development of learner autonomy, providing a framework for a more autonomous form of course delivery, whilst at the same time offering a bridge to classroom learning. It also provides adequate support for the processes of self-assessment and reflection on language and intercultural learning in a higher education context. It, thus, facilitates lifelong language learning by encouraging the learner to see the process of learning languages as a continuous activity, fostering the notion that learning continues beyond formal education (LOLIPOP, 2008).

2.2.4.7 LinguaFolio Online

The LinguaFolio Online is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language at school or outside of school can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. It is a tool that should accompany language learning throughout life and is suitable for documenting language abilities for various uses (CASLS University of Oregon, 2012). The LinguaFolio Online is composed of the:

- **Language Passport** which constitutes an overview of the learner's experiences and ability with different languages. It records formal qualifications and diplomas as well as self assessments and can be updated frequently. The Passport includes:
 - a summary of language learning and intercultural experiences or language courses outside of school;
 - summer study, academies, or camps;
 - contact with speakers of the language;
 - a self-assessment grid and global scale;
 - a linguistic profile.
- **Language Biography** which is a record of a learner's personal language learning history that helps evaluate his/her learning goals and reflect on language learning and cultural experiences. The Biography includes:
 - learning goals: why a learner is learning language(s) and which language skills are most important to him/her;
 - language history list of language learning experiences and dates;
 - significant language learning and intercultural experiences;
 - current linguistic priorities including self-assessment checklist.
- **Dossier** which refers to a collection of samples of work and certificates chosen by the learner to document and illustrate his/her language skills, experiences, and achievements. It can be used to demonstrate a learner's language abilities to others and it comprises:
 - samples of written work and projects;
 - certificates that indicate language skills;
 - video and/or audio recordings;
 - reports from tutors.

LinguaFolio Online is intended to:

- encourage the learning of all languages;
- emphasize the value of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism;
- contribute to global understanding;
- promote autonomous learning and the ability to assess one's skills;
- facilitate articulation among language programs based on a clear and commonly accepted description of language proficiency;
- promote language learning as a lifelong endeavor.

LinguaFolio Online helps learners:

- evaluate and describe their language proficiency in clear and simple terms;
- document and reflect on their language learning inside and outside school and on their intercultural experiences;
- inform others about their proficiency in different languages;
- set personal language learning objectives and map out ways to achieve them;

LinguaFolio Online helps educators, schools, and other institutions:

- recognize the needs and motivation of learners and to help them set learning goals;
- develop programs based on learner strengths and needs;
- obtain information about the learner's previous experiences with languages;
- evaluate and document performance in a variety of ways.

2.2.5 Electronic Language Portfolio Initiatives from Various Countries

An incomplete list of electronic language portfolio initiatives from various countries are provided below, unveiling the wide range of types, functions and application areas of ePortfolios in language learning.

- **ePortfolio Européen des Langues– e-Pel.** (Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, France) (e-Pel, 2009).
- **Demonstrate.** Upload of language documents: text, rich media. (Michigan State University)
- **European Language Portfolio for professional purposes – Prof-ELP.** One of rather a few language ePortfolios for employees. (EU project, coordinator: Employment Service of Navarre, Spain)
- **European Language Portfolio for the Deaf and Hearing-Impaired – Deaf Port.** (Twelve European partners: NGOs, academia)

2.2.6 The Milestone European Language Portfolio-A Language Portfolio for Adult Immigrants

Within the context of immigration, much of the policy debate surrounding integration has focused on the need to help individuals relate to their host community, and to help the host community relate to new arrivals. These societal links between individuals are actualized through families, friendships, workplaces and social activities. Often the language classroom is one step removed from such networks; whilst role-plays and communicative routines are rehearsed, individuals often remain *'unrelated'* to social situations in the language of the host community in practice. Refugees, like other minority populations on the fringes of society, are vulnerable to loneliness, anxiety and depression (Fong, 2004). Without sufficient proficiency in the language of the host community, some refugees may never access employment or anything more than minimum wage jobs, and become victims of the disadvantages which accompany poverty, such as low self-esteem and loss of dignity.

The Milestone project (Milestone ELP, 2006) has developed versions of the European Language Portfolio for adult migrants. Funded as part of the European Union's Socrates–Comenius 2.1 Programme, the Milestone project is the result of collaboration between partners from five different European countries, seeking to develop autonomous learning in migrants learning the language of their host community (Carson, 2006). Milestone ELPs have been developed in English, German, Dutch, Swedish and Finnish. Milestone ELPs have the same tripartite structure as all other ELPs. However, there are some differences deriving from the needs of its specific learner group.

The Milestone ELP begins not with the *Language Passport* but with the *Language Biography*, which is divided into two parts. The first relates to the owner's previous language learning and intercultural experiences, and the relationship between the

learner's previous life in their country of origin, and their new life in the host country (Milestone ELP, 2006). It, thus, encompasses an assessment of 'Past, Present and Future', comparing activities, interests and hobbies of the learner in their home country and in the new host country, as well as questions about the learner's experience of speaking the language of the host community since their arrival. The self-assessment grid common to all ELPs involves learners in assessing their proficiency in all the languages they know; a simplified self-assessment grid is also included for learners with low proficiency. This part of the Milestone ELP has turned out to be important in terms of raising students' self-esteem, but also productive in terms of teaching and learning, so that individual experiences can be drawn into the common knowledge resource of the class (Little, 2009).

The second part of the *Language Biography* focuses on specific components, tailored to the needs of adult immigrants, as regards their current language learning – asking them about their attitudes, expectations, degrees of cultural awareness, learning style and personal learning goals; this part also includes the checklists of 'Can do' statements describing tasks in the target language.

Commonly, the *Dossier* section of an ELP constitutes an open form which can be filled with samples of work, work in progress, or a learning journal. The *Dossier* in the Milestone version can be used in the same way but it has also been given structured content, an instantiation of which is a page where learners can keep their own attendance record.

The last element in the Milestone ELP is the *Language Passport*, which is the so-called standard adult passport that the Council of Europe recommends for use with all ELP models designed for older adolescents and adults.

The Milestone European Language Portfolio, validated by the Council of Europe's ELP Validation Committee (in 2002), is intended to:

- support teaching and learning through the gradual development of learner autonomy;
- provide evidence of the holder's language abilities and intercultural capacities to teachers, officials, and prospective employers;
- develop in learners a range of transferable learning, communication and intercultural skills which are essential for effective engagement at all levels with the host society.

Therefore, the Milestone European Language Portfolio Project is inextricably associated with benefits for students, teachers and prospective employers as illustrated in Table 5.

Benefits entailed by the Use of The Milestone ELP	
For the STUDENT	<p>The European Language Portfolio allows students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to show what they know in other languages; ▪ to understand what they need to learn for everyday life, study, training or employment; ▪ to record what they have learnt and to see what they need to study; ▪ to help them learn the language that they need for other specific purposes; ▪ to demonstrate what they are capable of doing to teachers, other training institutions, and employers.
For the TEACHER	<p>The European Language Portfolio allows teachers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to see exactly what their students can already do in different

	<p>languages;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to plan future learning accurately to meet their students' individual needs; ▪ to support their students in their own self-assessment so that they can become effective learners.
For the EMPLOYER or OFFICIAL	<p>The European Language Portfolio allows prospective employers or officials to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to see how the owner can perform in the language of the prospective employer's country; ▪ to see what other languages the owner knows and can offer to an employment or study situation; ▪ to see how the owner has approached the challenge of learning the language of the prospective employer's country.

Table 5: Benefits Entailed by the Use of the Milestone ELP

2.3 Self-Directed Learning

The rapidity of change, the perpetual creation of new knowledge, and an ever-widening access to information amplify the need for much of the learning routines to take place at the learner's initiative, even if available through formal settings (Hiemstra, 1994). A conventional label attributed to such activity is self-directed learning. In essence, self-directed learning is learning in which the conceptualization, design, conduct and evaluation of a learning project are directed by the learner (Brookfield, 2009); the latter assumes the primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and even evaluating a learning effort.

Research, scholarship, and interest in self-directed learning have literally exploded around the world in recent years. Few topics, if any, have received more attention by educators than self-directed learning. Related books, articles, monographs, conferences, and symposia abound. In addition, numerous new programs, practices, and resources for facilitating self-directed learning have been actualized (Hiemstra, 1994). In the current section of this thesis, relevant literature is reviewed in an attempt to extract some meaning from information available and shed light on the heavily debated concept of self-directed learning.

2.3.1 What is Self-Directed Learning?

There may be slight variations in the way educators define self-directed learning, rooted in adult education and principally derived from the humanistic psychology, but a thorough review of the literature discloses tenets that are central to the concept.

- As the term suggests, SDL views learners as responsible owners and managers of their own learning process. SDL integrates self-management with self-monitoring (the process whereby the learners monitor, evaluate and regulate their cognitive learning strategies) (Bolhuis, 1996; Garrison, 1997).
- SDL recognizes the significant role of motivation and volition in initiating and maintaining learners' efforts. Motivation drives the decision to participate, and volition sustains the will to see a task through to the end so that goals are achieved (Corno, 1992; Garrison, 1997).
- In SDL, control gradually shifts from teachers to learners. Learners exercise a great deal of independence in setting learning goals and deciding what is

- worthwhile learning as well as how to approach the learning task within a given framework (Morrow, Sharkey, & Firestone, 1993).
- Teachers scaffold learning by making it 'visible'. They model learning strategies and work with students so that they develop the ability to use them on their own (Bolhuis, 1996; Corno, 1992; Leal, 1993).
 - SDL develops domain-specific knowledge as well as the ability to transfer conceptual knowledge to new situations. It seeks to bridge the gap between school knowledge and real-world problems by considering how people learn in real life (Bolhuis, 1996; Temple & Rodero, 1995).

Acknowledging the aforesaid salient features of self-directed learning (SDL), various definitions have been produced. Well-known researchers' definitions of SDL are illustrated in Table 6:

Definitions of Self-Directed Learning	
Knowles (1975)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Described self-directed learning as “a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of other”. ▪ The processes in self-directed learning include diagnosing one’s own learning needs, setting personal goals, making decisions on resources and learning strategies and assessing the value of the outcomes.
Guglielmino (1977)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theorized that “self-direction in learning can occur in a wide variety of situations, ranging from a teacher-directed classroom to self-planned and self-conducted learning projects”. ▪ Further stated that it is the personal characteristics of the learner “that ultimately determine whether self-directed learning will take place in a given learning situation. The self directed learner more often chooses or influences the learning objectives, activities, resources, priorities and levels of energy expenditure than does the other-directed learner”. ▪ Described self-directed learning as an increase in knowledge, skill or performance pursued by any individual for personal reasons employing any means, in any place at any time or age.
Kasworm (1983)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposes that self-directed learning “represents a qualitative evolvement of a person’s sense of cognitive definition and developmental readiness for ambiguous and non-defined actions”.
Brockett & Hiemstra (1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Described self-directed learning as a self-initiated process of learning, stressing the ability of individuals to plan and manage their own learning, and as a way of organizing instruction that allows for greater learner control.
Merriam & Caffarella (1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pointed out that self-directed learning is a form of study in which learners have the primary responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning experiences.
Gibbons (2002)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated that “SDL is any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time”.

Table 6: Definitions of Self-Directed Learning

2.3.2 Historical Development of Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning has a long and rich history dating back to classical antiquity. Kulich (1970) noted that prior to the evolution of formal schools, self-education was the primary means at the disposal of individuals to deal with the changes going on about them. Self-education has played an important role in the lives of scholars throughout the history of Western civilization-Socrates, Plato and Aristotle just to name a few (Tough, 1967).

Early scholarly efforts to understand self-directed learning took place some 150 years ago in the United States. Craik (1840) documented and celebrated the self-education efforts of several people. About this same time in Great Britain, Smiles (1859) published a book entitled *Self-Help*, applauding the value of personal development.

However, it is during the last three decades that self-directed learning has become a major research area. Groundwork was laid through the observations of Houle (1961) who interviewed and classified 22 adult learners into three categories based on reasons for participation in learning:

- goal-oriented, who participate mainly to achieve some end goal;
- activity-oriented, who participate for social or fellowship reasons;
- learning-oriented, who perceive of learning as an end in itself.

It is this latter group that resembles the self-directed learner identified in subsequent research.

The first attempt to better understand learning-oriented individuals was made by Tough, whose effort to analyze self-directed teaching activities resulted in a book, *The Adult's Learning Projects* (1979). In parallel scholarship, during this same time period, Knowles (1975) popularized the term '*andragogy*' in North America. His 1975 publication, *Self-directed Learning*, provided foundational definitions and assumptions that guided much subsequent research:

- self-directed learning assumes that humans grow in capacity and need to be self-directed;
- learners' experiences are rich resources for learning;
- individuals learn what is required to perform their evolving life tasks;
- an adult's natural orientation is task or problem-centered learning;
- self-directed learners are motivated by various internal incentives, such as need for self-esteem, curiosity, desire to achieve, and satisfaction of accomplishment.

Another important research effort was Guglielmino's (1977), who developed the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS), an instrument subsequently used by many researchers to measure self-directed readiness or to compare various self-directed learning aspects with numerous characteristics. Spear & Mocker's (1984) work on organizing circumstances showed how important it is to understand a learner's environmental circumstances in promoting self-directed learning.

Establishment of an annual International Symposium on Self-Directed Learning in 1987 by Long and his colleagues completes this historical picture. The Symposia have spawned many publications, research projects, and theory building efforts by researchers and practitioners throughout the world.

2.3.3 Perspectives on Self-Directed Learning

Scholars have presented different perspectives on SDL. As a result, several models have been proposed to understand it, falling into three principal categories:

- Sequential models, which delineate steps in the self-directed learning process (Knowles, 1975; Tough, 1971). For instance, Tough's (1971) sequential model of SDL delineates 13 steps in a self-directed learning project, depicting one version of the way individuals go about planning and executing it. The steps tease out the 'what, where, and how' of self-directed learning.
- Interwoven models (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Danis, 1992; Garrison, 1997; Spear, 1988), which examine learner characteristics in addition to the learning context, "interacting to form episodes of self-directed learning" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). An example of an interwoven model of SDL is Brockett & Hiemstra's (1991) Personal Responsibility Orientation (PRO) model which contains the following components:
 - ⇒ Recognition that learners must take personal responsibility for the teaching-learning transaction and that personal responsibility must be a characteristic of the learner.
 - ⇒ Self-directed learning, viewed as an instructional method "that centers on the activities of planning, implementing, and evaluating learning".
 - ⇒ Learner self-direction. These are learner characteristics that "predispose [the learner] toward taking primary responsibility for personal learning endeavors".
 - ⇒ Best self-directed learning occurs when the learner's need for self-direction is matched with the opportunity for self-directed learning.
 - ⇒ Recognition of learning activities and the learner existing in a social context that affects the learning process and the learner.
- Instructional models (Grow, 1991; 1994; Hammond & Collins, 1991), which represent "frameworks that instructors in formal settings... use to integrate self-directed methods of learning into their programs and activities" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Grow's (1991) four-stage model is an instance of an instructional model of SDL, helping teachers instruct learners who are at different levels of self-direction:
 - ⇒ Stage 1 learners are low in self-direction and rely heavily on the teacher for guidance. Teachers act as coaches, providing insight and developing learners' insight by helping them set goals.
 - ⇒ Stage 2 have moderate self-direction and are interested in learning. Teachers act as motivators. These students can become increasingly self-directed when initially given praise and encouragement.
 - ⇒ Intermediate self-direction typifies Stage 3 learners who are active but need a guide. Teachers facilitate the learning process by offering resources while sharing decision making regarding learning goals and evaluation.
 - ⇒ Stage 4 learners are high in self-direction. They consult experts but "are both able and willing to take responsibility for their learning, direction, and productivity".

2.3.4 Benefits of Self-Directed Learning

The literature on SDL asserts that self-directed learners demonstrate a greater awareness of their responsibility in making learning meaningful and monitoring

themselves (Garrison, 1997). They are curious and willing to try new things, view problems as challenges, desire change, and enjoy learning (Taylor, 1995). Taylor (1995) also finds self-directed learners to be motivated and persistent, independent, self-disciplined, self-confident and goal-oriented.

Self-directed learning allows learners to be more effective learners and social beings. Guthrie et al. (1996) noted that the self-directed learners in a Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) program demonstrated the ability to search for information in multiple texts, employed different strategies to achieve goals, and represented ideas in different forms. Morrow et al. (1993) observe that with proper planning and implementation, self-directed learning can encourage students to develop their own rules and leadership patterns.

2.3.5 Self-Directed Learning as a 21st Century Skill

It has been widely acknowledged that the purpose of education is no longer simply producing manpower to fill the existing job vacancies, but anticipating the needs of future and preparing for jobs that are yet to be created in the new economy (Koh & Lee, 2008). The advent of the new millennium coincided with a number of reports on K-12 education – such as the *enGauge®21st Century Skills: Literacy in the Digital Age* (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003) and the *Results that matter: 21st Century Skills and High School Reform* (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006) reports – questioning the efficiency of school education in equipping students against the challenges posed by the 21st century and underscoring the urgency in looking beyond immediate learning goals in schools to prepare students to thrive in a globalised, socially and culturally diverse, knowledge society.

Life-ready competencies pertaining to creativity, innovation, cross-cultural understanding and resilience (Singaporean Ministry of Education, 2011) could safeguard students' thriving in a fast-changing and highly-connected world. Among such 21st century skills, SDL is classified as a key component. SDL is also intricately linked to lifelong learning, which has been considered a primary demand of the modern society by international organizations such as UNESCO¹¹ and OECD¹².

Within the Singaporean educational system, ranked as No. 1 in the Global Competitiveness Report¹³, in terms of its ability to meet the needs of a competitive

¹¹ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN). Its stated purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science, and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the UN Charter.

¹² The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international economic organisation of 34 countries founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. It is a forum of countries committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a platform to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices, and co-ordinate domestic and international policies of its members.

¹³ The World Economic Forum's Centre for Global Competitiveness and Performance through its Global Competitiveness Report and report series, aims to mirror the business operating environment and competitiveness of over 140 economies worldwide. The report series identify advantages as well as impediments to national growth thereby offering a unique benchmarking tool to the public and private sectors as well as academia and civil society. The Centre works with a network of Partner Institutes as well as leading academics worldwide to ensure the latest thinking and research on global competitiveness are incorporated into its reports.

economy, recommendations regarding the introduction of the SDL notion to schools, have been culminated by its Ministry of Education as part of its third ICT masterplan.

According to the Singaporean Ministry of Education (2011), students need to be better positioned to tap into the rich opportunities in the new digital age and this can be achieved through an educational system that enables them to reach desired outcomes, pertaining to (a) being a confident person who has a strong sense of right and wrong, is adaptable and resilient, knows himself, is discerning in judgment, thinks independently and critically, and communicates effectively, (b) being a self-directed learner who questions, reflects, perseveres and takes responsibility for his own learning, (c) being an active contributor who is able to work effectively in teams, is innovative, exercises initiative, takes calculated risks and strives for excellence, (d) being a concerned citizen who has a strong sense of civic responsibility, is informed about the world, and takes an active part in bettering the lives of others around him (Singaporean Ministry of Education, 2011), and via possessing a set of 21st century competencies, namely:

- Values which define a person's character. They shape the beliefs, attitudes and actions of a person, and therefore form the core of the framework of 21st century competencies.
- Social and Emotional Competencies—skills necessary for students to recognize and manage their emotions, develop care and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, as well as to handle challenging situations effectively.
- Civic Literacy, Global Awareness and Cross-Cultural Skills.
- Critical and Inventive Thinking
- Information and Communication Skills.

The SDL definition proffered by Gibbons (2002) resonates with the attributes a 21st century student should embody. According to Gibbons (2002), SDL is “any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time”. Gibbons' (2002) notion of SDL, then, stresses the importance of developing ownership of learning as it will motivate a learner to pursue a learning goal and persist in the learning process. Based on his perspective, SDL involves initiating personally challenging activities, developing personal knowledge and skills to pursue the challenges successfully while entailing three important aspects (Chee, Divaharan, Tan, & Mun, 2011):

- **Ownership of Learning:**

Brockett & Hiemstra (1991) argue that personal responsibility is the “cornerstone of self-direction in learning”. Learners who take personal responsibility in learning have ownership of their learning, set learning goals, and accept the consequences of their thoughts and actions. Candy (1991) suggests that developing personal responsibility in SDL can take place within an institutional setting where learners can develop personal autonomy or exert some control over decision-making regarding their own learning.

Developing a sense of ownership of learning is associated with the motivation to learn. According to Garrison (1997), there is a difference between *entering* motivation and *task* motivation. Entering motivation refers to how much the learner is attracted and committed to the learning goal and can be affected by factors, including whether the learning goals will meet the learners' needs, whether they perceive the goals as achievable, and how they perceive their own self-efficacy in relation to the goals.

Providing opportunities and control for learners to set their learning goals can enhance their entering motivation. On the other hand, task motivation affects the learner's sustaining effort towards the learning goal. It is affected by extrinsic rewards and by the intrinsic motivation to work on a task. Thus, it is crucial to provide opportunities for learners' control over managing and monitoring their learning (Chee et al., 2011).

- **Self-Management and Self-Monitoring:**

Candy (1991) and Garrison (1997) use the term self-management to describe the aspect of behavioral task control related to management of learning activities. They also propose an internal cognitive dimension that relates to learner's thinking and monitoring of learning, which is termed self-monitoring by Garrison. Self-management is characterized by management of external tasks and resources, whereas self-monitoring involves internal process of thinking, reflection, and making improvement on the learning process.

Self-monitoring focuses on both cognitive and meta-cognitive aspects of learning, which are internal to learners. Cognitive processes (e.g. thinking and integrating new knowledge into existing knowledge structure) are necessary in all learning processes. Meta-cognition refers to thinking about thinking or learning to learn, which is pooled with learner's ability to reflect on their learning. This aspect of SDL is close to self-regulated learning (Bandura, 1986; Zimmerman, 1989).

- **Extension of Learning:**

While Brockett & Hiemstra (1991) focus on SDL in institutional settings and acknowledge the influence of external contextual factors (e.g. the structuring of learning activities) in this learning process, Candy (1991) extends the idea of SDL from an instructional setting to an informal, non-institutional, everyday setting, which he called the autodidactic domain. *Autodidaxy* literally means self-teaching, where a learner has total control about the choice of what to learn, where to learn, how to learn, and how to evaluate learning.

2.3.5.1 Behavioural Indicators for Self-Directed Learning

The theoretical ideas on the ownership of learning, self-management and self-monitoring and extension of learning are more fruitful when translated into potential observable indicators for classroom use. Through the exemplification of such behavioural indicators, teachers can monitor whether their students are engaged in self-directed learning and this may cast a decisive effect on the planning of instructional strategies. It is important to note that behavioural indicators are not exhaustive or capable of capturing the internal meta-cognitive processes of the learners. To probe deeper into students' thinking, teachers ought to rely on other methods such as think-aloud protocols or reflection logs (Chee et al., 2011).

2.3.6 Self-Directed Learning as a Spectrum

Gibbons (2002) asserts that SDL takes place as a spectrum. According to Gibbons (2002), there are various phases in SDL and these phases start as a low degree of self-direction to the highest degree of SDL. The spectrum includes the following stages or degrees of movement toward SDL:

1. **Incidental Self-Directed Learning:** The occasional introduction of SDL activities into courses or programs that are otherwise teacher-directed.

2. **Teaching Students to Think Independently:** Courses or programs that emphasize the personal pursuit of meaning through exploration, inquiry, problem solving and creative activity.
3. **Self-Managed Learning:** Courses or programs presented through learning guides that students complete independently.
4. **Self-Planned Learning:** Courses or programs in which students pursue course outcomes through activities they design themselves.
5. **Self-Directed learning:** Courses or programs in which students choose the outcomes, design their own activities and pursue them in their own way.

Nonetheless, these phases do not necessarily take place in a hierarchical, linear and neat order in practice. Figure 1 summarizes Gibbons' spectrum, matched with the three salient aspects of SDL (ownership of learning, self-management and self-monitoring, extension of learning).

Phases of SDL (Gibbons, 2002)	Student's readiness	Student's SDL characteristics		
		Ownership	Monitoring and Management	Extension of learning
Self-directed learning	High	High ownership, identify and commit to learning goals	Skilful in managing and monitoring own progress of learning	Extend learning beyond school's curriculum
Self-planned learning				
Self-managed learning				
Teaching students to think independently				
Incidental self-directed learning	Low	Low ownership, dependent on teachers to direct learning	Unable to manage and monitor learning	Learning is limited to resources provided in classrooms

Figure 1: SDL Spectrum and Student's Readiness (Chee et al., 2011)

2.3.7 What Can Teachers Do to Support Self-Directed Learning?

Raising students' awareness of their roles in learning represents one of the most important tasks a teacher is faced with. Taylor (1995) proposes engaging students in discussion on topics stemming from the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS)¹⁴ provided that the exercise of evaluating oneself on such topics was found

¹⁴ The Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) is a self-report questionnaire with Likert-type items developed by Dr. Lucy M. Guglielmino in 1977. It is designed to measure the complex of attitudes, skills, and characteristics that comprise an individual's current level of readiness to manage his or her own learning.

to have positively influenced learner awareness. An instance of this kind of topics might be:

- I know that I want to learn and that I am a learner, so if I want to learn something, I can, and I like to learn and to solve problems because I know that thinking 'hard' can be fun.

Learner participation in decision-making is another fundamental aspect of the SDL approach. Taylor (1995) advocates involving students in decisions concerning what is to be learned, when and how it should be learned, and how it should be evaluated. In addition, every proponent of SDL underscores the significance of allowing learners to pursue their own interests so that learning becomes more meaningful.

Bolhuis (1996) stresses that teachers, wishing to foster SDL in their classes, should free themselves from a preoccupation with tracking and correcting errors, an ego-threatening practice (Guthrie et al., 1996). Bolhuis (1996) advocates greater tolerance of uncertainty and encourages risk-taking, and capitalizing on learners' strengths instead of focusing on weaknesses, as it is more beneficial for learners to achieve a few objectives of importance to them than it is to fulfill all the objectives important to the teacher.

Allowing learners to explore ideas through peer discussions - even without fully intact answers - a process that can yield new and valuable insights is endorsed by Leal (1993). Corno (1992) suggests allowing learners to pursue personal interests without the threat of formal evaluation, for even if they make mistakes while doing so, the activities will sustain their interest, and break barriers to achievement.

To establish the habit of self-monitoring, teachers need to urge learners to reflect on what they did and to revise attempted work (Corno, 1992). Keeping journals is one way of maintaining a record of the learning process.

On the basis that SDL stresses meaningful learning, Temple & Rodero (1995) advocate a situated learning approach, in which teachers bring real-life problems into the classroom for learners to work on, the rationale being that if the tasks are meaningful, learners will work on them willingly.

Finally, the modeling of learning strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing is needed by teachers, so that students will develop the ability to use such strategies on their own. Allowing individual learners to approach a task in different ways employing various strategies also appears to be highly appreciated in the relevant literature (Many, Fyfe, Lewis, & Mitchell, 1996).

2.3.7.1 Technology Integration in Support of Self-Directed Learning

Once teachers have decided on the lesson design, they may wish to consider the integration of technological tools to enhance students' learning and to assist them in monitoring their students' learning. The considerations that ensue may serve as triggers for the skillful teacher as he or she plans for SDL to take place within the context of formal schooling (Chee et al., 2011):

- Is there a place for technology to support my students' SDL? How will it lend support to my students? How can I utilize the technology to scaffold my students' learning?
 - Do I want to implement technology to support my students' brainstorming activity?
 - Do I want to implement technology to support my students' discussion and negotiation processes?

- Should it be technology that can provide a platform for my students to build up their knowledge as a collaborative group?
- Should it be technology that will provide my students opportunities to demonstrate their learning?
- How can I take advantage of technology to monitor my students' learning?
- What type of technology do I want to integrate? Do I want to integrate what my students have already learnt? Do I want to integrate technology which my students are unfamiliar with but are capable of using it?
- Should I give my students opportunities to choose their preferred technological tool?

The following technological tools can be used for various purposes depending on the teachers' intention.

- **Mind maps** can be used for problem solving, creating outlines for planning purposes, brainstorming ideas, expressing individual understanding of concepts learnt.
- **Forum Discussions** serve as a platform to continue discussions out of the classroom, to share information about a concept or topic which students have to learn, to discuss issues before coming to class, to generate ideas and share resources. Forum discussions are employed by teachers to monitor students' understanding of concepts which they are required to learn, to monitor the thought processes or thinking processes in a group discussion.
- **Wiki platforms** are useful when students are required to build on or edit one another's contributions in a neat and organized fashion or when wiki pages can be an ongoing task for students to share their learning journey.
- **Blogs** are useful when teachers wish their students to share their opinions about a topic, reflect on what they have learnt, and share their experiences.

2.3.8 Self-Directed Language Learning

The term self-directed language learning, having garnered much attention in the field of second language education, refers to language studies where learners themselves are responsible for organizing their studies: personal objectives, resources and assessment. Thus, the studies are tailored to the individual learner's needs (University of Iceland, 2012). Self-directed language learning relies on the student to have acquired learner autonomy. However, it is worth mentioning that self-directed language learning and language learner autonomy are not synonymous.

Self-directed language learning generally describes an approach to language learning, that of a learner trying to progress independently of a language classroom in which the teacher directs the learning (Bordonaro, 2006). The term self-directed learner is sometimes coined with the concept of the non-traditional adult learner (Knowles, 1975; Brookfield, 1986; Caffarella, 1993) than it is with the general concept of autonomy. A working definition has been offered by Benson (2001), stating that: "Self-directed learning tends to refer simply to learning that is carried out under the learner's own direction, rather than under the direction of others".

Several definitions of language learner autonomy are evident in the literature of second language education. The classic definition of language learner autonomy derives from Holec (1981) who describes it as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". Holec's (1981) notion of ability underscores many of the later definitions of language learner autonomy (Legutke & Thomas, 1991; Little, 1991; Littlewood, 1996).

Language learner autonomy differs from self-directed language learning in terms of the depth of learning. The difference in their use concerns the presence, or lack thereof, of conscious awareness of language learner status on the part of those involved in the efforts of learning a second language. Language learner autonomy is, therefore, used to mean self-directed language learning plus awareness and reflection on that language learning.

There are two conditions for self-directed study of languages (University of Iceland, 2012):

- that the learner is capable of organizing the study, and
- that he or she has access to varied resources suitable for self-directed study.

Any student should learn to be independent and learn to learn. To achieve this goal students need the assistance of a specialist, in this case a language teacher. The role of teachers in self-directed language learning is different from traditional teaching; they are advisors rather than teachers. As advisors, they guide students towards increased autonomy by making them aware of the study process, their strategies and their beliefs on language learning. In this manner, learners can take control of their studies and adjust them to their own individual needs.

As already mentioned, access to a variety of resources is a condition for self-directed language learning. This is where information technology comes into play as the assortments of study materials available online for self-directed study significantly increase authentic resources, i.e. material that is not originally designed for language learning, but which can be employed by students in their studies nonetheless. Hence, information technology can increase learners' proximity to the target language and culture, and enable them to gain insight into foreign societies and keep up with current affairs (University of Iceland, 2012).

2.3.9 Self-Direction in Language Portfolios

Language portfolios, in addition to their more formal role, can perform a powerful pedagogical function, in encouraging further language study, learner autonomy and the development of self-direction. Portfolios assist students in realizing and accepting their roles as active learners. The latter learn to plan their actions by becoming aware of their weaknesses and setting their goals, as well as selecting the most suitable learning strategies. While compiling their portfolios, learners become interested in their learning, i.e. they find an internal motivation for their work. Similarly, students gradually learn to assess and control their work and to take notice of other people's assessment. They become more open to new experiences and develop curiosity and tolerance for problems (Anttalainen, Kärkkäinen, & Pylkkänen, 1998).

Language portfolios give the student concrete evidence of achievement and build confidence in one's ability, an important component in language learning success. As is the case for other mechanisms to encourage autonomous language learning, the use of language portfolios works best if separated both from an educational setting and from a proprietary platform, so that the portfolios can be seen as personal documents (not a school assignment) and can be used long after schooling has been completed (Godwin & Jones, 2011).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aim of the Study

This study is aimed at presenting and delineating the synthesis of adult migrants' language ePortfolios facilitated through an online course, designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory and supported by a website, titled "My Electronic Language Portfolio". Thus, through this online course adult, highly-educated and digitally-skilled migrants, who have already settled in the destination country or are bound to leave the country they reside in, are guided into composing their own language ePortfolios in a manner that enhances their intercultural competence and their self-directed skills in terms of learning the language of the destination country. Within this context, the views and attitudes of a group of eLearning experts that have been selected to try and evaluate "My Electronic Language Portfolio" both in terms of a set of general ePortfolio evaluation criteria and whether its content can promote self-direction in language learning and enhance intercultural competence, are demonstrated and discussed.

3.2 Research Questions

In this framework, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Which are the eLearning experts' views on "My Electronic Language Portfolio", in terms of its:
 - Appearance (looking well),
 - Operational Features (functioning well),
 - Reflection (integration of underlying personal message),
 - Evidence (integration of academic and personal evidence)?
- Which are the eLearning experts' views on the activities encompassed in the "Electronic Language Portfolio", designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory, in support of promoting self-direction in language learning?
- Which are the eLearning experts' views on the activities encompassed in the "Electronic Language Portfolio", designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory, in support of enhancing intercultural competence?

3.3 Operational Terms

In this section, operational terms, assisting the reader's comprehension as regards the terminology related to this study are introduced:

- **ePortfolio:** "A digital container capable of storing visual and auditory content including text, images, video and sound ... they are designed to support a variety of pedagogical processes and assessment purposes" (Abrami & Barrett, 2005).
- **Language Portfolio:** A language portfolio can be defined as a "systematic collection of student work, analyzed to show progress over time with regard to instructional objectives" (Kohonen & Westhoff, 2003).
- **Intercultural Competence:** Intercultural competence is generally defined as the ability of successful communication with people of other cultures (Zaleskienė, 2006) involving the following: the ability to establish and maintain relationships, communicate with minimal loss or distortion,

collaborate in order to accomplish something of mutual interest or need (Fantini, 2006). According to J. W. Neuliep (2006), intercultural competence enables a person to predict beliefs, attitudes, values and the behavior of others and interact with people from other cultures more effectively. Deardorff (Deardorff, 2004 as cited in Deardorff, 2006) defines intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes”.

- **Self-Directed Learning:** “Self-directed learning (SDL) is any form of learning where adults have primary responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluating the learning effort” (Hiemstra, 1994). Gibbons (2002) defines self-directed learning (SDL) as “any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time” (Gibbons, 2002).

3.4 Research Method

The research method employed to evaluate the usability of the proposed web page is the heuristic evaluation. This type of evaluation has been reported to be among the easiest methods to learn and results in problem reports that appear to be better predictors of end-user problems (Mack & Nielsen, 1994). The method in case uses multiple evaluators who conduct independent inspections in which they compare interface elements with a list of recognized usability principles, the heuristics.

The heuristics were initially compiled by Nielsen (1994). The researcher included such widely accepted principles of user interface design as “supports recognition rather than recall” and “prevents errors”. The reports of the multiple evaluators are considered together in order to maximize the chances of properly identifying any usability problems.

Several studies have indicated that the use of three to five evaluators is the reasonable minimum that will ensure identification of about 75% of usability problems in a project. The use of more evaluators will only result in marginal improvements in the rate of detection (Nielsen, 1994).

However, evaluating software and web pages that focus on any type of educational process, may include additional challenges. In that framework, Quinn (1996) proposed that usability inspection approaches might be adapted for the purpose of evaluating the educational design of software. As regards Quinn's model, the evaluators would include representatives from the target learner group, educational design experts and content experts for the relevant domain. The heuristics would comprise a compilation of elements of good educational design based upon tenets of relevant educational theories.

Quinn (1996) developed a draft list of eight heuristics based upon theories including cognitive apprenticeship, anchored instruction, problem-based learning and technology-mediated instruction. These were selected on the grounds that, despite their differences in emphasis and sequencing, they are broadly constructivist and share characteristics such as learner engagement in sequenced activities and guided reflection on learning.

Other researchers have also recognized the potential of heuristic evaluation methods in relation to educational software. Squires (1997) distinguished between predictive evaluation of software as undertaken by teachers prior to purchase and interpretive evaluation of the software in use with students. Arguing that established

predictive evaluation techniques, such as writing software reviews or using checklists and frameworks, ignore context and are time consuming, Squires (1997) advocated a heuristic approach to the predictive evaluation of educational multimedia.

In the same vein, Squires & Preece (1999) proposed an approach to predictive evaluation of educational software based on a set of heuristics that integrate usability and learning issues. They identified cognitive and contextual authenticity as important dimensions in the evaluation of software for use in socio-constructivist learning environments. Under each of these dimensions, they located key aspects related to credibility, complexity and ownership in the case of cognitive authenticity and collaboration and curriculum in the case of contextual authenticity. These aspects were considered in the light of the ten usability heuristics identified by Nielsen (1994) and possible interrelated issues were identified for nineteen of the possible fifty areas of interaction. A set of eight '*learning with software*' heuristics were derived but empirical testing of the heuristics is yet to be conducted.

Anyhow, heuristic evaluation methods appear to offer potential benefits in the evaluation of educational multimedia and it was this potential that led to the adoption of the heuristic approach for this research. In the section to follow the metrics-usability heuristics employed to evaluate "My Electronic Language Portfolio" webpage are reviewed.

3.5 Indicators and Usability Heuristics

In the context of the present study, several different indicators will be used to evaluate the designed webpage. The indicators, which may be treated as focused usability heuristics, are dependent on the specific nature of the implemented website, which has a multi-dimensional purpose.

These indicators belong to three different groups/categories. The first category includes general usability indicators, encompassing:

- Appearance;
- Operational Features;
- Evidence;
- Reflection.

The second category is related to the usability of the website as regards self-directed language learning, and includes the following heuristics:

- Ownership of Learning;
- Self-Management and Self-Monitoring;
- Extension of Learning.

Finally, the third category is associated with the usability of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" regarding the users' intercultural competence, and pertains to the following heuristics:

- Attitudes (Respect, Openness, Tolerance for Ambiguity)
- Knowledge & Comprehension (Cultural Self-Awareness/Understanding, Culture-specific Knowledge, Sociolinguistic Awareness)
- Skills (To Listen, Observe and Evaluate; To Analyze, Interpret and Relate)
- Internal Outcomes (Adaptability, Flexibility)
- External Outcomes (Communication, Behavior)

Overall, a set of twelve indicators/usability heuristics will be estimated and presented in the next chapter.

3.6 Evaluators

A group of five evaluators (eLearning experts) were summoned to participate in the experimental procedure and thus evaluate the usability of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” against the list of the abovementioned guidelines and principles. All the evaluators were female and their educational level is ascribed the ‘*post-graduate*’ characterization on the grounds that they all take part in post-graduate study programs in the Department of Digital Systems, University of Piraeus, Greece. Additionally, all five participants are full-time occupied, and maintain a strong feeling of confidence as regards computer usage. Three of them were 19 to 30 years old while the age of the other two evaluators ranged from 30 to 49 years old, hence forming two different age groups.

3.7 Materials

One of the qualities distinguishing an ePortfolio from its paper counterpart is the electronic component that characterizes a collection of work as digital content. Other than this distinction, the quantity and variety of options and resources is vast and diverse. Lorenzo & Ittleson (2005a) have identified four types of electronic portfolios: *homegrown*, *open source*, *commercially available*, and *software generated* (2005b).

The ePortfolio California, focusing on fostering the development of life-long learning through innovative technology and collaborative education, reports on the emergence of several different types of software and productivity tools used for the development of electronic portfolios, typically chosen to meet a specific need or purpose. The ePortfolio California endorses the categorization of commonly used tools for ePortfolio development proposed by Cambridge (2007):

- Generic tools;
- Commercial tools;
- Open source tools;
- Homegrown tools;
- Social blogs and wikis;
- Hybrid tools.

While a number of papers have focused on the student processes involved in portfolio creation far fewer papers have concentrated on the electronic portfolio decision-making process. As with any eLearning application, the issues to be considered when deciding over a case-appropriate ePortfolio tool are multifaceted.

On her website, Barrett (2007) compares and discusses a number of different ePortfolio tools, providing information about the issues of hosting, storage space, licensing and maintenance costs. The systems she lists include Plone, Blackboard, Drupal, Folio Live, iWebfolio, Open Source Portfolio Initiative (OSPI), KEEP Toolkit, eFolio Minnesota, Epsilon, Elgg, WordPress, WikiSpaces and so forth. In Himpel & Baumgartner’s (2009) study, sixty examples of ePortfolio software are also being evaluated against criteria including usability, organisation and reflection.

Sweat-Guy & Buzzetto-More (2007) have prepared a review of eight widely available systems, comparing a range of features such as intended user groups, supporting file types, storage, accessibility, hosting options, vendor support and pricing. The review provides a comparison of different features of ePortfolio tools, but acknowledges that the purpose of ePortfolios needs to be soundly considered by suggesting that “there are any number of considerations that may influence the

electronic portfolio adoption process. Uses, needs, and stratagem may vary and some features may be more important than others” (Sweat-Guy & Buzzetto-More, 2007).

Lorenzo Associates, Inc. (2008) has recently launched a website that offers detailed coverage of ePortfolio system vendors and their products. The checklist covers a number of factors relevant to the different ePortfolio stakeholders as well as some key issues associated with assessment tasks, reporting requirements and technical specifications (e.g. security, file compatibility etc.). While no single checklist can be totally comprehensive, the document may be used to stimulate enquiry and discussion about the features and functionality of different systems.

Recourse to an exhaustive review of the available literature unearthed a handful of electronic portfolio decision making guides purposed to assist the academic community. In Table 7 a summary of this information is provided as presented in Buzzetto-More & Alade (2008).

Authors	Guidelines
<p>Cooper (1999)</p>	<p>Requisite considerations that should be modeled when creating a student portfolio assessment project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification of skill areas ▪ Design of measurable outcomes ▪ Identification of learning strategies ▪ Identification of performance indicators ▪ Collection of evidence ▪ Assessment
<p>Lorenzo & Ittleson (2005b)</p>	<p>Guiding questions that need to be considered by any institution considering ePortfolio adoption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should an ePortfolio be an official record of a student’s work? ▪ How long should an ePortfolio remain at an institution after the student graduates? ▪ Who owns the ePortfolio? ▪ How should an institution promote and support the use of electronic portfolios? ▪ How are electronic portfolios evaluated in a manner that is both valid and reliable? ▪ How can institutions encourage reflection in the design and use of electronic portfolios?
<p>Zeichner & Wray (2001)</p>	<p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the purpose of the portfolio: learning, assessment, or professional purpose? ▪ Who controls authorship and how much and how many guidelines should exist? ▪ How and what should the portfolios be organized around? ▪ What kinds of artifacts are acceptable as pieces of evidence? ▪ How much input and guidance should come from educators? ▪ How should the portfolio be assessed? ▪ What should happen to the portfolio after it is finished?
<p>Jafari (2004)</p>	<p>Considerations that should guide the electronic portfolio adoption and creation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The system’s future users ▪ Potential benefits

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technological features ▪ Usability ▪ Versatility
<p>Butler (2006)</p>	<p>Common issues related to portfolio implementation and maintenance whose consideration must be a part of the decision implementation and sustaining processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of guidelines ▪ Overabundance of guidelines causing restriction ▪ Lack of examples from previous portfolios ▪ Lack of guidance ▪ Lack of support ▪ Interoperability ▪ Technical problems ▪ Maintenance ▪ Lack of technology skills of students and staff ▪ Lack of time ▪ Poor buy in ▪ Accessibility ▪ Lack of security ▪ Student inexperience with authoring reflections ▪ Unclear assessment strategies ▪ Lack of or too much feedback

Table 7: Relevant Literature on ePortfolio Decision Making Guides

Adoption and design ought to be influenced more by educational goals than technical issues (Cooper & Love, 2002). To assist students, ePortfolio systems should include a full suite of software, templates, a means for students to bring in materials built elsewhere, and reflective student commentaries that serve as meta-documentation (Cooper & Love, 2002). The attributes of a successfully implemented portfolio have, therefore, been identified as:

- an understanding of both the process and the product of portfolio construction;
- clear framework and guidelines;
- a balance of structure and freedom for creativity;
- frequent and meaningful feedback;
- a value of reflection;
- understanding the value of the portfolio for future student professional usage;
- motivated students;
- student portfolio ownership;
- portfolios that reflect students' outside lives;
- consideration of the target audience; and
- sensibility and organization (Butler, 2006).

Such guiding questions and requisite attributes offer valuable contributions to the discourse on electronic portfolios. At this point it should be noted that thoughtful and intensive consideration for the above-mentioned issues has decisively guided the ePortfolio tool decision making and adoption process framing this study. Wordpress, a dynamic content management system (CMS), has, thus, been espoused to serve as the research tool to satisfy the purpose and facilitate the conduct of the present research.

3.7.1 The Language ePortfolio Tool

WordPress started as just a free and open source blogging tool but has evolved to be used as a dynamic, elegant, fully-fledged, and well-architected Content Management System (CMS) built on PHP and MySQL. WordPress is fresh software, but its roots and development date back to 2001. It first appeared in 2003 as a joint effort between Matt Mullenweg and Mike Little with a single bit of code to enhance the typography of everyday writing and with fewer users than can be counted on one's fingers. The name WordPress was suggested by Christine Selleck Tremoulet, a friend of Mullenweg (Wikipedia, n.d.).

In 2004, the licensing terms for the competing Movable Type¹⁵ package were changed by Six Apart¹⁶ and a host of its most influential users migrated to WordPress (Manjoo, 2004; Pilgrim, 2004). By October, 2009, the 2009 Open Source content management system Market Share Report reached the conclusion that WordPress enjoyed the greatest brand strength of any open source content management system (CMSWire, 2009). WordPress is used by over 14.7% of Alexa¹⁷ Internet's "top 1 million" websites and as of August 2011 it manages 22% of all new websites (Rao, 2011). In 2009, WordPress won the Packt¹⁸ best Open Source CMS Award while in 2011 it won the Open Source Web App of the Year Award at The Critters. (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Wordpress is an open source project whose core software, documentation and code itself are created *by* hundreds of community volunteers *for* the community. It can be downloaded from <http://wordpress.org>, offering free downloads of WordPress files, themes and plug-ins, and including step-by-step instructions for installing and configuring it on one's own hosting provider. The imminent advantages associated with the use of Wordpress as a CMS entail:

- **Intuitiveness:** A Wordpress website is easy to understand and use as its Graphical User Interface (GUI) options are not complicated, and it offers simplicity in its administration interface. In addition, ample amount of help is available online should it be needed with any aspect of a Wordpress website.
- **Flexibility and Ease of Customization:** Any of the WordPress templates or plug-ins available can be easily installed to customize a Wordpress website and exert complete control over its look and feel.
- **Extensibility via Plug-ins and Widgets:** Another important feature exemplified by Wordpress as a CMS is the option to install plug-ins and widgets. There is an active community around the Wordpress platform that helps build plug-ins and widgets, extending its functionality.

¹⁵ Movable Type is a weblog publishing system developed by the company Six Apart. It was publicly announced on September 3, 2001 (Six Apart, 2001). On 12 December 2007, Movable Type was relicensed as free software under the GNU General Public License (Dash, 2007).

¹⁶ Six Apart Ltd. is a software company known for creating the Movable Type blogware, TypePad blog hosting service, and Vox. It is headquartered in Tokyo.

¹⁷ Alexa Internet, Inc. is a California-based subsidiary company of Amazon.com, known for its toolbar and website. Once installed, the Alexa toolbar collects data on browsing behavior and transmits it to the website, where it is stored and analyzed, forming the basis for the company's web traffic reporting. (Alexa, 2012).

¹⁸ The Packt company specializes in publishing focused books on specific technologies and solutions. The company's business model involves print on demand publishing and selling direct while its aim is to give authors high royalty rates and the opportunity to write on topics that standard publishers tend to avoid.

- **No Need for Programming Knowledge:** No technical knowledge is required to operate Wordpress. However, code can be subjected to change if technically minded.
- **Community Support:** Wordpress users can connect with the Wordpress community through online resources such as forums, mailing lists or via free or low-cost events that happen all around the world to gather and educate WordPress users, organized by WordPress users themselves.
- **No Proprietary Licensing Fees:** Wordpress can be used without paying a license fee.
- **Security:** Wordpress allows the installation of specific plug-ins and the editing of files/permissions in order to increase security levels. It also allows the assignment of a different username and password to each user.
- **Roles Based User Access:** Wordpress allows for role based user access to a Wordpress website. This can prove particularly useful in a multi-user environment when responsibilities need to be divided among different users.
- **SEO Friendly:** A host of Wordpress plug-ins can help with website Search Engine Optimization (SEO), enabling custom page titles, meta-descriptions, friendly URLs and permalinks to support SEO goals (Reyes, 2009; Wordpress, n.d.; Campbell, 2012).

3.7.7.1. Structuring “My Electronic Language Portfolio”

In this section an extensive analysis of the way the content of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” has been structured to fit the needs of the present study, is undertaken. Getting right the structure of the content of the website was deemed important, for this could cast a decisive effect on its usability, making it possible for end users (learners) to navigate through the content easily and quickly. “My Electronic Language Portfolio” has been constructed via employing a powerful CMS platform, Wordpress, and taking full advantage of the variety of useful options it has to offer, such as:

- easy content management;
- free download and installation of attractive themes (i.e. site designs, often adding functionality to WordPress from sites such as <http://wordpress.org>);
- plug-ins that extend the functionality of the Wordpress platform and automatically optimize a Wordpress website;
- the possibility of building a semantically structured (i.e., with meaning) website which makes the job of search engines easier (Wordpress, n.d.).

Briefly before embarking on the realization of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” a plan was made in order to figure out what was actually needed by the website to do. On the premises that the content needed to be managed pertained to an online course whose participants would be assisted into developing their own language ePortfolios, the scales was tipped in favor of achieving a CMS look and feel. Upon installation of Wordpress, factors considered to give flesh and bones to “My Electronic Language Portfolio”, include:

♦ **Appearance**

The website has been titled “My Electronic Language Portfolio” and the tagline used, “My Language and Intercultural Learning Spot”, is suggestive of its content. A free education-school related WordPress theme has been selected (available at <http://www.freewordpresstheme.info/theme/english-teacher-wp.html>). The theme’s

width is fixed; it has three columns, two right sidebars, multi-level dropdown navigation menu, a customizable footer and an options page. It is XHTML/CSS valid, cross-browser compatible, ads, adsense, rss, widget, gravatar ready and working with the last version of WordPress and lower. Slight changes to the template's code resulted in the adaptation of the theme to best correspond to the purpose of the website.



Figure 2: Wordpress Theme Selected for “My Electronic Language Portfolio”

◆ **Widgets**

A number of widgets have been added the right sidebar to enhance the content of the website and enable easy access to important sections of the site. The widgets employed are illustrated in Figure 3.

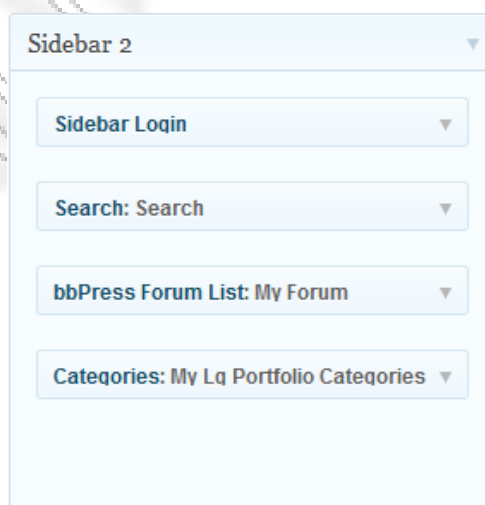


Figure 3: Widgets Used within “My Electronic Language Portfolio”

♦ **Plug-ins**

Several plug-ins have been employed to enable the customization of “My Electronic Language Portfolio”. The majority of these plug-ins were found and downloaded from the Wordpress Plug-in directory (available at <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/>) and are briefly outlined below:

- **bbPress:** A forum software.
- **Bookmarkify:** A social media plug-in allowing social bookmarking links into posts and pages.
- **Category & Page Icons:** Adds icons to sidebar of categories and pages.
- **Category Order:** Allows the reordering of categories via drag and drop.
- **Fast Secure Contact Form:** Enables visitors to send a quick e-mail message. Customizable with a multi-form feature, optional extra fields, and an option to redirect visitors to any URL after the message is sent. Includes CAPTCHA and Akismet support.
- **Issuu PDF Sync:** Allows creation of PDF Flipbooks with the <http://issuu.com> service.
- **kk Star Ratings:** A ratings plug-in.
- **List Category Posts:** Allows the listing of posts from a category into a post/page using the [catlist] shortcode.
- **My Calendar:** An event calendar plug-in.
- **Quizzin:** This plug-in allows adding quizzes to a website.
- **Sidebar Login:** Adds a login widget to a site's sidebar.
- **Sliding Read More:** Converts the read more tag into an expandable content area.
- **Table of Contents Creator:** Generates a dynamic site wide table of contents that is always up-to-date.
- **Wordpress Download Monitor:** Manages downloads and shows hits for each download.

♦ **Pages**

Enhancing the CMS look and feel of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” and, thus, creating a standard non-blog website postulated the organization and management of its content through a considerable amount of Pages and Subpages, extensively presented in Table 8:

Pages	Description
HOME	A “static front page” look was selected to be given to “My Electronic Language Portfolio” homepage, offering it a more CMS (content management system) than “blog” feel. The homepage has been enhanced via Glogster (available at http://www.glogster.com/), a unique social network providing its users with an online environment to design interactive posters, or Glogs. A ‘Glog’ has, therefore, been created to welcome and inform learners about the purpose of “My Electronic Language Portfolio”.
SCHEDULE	The “Schedule” page is expected to be consulted by learners so as to obtain a clear-cut picture of the actual duration of the online course and the exact dates different sets of activities need to be performed.
SHALL WE START?	The “Shall We Start?” page constitutes part of the introduction/orientation mechanism aimed at preparing learners for their language ePortfolio development. Its use is intended to instill a

portfolio culture on learners through highlighting the pedagogic understanding of the relationship between the aims and objectives of the course of study, the requirement on the learner to engage in this form of activity and the potential benefits to the learner (Clark & Neumann, 2009). The following set of subpages have been added to the “Shall We Start” page:

- **From ‘Portafoglio’ to ‘Portfolio’:** Here, information about the etymology of the word ‘portfolio’ is provided. Portfolio use areas (art, architecture, education, marketing) are also discussed.
- **What is a Portfolio?:** A definition of the portfolio concept is presented along with portfolio types (student, teaching, institutional) that have received significant attention in the relevant literature.
- **What is an ePortfolio?:** A range of ePortfolio definitions are provided complemented by information regarding:
 - ePortfolio general characteristics;
 - points of difference from traditional portfolios;
 - benefits of electronic portfolios;
 - ePortfolio types;
 - ePortfolio tools.

To raise learners’ confidence about their ePortfolio knowledge, a link to a YouTube video, links to ePortfolio websites and a quiz have been appended.

- **Language Portfolios:** Here, the language portfolio concept is introduced, accompanied by information on:
 - language portfolio aims;
 - language portfolio advantages;
 - the European Language Portfolio (ELP);
 - functions of a European Language Portfolio;
 - the three parts of the European Language Portfolio.

To clarify potential misconceptions as regards language portfolios, supplementary material is being provided, pertaining to:

- informative videos;
- a PowerPoint presentation;
- a flipbook on a language portfolio for adults (the Milestone Project);
- links to language portfolio websites.
- **What is Self-Directed Learning?:** This page focuses upon the notion of “Self-Directed Learning” and includes:
 - a working definition of self-directed learning;
 - known facts about self-directed learning;
 - self-directed learning as a spectrum.

At this point, it was deemed a good idea to provide learners with a guide in order to obviate the risk of their getting lost in “My Electronic Language Portfolio” and remind them of the level of their self-direction in language learning.

ACTIVITIES

A set of twelve activities, learners are prompted to attempt to successfully develop their own language ePortfolios, are subsumed in the “Activities” page of “My Electronic Language Portfolio”. These activities have been aligned with Gibbons’ (2002) Self-Directed

Learning (SDL) spectrum which refers to degrees of SDL ranging from entirely Teacher-Directed Learning (TDL) to Self-Directed Learning. The spectrum includes the following stages or degrees of movement toward SDL:

- Incidental Self-Directed Learning
- Teaching Students to Think Independently
- Self-Managed Learning
- Self-Planned Learning
- Self-Directed Learning

The learning activities proposed, have been included in Gibbons' (2002) stages or degrees of movement toward SDL, as follows:

- **Incidental Self-Directed Learning**
 - Activity 1: Diagram Creation
- **Learning How to Think Independently**
 - Activity 2: Avatar Creation (My Personal Identification)
- **Self-Managed Learning**
 - Activity 3: My Language CanDo Statements
 - Activity 4: My Linguistic Identification
 - Activity 5: My Intercultural CanDo Statements
 - Activity 6: My Forum
 - Activity 7: My Language and Intercultural Experiences
 - Activity 8: My Cultural Awareness
- **Self-Planned Learning**
 - Activity 9: My Reflections on How I Learn Best
 - Activity 10: My Learning Contract
- **Self-Directed Learning**
 - Activity 11: Organizing My Dossier
 - Activity 12: Organizing My Passport

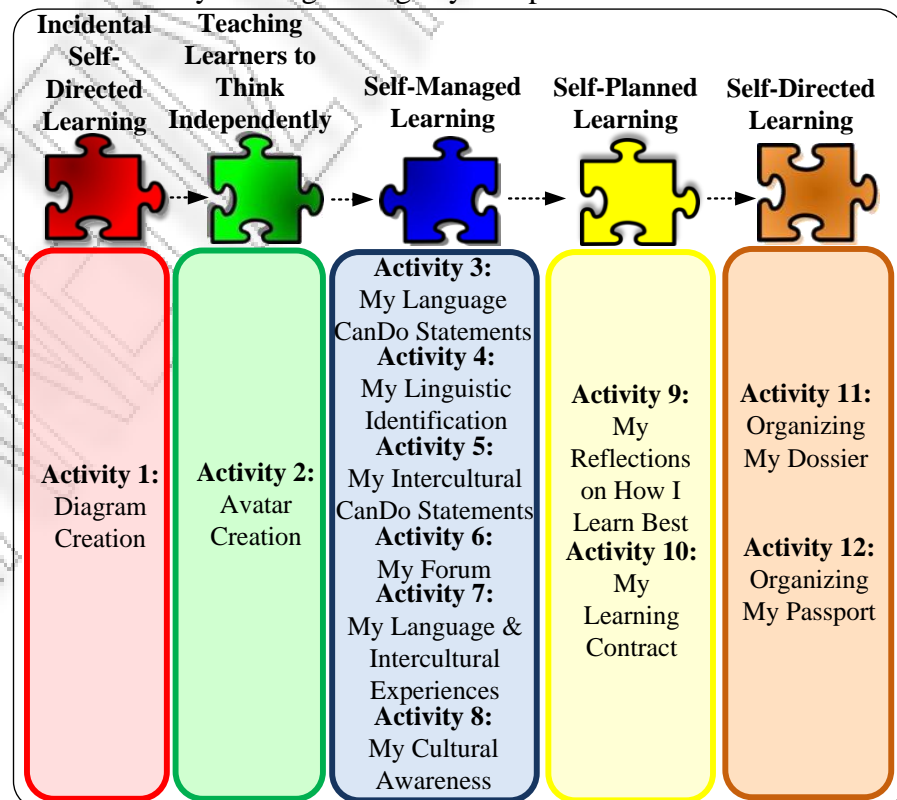


Figure 4: Distribution of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Activities across the Spectrum of Self-Directed Learning

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the successful completion of each of the activities is facilitated through the provision of:

- an extensive activity description;
- the aim to be achieved through each activity;
- tips for activity completion;
- a ‘How To’ guide.

MY PORTFOLIO

The pages arranged under “My Portfolio” page are the place where learners’ activities are kept upon completion. The teacher, the learner and his/her peers can easily access all activities through “My Portfolio” subpages in order to view or comment on them, provide feedback and share insights. “My Portfolio” page encompasses three subordinate pages corresponding to the three sections a typical language portfolio consists of:

- **My Passport**
- **My Biography**
- **My Dossier**

Each of these three subordinate pages is further subdivided in more subordinate pages analogous to the contents of each section of a typical language portfolio, that is to say:

- **My Passport**
 - My Personal Identification
 - My Linguistic Identification
 - My Diplomas and Certificates
 - My CV
- **My Biography**
 - My Linguistic Proficiency
 - My Intercultural Competence
 - My Language and Intercultural Experiences
 - My Cultural Awareness
 - My Reflections on How I Learn Best
 - My Learning Contract
- **My Dossier**
 - Examples of My Work
 - My Personal File
 - My Diplomas and Certificates
 - My CV

RESOURCES

The “Resources” page contains links to websites, a learner can consult to find additional information on:

- ePortfolios;
- language portfolios;
- English language learning;
- Intercultural learning.

A “Quizzes” subpage is also added to the “Resources” page, where learners can get hold of an ePortfolio quiz.

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME

This page encompasses information about the creator of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” along with reference to the context within which the latter has been constructed.

SITE MAP	The “Site Map” page contains a table of contents for “My Electronic Language Portfolio”.
CONTACT ME	This page enables learners to reap the benefits of getting in touch with “My Electronic Language Portfolio” creator, leave comments or pose any questions arising in the course of their getting engaged with “My Electronic Language Portfolio”.

Table 8: Pages and Subpages within “My Electronic Language Portfolio”

It should be noted that in order to provide “My Electronic Language Portfolio” users with some sense of orientation and effortlessly guide them through its intricate information architecture, the top horizontal bar navigation design pattern combined with dropdown sub-navigation to avoid the limitation of the number of pages held, posed as an ideal navigation option.

♦ **Posts**

Posts are the tool learners will be using within “My Electronic Language Portfolio” for the instructional activities they are encouraged to perform. The bulk of these activities necessitate the creation of posts where learners’ artefacts will be kept. The reason behind the decision to allow the use of posts within “My Electronic Language Portfolio”, is closely related to an increase of the users’ social interaction skills via the posts’ commenting function, enabling learners to view and provide their insights on their peers’ work; at the same time, receiving feedback, in the form of a comment by the teacher, is plausible.

♦ **Categories**

Categories provide a helpful way to group related posts together and to quickly tell readers what a post is about. By means of adding “My Language Portfolio Categories” widget to the right sidebar of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” learners can gain immediate access to their peers’ artefacts upon completion of the activities proposed.



Figure 5: Sample Categories Added to “My Electronic Language Portfolio” (Right Sidebar)

Screenshots of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” are appended as Appendix G. To gain a more global understanding of the way “My Electronic Language Portfolio” has been structured, visit <http://www.nikosmdtps.com/wordpress/>.

3.8 Research Tools/Instrumentation

The research instruments used for this study pertain to three questionnaires that were administered to evaluators via e-mail upon completion of the pilot testing phase for “My Electronic Language Portfolio”. Specifically:

The first questionnaire consists of 18, closed-ended, 5-point Likert items that can be rated as ‘1-Not at all’, ‘2-A Little’, ‘3-Somewhat’, ‘4-Quite Enough’ and ‘5-A Lot’. This questionnaire was intended for gaining insight into the evaluators’ views on “My Electronic Language Portfolio” in terms of four distinct areas, namely its:

- Appearance (ePortfolio looks well);
- Operational Features (ePortfolio functions well);
- Evidence (integration of academic and personal evidence in the ePortfolio);
- Reflection (integration of message into the ePortfolio).

The statements contained in this questionnaire are arranged under the abovementioned groups (appearance, operational features, evidence, and reflection). Specifically, 10 items in total are included in both the first (appearance) and second group (Operational Features) while 8 items in total are included in the third (Evidence) and fourth group (Reflection). The design of the questionnaire in case is based on general ePortfolio Evaluation Criteria, as proposed by the Penn State University and is titled: “My Views on My Electronic Language Portfolio” Questionnaire.

The second questionnaire was aimed at identifying the level at which “My Electronic Language Portfolio” can be used as a useful tool for becoming stimulated and self-directed towards learning a language. It consists of 17 closed-ended, typical Likert statements, each offering five response options ranging from ‘1-Not at all’ to ‘5-A Lot’ and focusing on identifying whether the activities encompassed in “My Electronic Language Portfolio” can foster the development of self-direction in language learning. The items encompassed in this questionnaire form the following three groups:

- Self-Directed Language Learning – Ownership of Learning;
- Self-Directed Language Learning – Self-Management and Self-Monitoring;
- Self-Directed Language Learning – Extension of Learning.

This questionnaire has been based on possible observable indicators of the theoretical ideas on the ownership of learning, self-management and self-monitoring and extension of learning as proposed in Chee et al. (2011) and it is entitled: “My Electronic Language Portfolio Use Experience” Questionnaire (Self-Directed Language Learning).

The third questionnaire was intended for deepening the findings concerning the level at which “My Electronic Language Portfolio” can enhance users’ intercultural competence, entailing a change in one’s knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors so as to be open and flexible to other cultures (Alred & Byram, 2002). It contains 23 closed-ended, 5-point Likert statements that can be rated as ‘1-Not at all’, ‘2-A Little’, ‘3-Somewhat’, ‘4-Quite Enough’ and ‘5-A Lot’. This questionnaire is titled: “My Electronic Language Portfolio Use Experience” Questionnaire (Intercultural Competence) and is based on Deardoff’s (2006) Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence. The items it includes are grouped into the following five categories:

- Attitudes
- Knowledge & Comprehension
- Skills
- Internal Outcomes
- External Outcomes

It is worth noting that the data collection process was further facilitated by the verbalization of the evaluators' comments relating to improvement recommendations and the identification of possible difficulties that future users of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" may encounter.

Sample items contained in all three questionnaires serving the purpose of data-collection instruments within the context of the present study are appended as Appendix H.

3.9 Procedure

3.9.1 Delineation of the Process of Developing a Language ePortfolio within the Context of an Online Course for Adult Migrants

A critical and comprehensive review of the relevant literature shed light on key issues needed to be considered and explored while envisaging the implementation of an ePortfolio within the context of a course. Based on a study of Stefani, Mason, & Pegler (2007) issues related to ePortfolio development at a course level involve:

- Clarifying the Purpose of the ePortfolio
- Selecting ePortfolio Tool and Defining ePortfolio Scope of Action
- Relating the ePortfolio Purpose to the Objectives of the Online Course
- ePortfolio Activities
- Preparing for ePortfolio Use
- Assessing the ePortfolio

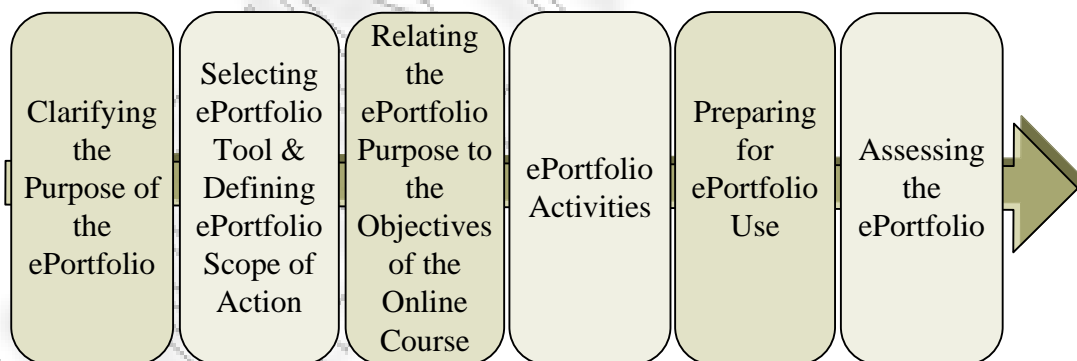


Figure 6: Issues Related to ePortfolio Implementation at a Course Level

The abovementioned issues are extensively detailed in the subsections to follow.

3.9.1.1 Clarifying the Purpose of the ePortfolio

When surveying the different trends in ePortfolio usage, it becomes clear that ePortfolios are currently being used for a variety of purposes. While the versatility of ways ePortfolios can be used is a strength of the concept, it also represents a liability. Jafari (2004) reports confusion generated by the variety of purposes ePortfolios can address. Different objectives, such as demonstrating the outcomes of learning, self-

directed learning and showcasing achievements are frequently listed as main reasons for using ePortfolios and determine their functionalities (Abrami & Barrett, 2005).

The fact that ePortfolios can be used for a wide array of purposes makes the landscape complex, warranting various ways of implementing ePortfolio solutions and postulating different theoretical frameworks adopted by educators to justify the approaches they are likely to use.

As stated in Stefani, Mason & Pegler (2007) there are mainly three types or applications of ePortfolios:

- **Course portfolios** which are usually assembled by students for one course. They document and reflect upon the ways in which the student has met the outcomes for that particular course.
- **Program portfolios** that are developed by students to document the work they have completed, the skills they have learned, and the outcomes they have met in an academic program or department. Students can use them to showcase their work to prospective employers.
- **Institutional portfolios** that are mainly used as personal development planning tools in which each individual's records are documented, including future plans and extra-curricular activities.

When it comes to language learning, it is customary to distinguish between two fundamental types of language portfolios (Kohonen & Westhoff, 2001), that is to say:

- the process-oriented **learning** (“working”) **portfolios**, aimed at guiding and supporting the learner in the process of language learning, and
- the product-oriented **reporting** (“showcase”) **portfolios** that concern the product perspective to language learning, providing a record of the linguistic and cultural skills the students have acquired (including both formal and informal learning), by relating the communicative skills to the proficiency levels recognized in the Common European Framework (1996).

Effectively addressing the question “What is the ePortfolio purpose?” for the ePortfolio to be developed throughout the online course designed within the context of the present study postulated drawing the *learning* (process-oriented) portfolio type from the reserve of language portfolio categories reviewed in the relevant literature.

The reasons underlying the selection of this portfolio type can be summarized in the fact that a *learning* (process-oriented) portfolio is intended to be used as a means of making the language learning process more transparent to learners, helping them to develop their capacity for reflection and self-assessment, and thus enabling them gradually to assume more and more responsibility for their own learning. This function, also coinciding with the Council of Europe's interest in fostering the development of learner autonomy and promoting lifelong learning (Little & Perclová, 2001), ultimately resonates with the purpose of this study.

Along these lines, learners participating in the online course designed to assist them in the creation of their own language ePortfolios are prompted to synthesize and evaluate their language learning, reflect on what they have already learned, set their goals and improve their future language learning. In addition, learners are encouraged to select and organize the content of their language portfolios, and increasingly assume more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning endeavor (Hiemstra, 1994).

In Figure 7 the process of identifying the purpose of learners' ePortfolios to be synthesized within the framework of the present study is clearly illustrated.

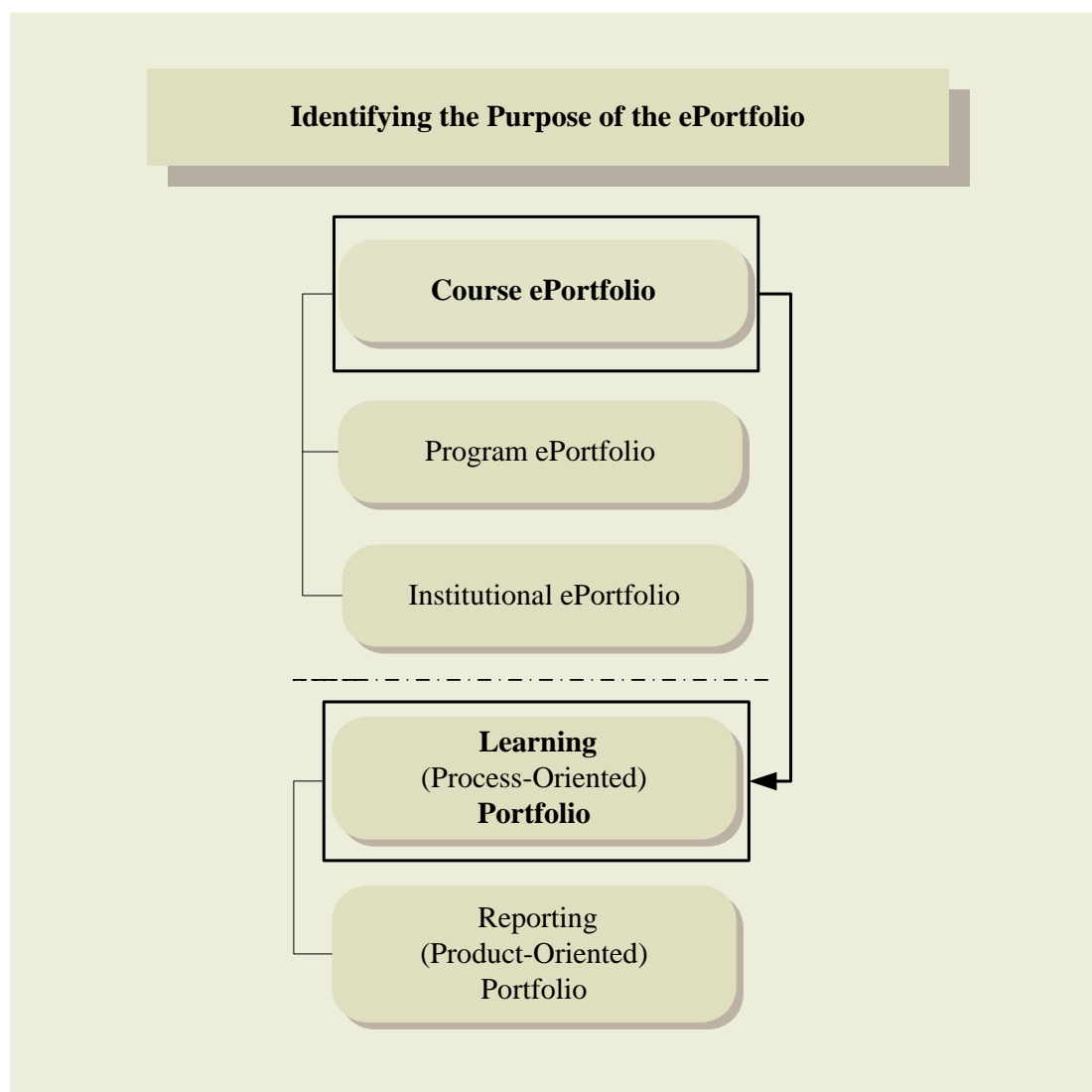


Figure 7: Process of Implementing a Language ePortfolio within the Context of an Online Course: Identifying the Purpose of the ePortfolio

3.9.1.2 Selecting ePortfolio Tool and Defining ePortfolio Scope of Action

According to Lorenzo and Ittleson (2005a), those who have adopted ePortfolios purport that the latter constitute the greatest educational technology development since the adoption of learning management systems. Stefani, Mason & Pegler (2007) identify four main categories of ‘*ePortfolio softwares*’ or ‘*ePortfolio tools*’ encompassing commercial software, proprietary systems, open source software, and open source common tools. Some of the commercial ones include PebblePad, Desire2Learn and the built-in ePortfolio module for learning management systems such as Blackboard. Proprietary systems are often designed by universities and examples include the University of Denver Portfolio Community (DUPC) system (<https://portfolio.du.edu/pc/index>) and University of Nebraska ePortfolio system (<http://portfolio.unomaha.edu>). There are several open source systems available, some of the most common ones are Elgg, Mahara, Sakai, Mystuff, and OSPI. Tools such as Blogs, Wiki, eJournals and Dreamweaver are also used as ePortfolio systems.

In a MOSEP (More Self-Esteem with my ePortfolio) study (2009) on new qualifications and skills needed by teachers and career counselors to empower young students with the ePortfolio concept and tools, ePortfolio software products were classified into five broad categories:

- commercial ePortfolio software products;
- open source software products;
- learning management systems, with portfolio functions via plug-ins;
- content management systems with extended ePortfolio functions;
- integrated systems and system families.

George Siemens, founder of Complexive Systems, Inc., an independent research institution and learning lab, has developed a 5-level model characterizing the above-mentioned e-portfolio tools with respect to conflicting priorities between individual and institutional benefit. Levels 1 and 2 offer greater benefit for the learners, levels 3 and 4 for institutions, and level 5 for regional and industrial development.

To facilitate the process of selecting a case-appropriate ePortfolio tool, reference needs to be made to Siemens' (2004) discussion of the attributes of "an ideal ePortfolio system" and Jafari's (2004)¹⁹ ePortfolio Success Algorithm, acknowledging the existence of factors contributing to a successful ePortfolio project.

As with any software, numerous aspects need to be considered for successful implementation. Sweat-Guy & Buzzetto-More (2007) asserted that there are a number of considerations that may influence the ePortfolio implementation process. They suggested that the role and purpose of ePortfolio need to be carefully considered before embarking on the selection of ePortfolio software. As with any eLearning application, the issues to be considered by individual teachers, faculties or institutions are multifaceted. These issues may include:

- Licensing conditions
- Development costs
- Maintenance costs
- Degree of adaptation desired
- Level of technical support available
- Quality of vendor support
- Speed of implementation prescribed
- Potential longevity of a system or a project
- Degree of structure and guidance required for users
- Degree of creativity offered to the users
- Level of ICT literacy amongst students and educators

The above issues were taken into account and a decision was reached as regards the selection of the ePortfolio tool to frame the present study. In an earlier section (i.e. **3.7.1. The Language ePortfolio Tool**) Wordpress, a dynamic content management system (CMS), employed to enable the implementation of a language ePortfolio as part of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" is discussed.

In Figure 8, the process of selecting an ePortfolio tool and defining its scope of action is delineated.

¹⁹ If you wish to receive further information on Siemens' (2004) discussion of the attributes of "an ideal ePortfolio system" and Jafari's (2004) ePortfolio Success Algorithm revisit section 2.2.7.1 ePortfolio Tool Selection Criteria, Chapter II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.

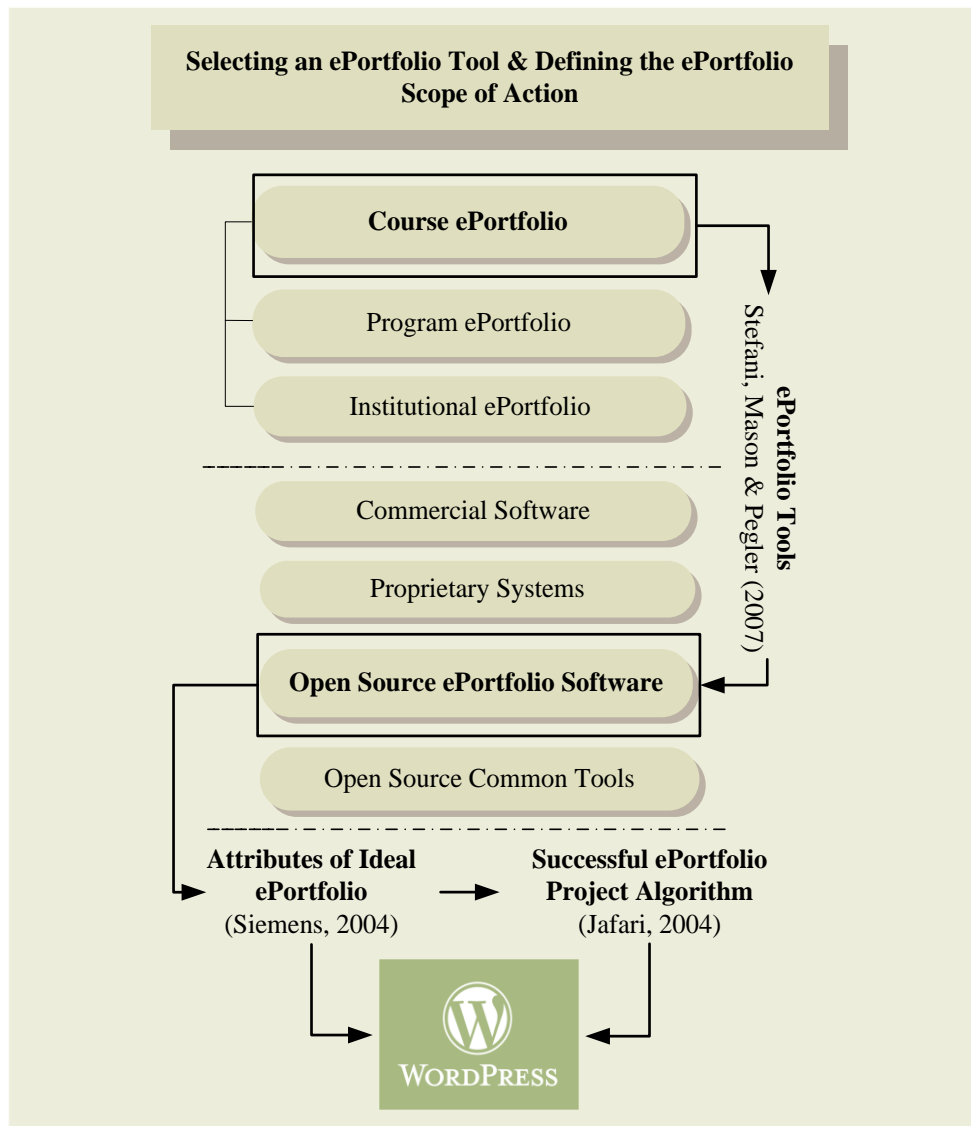


Figure 8: Process of Implementing a Language ePortfolio within the Context of an Online Course: Selecting ePortfolio Tool and Defining ePortfolio Scope of Action

3.9.1.3 Relating the ePortfolio Purpose to the Objectives of the Online Course

As already mentioned the development of a language ePortfolio within the context of an online course necessitated informed decision-making with regard to the purpose it would serve. The *learning* portfolio type has been selected as it constitutes an invaluable companion to learning, offering learners the means to assess their own language knowledge, reflect on their language learning, and set realistic and achievable language learning targets and priorities. The learning portfolio, in effect, can help students transform gaps in learning into potential opportunities for improvement. Because the portfolio emphasizes reflection and purposeful selection and integration of evidence of learning, it results in significant and lasting educational experiences. The payoff for students will come when they recognize that reflecting on and documenting their progress as learners reinforce the foundational elements of significant learning (Zubizarreta, 2008).

Owing to the fact that the development of a language ePortfolio within the context of the present study is tailored to fit into an online course, the association of the

ePortfolio purpose to the objectives of the online course was compelling. Learning objectives (sometimes referred to as intended learning outcomes or course-specific goals) are clear statements that describe the competences that students should possess upon completion of a course (Simon & Taylor, 2009; Anderson et al., 2001; Harden, 2002; Kennedy, Hyland, & Ryan, 2006). Effective learning objectives state what students should know and be able to demonstrate, as well as the depth of learning that is expected.

Clearly defined and intentionally integrated course learning objectives can:

- help organize, structure and enhance student learning;
- improve communication with students regarding the important concepts and skills covered in a course; and,
- improve assessment practices (Simon & Taylor, 2009).

Based on various situational factors and contexts, courses typically contain 5-8 broadly stated learning objectives that represent a learner's essential learning within the course. Learning objectives should be "SMART", that is:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable/Observable
- **A**ttainable for target audience
- **R**elevant and results-oriented
- **T**argeted to the learner and to the desired level of learning (Atherton, 2011).

With respect to the course objectives, the latter have been aligned to the aims and functions of the European Language Portfolio as proposed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe (2008). The objectives have been phrased in succinct, simple sentences each of which begins with an action verb that alludes to the measurable and observable behaviors expected by the learner, enabling both the teacher and the student to know what comprises successful learning. The action verbs that would help align objectives to an observable behavior have been drawn from Bloom's taxonomy (1956).

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom edited the Taxonomy of Instructional Objectives. He maintained that not only was the identification of program or course objectives inherently valuable for clarifying the purpose of the educational offering, but that well constructed objectives guided selection and organization of learning experiences. This, of course, is a principal consideration to not merely promoting the achievement of the objectives; they are educational outcomes or standards against which we can evaluate achievement. The Taxonomy identified three areas in which learning takes place and which can be addressed by objectives or standards – the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Primarily dealing with the cognitive domain, pertaining to the recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual ability, is commonplace. Six major classes are usually identified within the cognitive domain: (a) knowledge, (b) comprehension, (c) application, (d) analysis, (e) synthesis, and (f) evaluation. Each of these classes becomes progressively more complex and in theory builds upon the previous level (Reagan, 2008).

The effective definition of the course objectives within the context of this study was, thus, facilitated through the adoption of action verbs emerged from each level of the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy; the course objectives were subsequently brought in line with the purposes served through the learning portfolio type selected to frame this study. In Figure 9 the process of aligning the course objectives to the ePortfolio purposes are depicted.

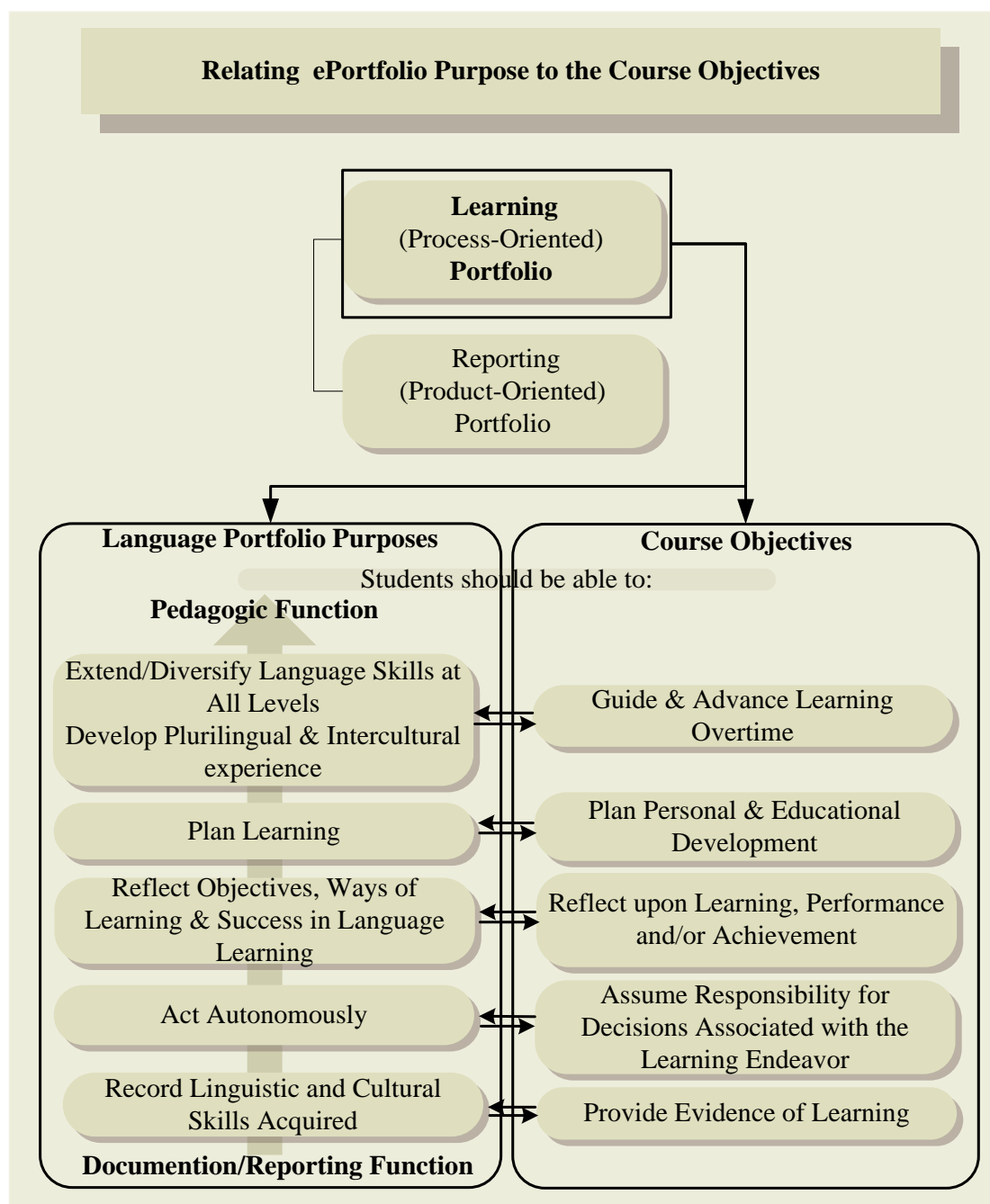


Figure 9: Process of Implementing a Language ePortfolio within the context of an Online Course: Relating Course Objectives to the ePortfolio Purpose

3.9.1.4 ePortfolio Activities

Self-directed learning, according to Knowles (1975), describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes. Thus, the central idea concerns the learners wanting to assume greater responsibility for their own learning. By evaluating their own learning, thinking about what has worked and what can be improved, reflecting on one's own

effort, defining the goals for one's learning, planning for how things should proceed and evaluating these goals, the learners train their consciousness.

Self-direction in learning can be taken as an umbrella concept because it refers to "activities where primary responsibility for planning, carrying out and evaluating a learning endeavor is assumed by the individual learner" (Brockett, 1983b as quoted in Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991). It refers to a process in which a learner assumes responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process where an education agent often plays a facilitating role. Therefore, self-direction in learning refers to both the external characteristics of an instructional process and the internal characteristics of the learner where the individual assumes responsibility for a learning experience.

Self-direction, according to Dickinson (1987), "refers to a particular attitude towards learning, one in which ... the learner is prepared to take responsibility for his own learning". Self-directed learning, as Dickinson (1987) posits, is an attitude of mind towards learning rather than any particular techniques or activities. He further states that self-directed learners have many of the qualities of good language learners. Therefore, promoting self-directed learning is improving proficiency in learning in general and language learning in particular. The manifestation of self-directed learning differs according to the context, i.e. how far the context has been arranged to allow self-direction. Self-directed learning fits with autonomy; autonomy is one possibility within self-directed learning in which the learner undertakes all of the management tasks associated with his own learning.

To find concrete ways that lead learners into routines for planning, carrying out and evaluating their learning is one of the tasks that falls upon a language teacher. But giving the learners an organizing framework for dealing with the work is not enough. They need, in addition, to get instruments and tools required for language learning enabling them to work independently. Kohonen (2007) states that to promote independent work, the learning tasks should be open enough to leave space for real choices, as appropriate with respect to the students' age and learning skills. Seeing options, making choices, reflecting on the consequences and making action plans are essential for the development of increasingly autonomous learning. Therefore, both teachers and students need to develop a common language and concrete tools for the pedagogic tutoring, monitoring and reflection of language learning.

Acknowledging the significance of self-direction in language learning in terms of enabling learners to demonstrate a greater awareness of their responsibility in making learning meaningful and monitoring themselves (Garrison, 1997), being curious and willing to try new things, viewing problems as challenges, and enjoying learning (Taylor, 1995) adduced to the inclusion of activities that foster learners' becoming stimulated and self-directed towards language learning in "My Electronic Language Portfolio".

The process of creating the content of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" was facilitated by the adoption of Gibbons' (2002) definition of self-directed learning, as "any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time". Gibbons' (2002) assertion that there are various phases in SDL, namely the:

- Incidental Self-Directed Learning
- Teaching Students to Think Independently
- Self-Managed learning
- Self-Planned learning

- Self-Directed learning

has also been taken into consideration provided that these phases served as the theoretical background the content of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” has been founded upon.

In addition, the content of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” has been molded showing consideration for the fact that intercultural encounters have tremendously increased along with globalization. Sojourners, expatriates, those travelling outside their native countries and an increasing number of us come to terms with ‘*difference*’ or ‘*foreignness*’ in our immediate living environments. Despite the increase in intercultural experiences, however, these encounters often fail to increase our understanding of “other” ways of acting and being. This poses a great challenge to enhancing individuals’ performance in multicultural settings.

Intercultural competence, which is the ability to change one’s knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors so as to be open and flexible to other cultures, has become a key issue in the globalized society of the 21st century (Alred & Byram, 2002). According to Huang, Rayner, & Zhuang (2003), an interculturally competent person can develop relationships with people from different cultures and manage to solve complicated conflicts by crossing the barriers that arise as a result of cultural differences.

Taylor (1994) defines intercultural competence as a transformative process through which the stranger develops adaptive capacity, altering his/her perspective to effectively understand and adapt to the demands of the host culture. Hence, learning to deal with different cultures effectively requires cultural awareness, communicative competence, personal attitudes like empathy and flexibility, self-awareness and understanding of others’ values, norms and beliefs.

Dr. Darla K. Deardorff²⁰ defines intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2004 as cited in Deardorff, 2006). Her definition includes four necessary dimensions of intercultural competence: a) attitudes (motivation); b) intercultural knowledge and skills; c) an ability to reflect the frame of reference -as the internal outcome of intercultural competence, as well as d) constructive interaction as the external outcome of intercultural competence. Deardorff also elicited a consensus on some of the characteristics of an interculturally competent person, including curiosity, general openness, respect for other cultures, comparative thinking skills, and cognitive flexibility (Deardorff, 2006).

A crucial change in foreign language learning and teaching over the past few decades has been the recognition of the cultural dimension as a key component (Atay, Kurt, Çamlıbel, Ersin, & Kaslioglu, 2009). The need for language learners to develop intercultural competence has been strongly advocated as a central component in second language instruction. This need has transformed the nature of the teaching and learning languages experience to a great extent. The objective of language learning is no longer defined in terms of acquiring communicative competence in a foreign language (Council of Europe, 2001) but rather in terms of acquiring intercultural

²⁰ Dr. Darla K. Deardorff is currently executive director of the Association of International Education Administrators, a national professional organization based at Duke University, where she is a Research Scholar in the Program in Education. In addition, she is a visiting professor at Leeds-Metropolitan University in the United Kingdom, an adjunct professor at North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and is on faculty of the prestigious Summer Institute of Intercultural Communication in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Deardorff has published widely on topics in international education and intercultural learning/assessment and is the editor of *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*.

competence, which is “the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (Meyer, 1991).

Byram (1997) presents a conceptual framework consisting of four-interrelated components—knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness—that appears to be a frequently adapted approach to develop intercultural competence. Within this framework, the goal is to promote cultural learning that goes beyond a superficial “facts only” approach. To become interculturally competent, learners need to be open-minded to people of other cultures so that they understand cross-cultural perspectives with non-judgmental attitudes and respect (Bennett, 1993). In the process of developing intercultural competence, learners are encouraged to reflect upon the cultural similarities and differences, and further develop the ability to tolerate differences that allow them to handle situations encountered with L1s.

Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet (1992) further claim that the primary focus of teaching based on the intercultural approach is on the target cultures, yet, it also includes comparisons between the learner’s own country and target country, thereby helping learners to develop a reflective attitude to the culture and civilization of their own countries. Thus, educating students to use a foreign language means to accustom them to being interculturally sensitive, by supporting them to build the ability to act as a cultural mediator, to see the world through the other’s eyes, and to consciously use culture learning skills (Sengupta, 2002). Within this framework, the foreign language learner is viewed as an “intercultural speaker”, someone who “crosses frontiers, and who is to some extent a specialist in the transit of cultural property and symbolic values ” (Byram & Zarate, 1997).

Among other approaches to intercultural learning, portfolio technology can be used to foster cross-cultural communication and awareness. It is more important that learners acquire skills of analysis than factual information. The Language Biography of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) can include self-assessment of intercultural competence. The role of assessment is, then, to encourage learners' awareness of their own abilities in intercultural competence, and to help them realize that these abilities are acquired in many different circumstances inside and outside the classroom (Kohonen & Westhoff, 2001). The Dossier section of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) offers the learner the opportunity to select materials to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the Language Biography or Passport. Thus, the portfolio introduces the notion of self-assessment which is considered significant both as a means of recording what has been experienced and learnt and as a means of making learners more conscious of their learning and of the abilities possessed.

With an appropriate cultural orientation, most learning activities embedded in a language portfolio can take on intercultural aspects, offer obvious opportunities for developing cultural competence in addition to communicative competence (Krasnick, 1984). For that purpose, the content of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” has been enriched with a set of culturally-oriented activities to satisfy the aims of the present study.

The activities encompassed in “My Electronic Language Portfolio” are detailed below:

- **Phase 1: Incidental Self-Directed Learning**


In the course of the “Incidental Self- Directed” learning phase, the concept of an electronic language portfolio is introduced. Learners get acquainted with the notion

of a language portfolio and get informed that they are going to create their own language portfolio within the context of this course. The process does not postulate learners' face-to-face encounter with the teacher.

Activity 1:
*Interconnecting
 Related Ideas and
 Concepts*

Each learner is encouraged to create a diagram representing the typical structure of a language portfolio and the content of its components. Learners are directed towards www.cacoo.com where, after signing up, they can create their diagrams. Once completed, the diagrams can be placed into the Dossier section of learners' portfolio (Examples of My Work).

Diagram Creation: Activity 1





<p>Activity Description:</p> 	<p>Having read several pieces of information concerning language portfolios, it is about time you embarked on your first activity. This necessitates the creation of a diagram that will represent the typical parts of a language portfolio as well as the contents of each part. Your diagram will be placed into your Dossier (Examples of My Work).</p>
<p>Aim of Activity:</p> 	<p>The aim of this activity is to enable you to formulate a clear-cut picture of the typical structure of a language portfolio and receive practice in the way related concepts can be interconnected. This activity is also intended to offer you the opportunity to create the "Examples of My Work" section of your Dossier.</p>

Figure 10: Screenshot Captured of Activity 1 Encompassed in "My Electronic Language Portfolio"

▪ **Phase 2: Teaching Ls To Think Independently**

This phase is characterized by the intention to make provisions for learners to handle real life data for an identified purpose; such an intention could cast an effect upon their learning to think independently. While in this phase, learners are encouraged to complete "My Personal Identification" (My Passport) section of their electronic language portfolios. To achieve this goal, they get involved in the creation of an avatar that will assist them in effectively introducing themselves. Learners' creations are, then, placed in the Dossier section of their electronic language portfolios. The successful implementation of the current phase does not necessitate learners' face-to-face encounter with the teacher.

Activity 2:
Creating an Avatar
Introducing Oneself

Instead of being urged to introduce themselves by giving their names and other information about themselves (which are usually forgotten immediately after the activity), learners are put in a context. They are encouraged to imagine they are at a party where they have to know each other by asking questions. Learners are prompted to think about the things they would like to say about themselves. The following ideas are added to the things that could be included:

- a greeting;
- who they are;
- where they are from;
- where they live (country);
- their job;
- languages they speak;
- what they like to do (sports, music, films, e.t.c.)

Learners are guided to <http://www.yoki.com/> where each of them can embark on the creation of an avatar introducing oneself. Learners' avatars should contain some of the information mentioned. However, the configuration of the content of the avatar's sayings is dependent on each learner's creativity. Learners' avatars constitute their "Personal Identification" and are placed into the Passport section of their portfolios (My Personal Identification). Learners are then encouraged to include their avatars in the Dossier section of their portfolios as well (Examples of My Work).

Avatar Creation: Activity 2







<p>Activity Description:</p> 	<p>Through the use of an avatar, you are invited to introduce yourself. Your avatar constitutes your "Personal Identification" and should be placed into the Passport section of your portfolio (My Personal Identification). Your avatar can also be placed into your Dossier (Examples of My Work).</p>
<p>Aim of Activity:</p> 	<p>The aim of this activity is to enable you to handle real life data for an identified purpose and thus complete "My Personal Identification" section (My Passport) of your portfolio.</p>
<p>Tips for Activity Completion:</p> 	<p>To successfully perform the activity in case it would be helpful to imagine that you are at a party where you have to get to know each other by asking questions.</p>  <p>Do you have an idea about the way you could introduce yourself?</p> <p>Can you think and name some of the things you would like to say about yourself?</p> <p>Here are some useful tips on the things that could be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a greeting; ○ who you are; ○ where you are from; ○ where you live (country); ○ your job; ○ languages you speak; ○ what you like to do (sports, music, films, e.t.c.) <p>In case you still haven't formed a clear cut picture about the way you could introduce yourself, watching the video to follow will definitely give you a hint.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Introducing oneself</p>

Figure 11: Screenshot Captured of Activity 2 Encompassed in "My Electronic Language Portfolio"

▪ **Phase 3: Self-Managed Learning**

In this phase, learners complete “My Linguistic Proficiency”, “My Intercultural Competence”, “My Language and Intercultural Experiences”, “My Cultural Awareness” (My Biography) and “My Linguistic Identification” (My Passport) sections of their electronic language portfolios. To enable learners to achieve the completion of these sections independently (self-managed learning), a number of activities has been contrived. The teacher adopts the role of a facilitator to provide guidance and feedback that will enable students to add value to their learning. The areas learners should focus on are highlighted and the latter are guided through the learning process. The successful implementation of the third phase does not call for learners’ face-to-face encounter with the teacher.

Activity 3:
Identifying Current Linguistic Competence (Self-Assessment)

Learners are provided with a set of CanDo (I do the task with great ease, I do the task not with particular ease by making efforts, This is a target for me) statements (all skills, all levels included). Learners tick the boxes they assume to correspond to their current linguistic competence as regards the languages they know. They also write down what they want to improve and what more they want to learn. Upon completion, the CanDo statements are placed into “My Linguistic Proficiency” section of learners’ Biography.



Figure 12: Informing Learners about their Level of Self-Direction while Attempting Activity 3 Included in “My Electronic Language Portfolio”

Activity 4:
Placing a Summary of Linguistic Competence in the Passport Section of My Electronic Language Portfolio

Learners are prompted to complete “My Linguistic Identification” template. This template alludes to information concerning their linguistic background. Once completed, it is placed in the Passport section of their portfolios.

Activity 5:
Identifying Current Intercultural Competence (Self-Assessment)

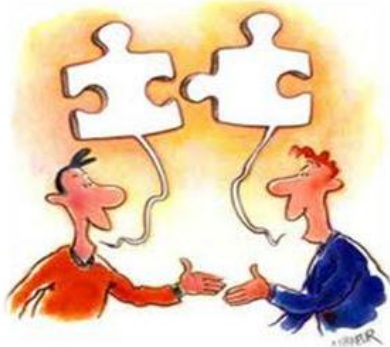
Learners are provided with a set of CanDo statements (intercultural competence related). Learners tick the boxes they assume to correspond to the present level of their intercultural competence. Upon completion, the CanDo statements are placed into “My Intercultural Competence” section of their Biography.

MY INTERCULTURAL CAN DO STATEMENTS

SELF-ASSESSMENT PAGES
ΣΕΛΙΔΕΣ ΑΥΤΟ-ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΗΣΗΣ

In the following pages you may write down what you already know, what you want to improve and what more you want to learn. You may use the symbols given below in order to assess your intercultural knowledge with more precision.

Στις σελίδες που ακολουθούν μπορείς να καταγράφεις τι γνωρίζεις ήδη, τι θέλεις να βελτιώσεις και τι θέλεις ακόμη να μάθεις. Μπορείς να χρησιμοποιήσεις τα παρακάτω σύμβολα για να αξιολογήσεις με μεγαλύτερη ακρίβεια τις διαπολιτισμικές γνώσεις σου.



SYMBOLS/ΣΥΜΒΟΛΑ

- I do the task with great ease.**
Ανταποκρίνομαι στο ζητούμενο με μεγάλη άνεση.
- I do the task not with particular ease by making efforts.**
Ανταποκρίνομαι στο ζητούμενο με όχι ιδιαίτερη άνεση καταβάλλοντας κάποια προσπάθεια.
- This is a target for me.**
Αυτό είναι στόχος για μένα.

1

<p>A1</p>  <p>I have a basic knowledge of the culture of the country I live in and I would like to get to know its people better.</p> <p><small>Διαθέτω βασική γνώση της κουλτούρας της χώρας στην οποία ζω και θα ήθελα να γνωρίσω τους ανθρώπους της καλύτερα.</small></p>	<p>Attitudes, knowledge and skills connected with intercultural communication:</p> <p><small>Στάσεις, γνώσεις και δεξιότητες που συνδέονται με την διαπολιτισμική επικοινωνία.</small></p>	<p>I have a basic knowledge concerning the country, geography, climate, etc.</p> <p><small>Διαθέτω βασική γνώση αναφορικά με τη χώρα, τη γεωγραφία της, το κλίμα κτλ.</small></p>
	<p>Knowing how to / Having the ability to acquire knowledge of a culture and use it in real-life interaction:</p> <p><small>Γνώση του τρόπου με τον οποίο επιτυγχάνεται κάτι/Ικανότητα απόκτησης της γνώσης μιας κουλτούρας και χρήσης της κατά τη διάρκεια πραγματικής αλληλεπίδρασης.</small></p>	<p>I start to control the daily situations (manners of eating, greetings, courtesy).</p> <p><small>Αρχίζω να αποκτώ τον έλεγχο των καθημερινών καταστάσεων (τρόπους καλής συμπεριφοράς κατά τη διάρκεια των γευμάτων, των χαιρετισμών και ευγένειας).</small></p>
	<p>Curiosity, openness and readiness to discover different perspectives on familiar and unfamiliar phenomena:</p> <p><small>Περιέργεια, ανοχή και ετοιμότητα για την ανακάλυψη ποικίλων εκφάνσεων οικείων και μη φαινομένων.</small></p>	<p>I start to include/understand and use competences which I need to communicate with people whose beliefs, values and behaviors are different from mine.</p> <p><small>Αρχίζω να περιλαμβάνω/κατανόω και να χρησιμοποιώ δεξιότητες τις οποίες χρειάζομαι προκειμένου να επικοινωνήσω με άτομα των οποίων οι αντιλήψεις, οι αξίες και οι συμπεριφορές διαφέρουν από τις δικές μου.</small></p>
	<p>Making critical evaluations of real experiences concerning one's own and other cultures:</p> <p><small>Κριτική αξιολόγηση πραγματικών εμπειριών που αφορούν στην κουλτούρα κάποιου καθώς και σε άλλες κουλτούρες.</small></p>	<p>I seize any opportunity that allows me to acquire a new cultural experience.</p> <p><small>Δράττομαι οποιασδήποτε ευκαιρίας μου επιτρέπει να αποκτήσω μια νέα πολιτισμική εμπειρία.</small></p>
		<p>I can identify basic differences and similarities in the practices and cultural experiences between my own country and the other country.</p> <p><small>Μπορώ να προσδιορίσω βασικές διαφορές/ομοιότητες στις πρακτικές και στις πολιτισμικές εμπειρίες μεταξύ της χώρας μου και της άλλης χώρας.</small></p>

Figure 13: Screenshot Captured of Activity 5 Encompassed in “My Electronic Language Portfolio”

Activity 6:
*Forum Discussion
 concerning Language
 and Intercultural
 Differences*

Learners participate in a forum discussion where they can share views, exchange opinions with peers and post their comments on new and interesting things they notice when travelling or staying in other countries (My Forum).

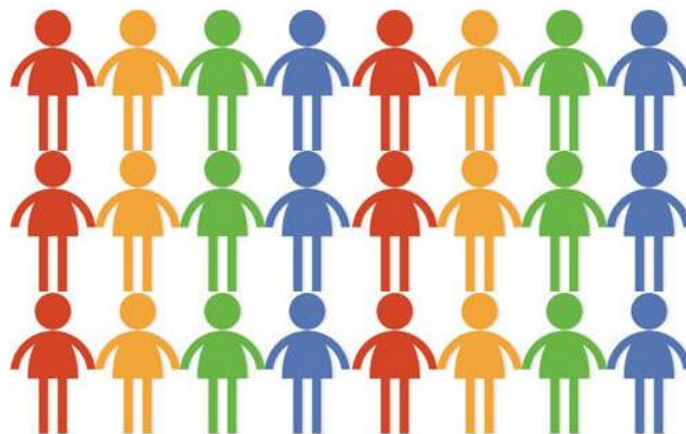
<p>Step 1</p> 	<p>To get access to the "Lg & Intercultural Differences" discussion forum, find "My Forum" block, placed in the "Right Sidedbar" of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" site.</p> <p>Click on the "Lg & Intercultural Differences" link.</p> 
<p>Step 2</p> 	<p>From the "Topic" options, click on "What Struck me the Most when Travelling or Staying at a New Country" topic.</p> 
<p>Step 3</p> 	<p>Post your reply in the "Reply" box, placed under the topic title.</p> 
<p>Step 4</p> 	<p>Submit your reply through the "Submit" button.</p> 
<p>Step 5</p> 	<p>If you need to modify your reply (eg. insert pictures, change fonts etc.), press on the "Edit" button just above your post.</p>  <p>In the popping out window (Reply To: What Struck me the Most when Travelling or Staying at a New Country), click on the "Edit" button once more to add necessary changes.</p> 

Figure 14: Screenshot Captured of Activity 6 Completion Guidelines Encompassed in "My Electronic Language Portfolio"

Activity 7:
Reflecting on Language and Intercultural Experiences

Learners are invited to reflect on their language and intercultural experiences through adding their contributions to the corresponding template. The present activity is focused upon encouraging learners to report on the cultural differences they experience while travelling to other countries. As soon as their experiences are added to the template, the latter is kept in “My Language and Intercultural Experiences” section of their Biography.

MY LG & INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES



The new and interesting things I noticed when travelling or staying in other countries.

Νέα και ενδιαφέροντα πράγματα που παρατήρησα όταν επισκέφτηκα ή έμεινα σε άλλες χώρες.

					
Country: Χώρα:	From: Από To: Έως:	Staying with friends/family (✓) Διαμονή με φίλους/οικογένεια	Travel (✓) Ταξίδι	Study (✓) Μελέτη	Work (✓) Εργασία
					
Language: Γλώσσα:					

Figure 15: Screenshot Captured of Activity 7 Encompassed in “My Electronic Language Portfolio”

Activity 8:
Reflecting on Intercultural Awareness

Learners are invited to reflect on the cultural attitudes and behaviors they notice or do not fully understand at the time being (in this course, in the world outside or their workplace). They note their reflections in a template and place the completed template in “My Cultural Awareness” section of their Biography.

▪ **Phase 4: Self-Planned Learning**

The fourth phase of the script is intended to promote learners' self-planned learning and allow them to assume a high degree of self-direction. They are required to make decisions about what they want to learn, how they want to learn and to draw out a time frame of the duration within which they will achieve what they want to learn. The implementation of the fourth phase does not call for learners' face-to-face encounter with the teacher.

Activity 9:
Identifying Learning Strategies and Activities and Blog Creation under the Title "Reflecting on How I Learn Best"

Ls are provided with a "How I Learn Best" guide proposing activities and learning strategies that can enhance their language and intercultural learning. They are induced to consult the guide and reflect on the ways they learn best, both in the five language skill areas (listening, reading, writing, spoken production, spoken interaction) and in the area of cultural competence. Learners add the "How I Learn Best" guide into the Dossier section of their language portfolios (My Personal File).

At this point, learners create a blog under the title "My Reflections on How I Learn Best". There they can post their reflections concerning learning strategies and activities they consider to be most effective for bolstering their language and intercultural learning. Posts contained in this blog can contain reflections on any of the five language skill areas or in the area of their intercultural competence. Posts taken from the blog or the blog itself are then placed in the Biography section of learners' language portfolio, under the title "My Reflections on How I Learn Best".



Figure 16: Informing Learners about their Level of Self-Direction while Attempting Activity 9 Included in "My Electronic Language Portfolio"

Learners attempt to produce a learning contract that will help them take responsibility and promote a sense of ownership and commitment to their learning. The contract can involve the completion of a template provided by the teacher or it may be a recording or a descriptive statement. The format of the learning contract is decided by the learners themselves. To produce the contract, learners need to have the following steps in mind:

Activity 10:
Creation of a Learning Contract

- Step 1:** Diagnose their learning needs;
- Step 2:** Specify their learning objectives;
- Step 3:** Specify learning resources and strategies;
- Step 4:** Specify target dates for completion;
- Step 5:** Specify evidence of accomplishment;
- Step 6:** Specify how the evidence will be validated.

Upon completion learners' contracts can be placed into the Biography section of their portfolio (My Learning Contract).

My Learning Contract:

Activity 10



<p>Activity Description:</p> 	<p>At this point, you are encouraged to attempt to produce a learning contract that can help you take responsibility and promote a sense of ownership and commitment to your learning. The contract can involve the completion of a template provided by your teacher or it may be a recording or a descriptive statement. The format of the learning contract is totally dependent on you!</p>
<p>Aim of Activity:</p> 	<p>The aim of this activity is twofold! On the one hand, it is intended to enable you to take responsibility and promote a sense of ownership and commitment to your learning. On the other hand, it will offer you the opportunity to complete "My Learning Contract" section of the Biography component of your language portfolio.</p>

Figure 17: Screenshot Captured of Activity 10 Encompassed in "My Electronic Language Portfolio"

▪ **Phase 5: Self-Directed Learning**

In the final phase of this script, learners get involved in project work, postulating the configuration of the Dossier and Passport sections of their electronic language portfolios. Learners assume a high degree of self-direction; the implementation of this phase does not necessitate learners' face-to-face encounter with the teacher.

Activity 11:
*Organizing the Dossier
section of the Electronic
Language Portfolio*

Learners have to set up the Dossier component of their portfolio. They first have to come up with ways of organizing the "Examples of My Work" section. They need to think which items could be inserted there that best represent their languages' knowledge and their intercultural skills so as to project their best possible self.

Learners go through their "Personal File" where they can have links to educational resources that can help them in the process of learning, maybe a dictionary or some links to language materials they deem useful. They also organize "My Diplomas and Certificates" section of their Dossier by means of adding information relevant to the formal evidence of their linguistic competence in a template. Finally, they create their resume in a template and add it to "My CV" section of their Dossier.

Activity 12:
*Organizing the Passport
section of the Electronic
Language Portfolio*

Learners get involved in copying "My Diplomas and Certificates" and "My CV" sections of their Dossiers into the Passport section of their language portfolios.

In Figure 18, the activities included in "My Electronic Language Portfolio" are illustrated. The entire storyboard is appended as Appendix I.

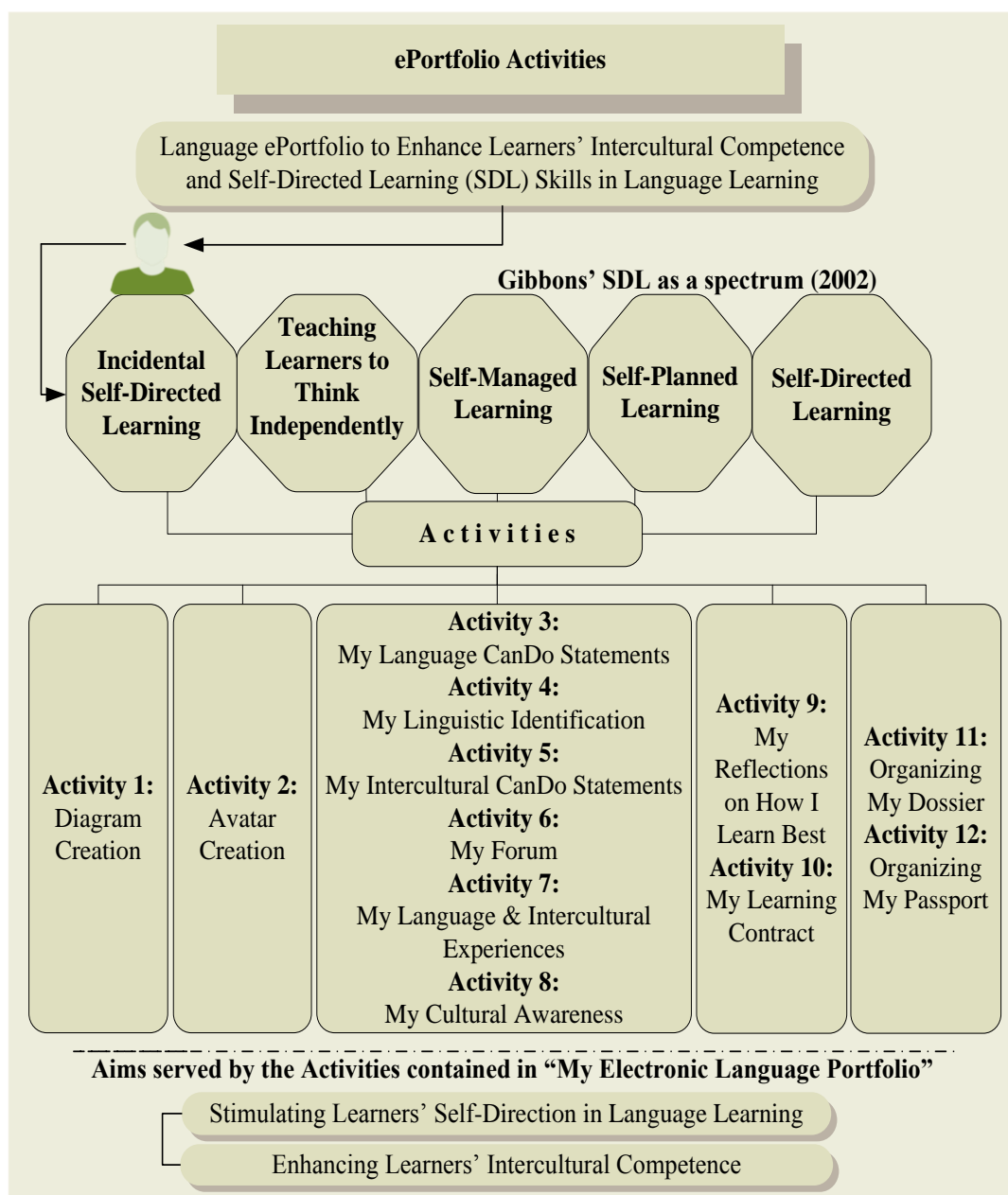


Figure 18: Process of Implementing a Language ePortfolio within the Context of an Online Course: ePortfolio Activities

3.9.1.5 Preparing for ePortfolio Use

An ePortfolio, as a product, provides a personal space where students can collect the digital artefacts that present evidence of their experiences and achievements, articulating actual learning outcomes. The ePortfolio, as a process, allows students to move beyond the notion of *what* they have learned to consider *how* they have learned (Australian ePortfolio Project, 2008). Helen Barrett (2007), a pioneer in the ePortfolio area, argues that the true value of an ePortfolio lies in the fact that it enables documentation of the students' reflections linked to evidence of their practice while facilitating an ongoing record of their learning journey.

An ePortfolio enables learners to better comprehend the connections inherent in the creative process of learning: by identifying and selecting learning experiences, by

reflecting on their skill development, and, by sharing, collaborating and presenting the evidence to others, they are able to make sense of their own complex stories. It also provides an opportunity for linkages between learning and assessment, with the focus changing from assessment ‘*of*’ learning to assessment ‘*for*’ learning (Australian ePortfolio Project, 2008).

Eportfolios support pedagogical approaches that foster student motivation for learning and student engagement with their learning by highlighting progress and achievement. Effective learning occurs when learners “understand what it is they are trying to achieve – and want to achieve it” (Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA), & Assessment Reform Group, 2002), so through their ePortfolio learners can contribute to the development of learning goals and monitor the progress they make. Through self-reflection and self-evaluation, the ePortfolio can be used as an environment that fosters the learner’s independence, initiative and confidence.

According to Nickel (2006) students require guidance to take full advantage of the potential learning experience an ePortfolio has to offer. Similarly, Stefani, Mason, & Pegler (2007) argue that, when discussing the topic of preparing users to use the ePortfolio, responsibility needs to be assumed for creating independent learners who will be able to learn throughout their lifespan.

Training in the use of the ePortfolio should aim to instill an ePortfolio culture among students; consequently, it should not be restrained to the technical skills required to construct and develop the ePortfolio but also highlight the pedagogic understanding of the relationship between the aims and objectives of the course of study, the requirement on the learner to engage in this form of activity and the potential benefits to the learner (Clark & Neumann, 2009). As stated in Buzzetto-More & Alade (2008) preparing students for ePortfolio implementation involves the development of an introduction/orientation mechanism. This requires consideration for:

- when, and how, the portfolio will be introduced to students;
- how the concepts should be presented;
- whether the students will require training;
- where and how that training will occur;
- how training should be structured;
- what resources will be made available to students; and, finally
- how such activities could be optimally sequenced.

Significant issues concerning users’ preparation to use an ePortfolio are further raised by Ward & Richardson (2005) in their report to the JISC proposing:

- learner guidance on the purposes of an ePortfolio;
- learner guidance on how to use the ePortfolio system;
- a tutorial programme alongside to support the ePortfolio process;
- online tutor/mentor support for feedback to learners.

In Figure 19 the factors taken into consideration to prepare learners for using “My Electronic Language Portfolio” are presented.

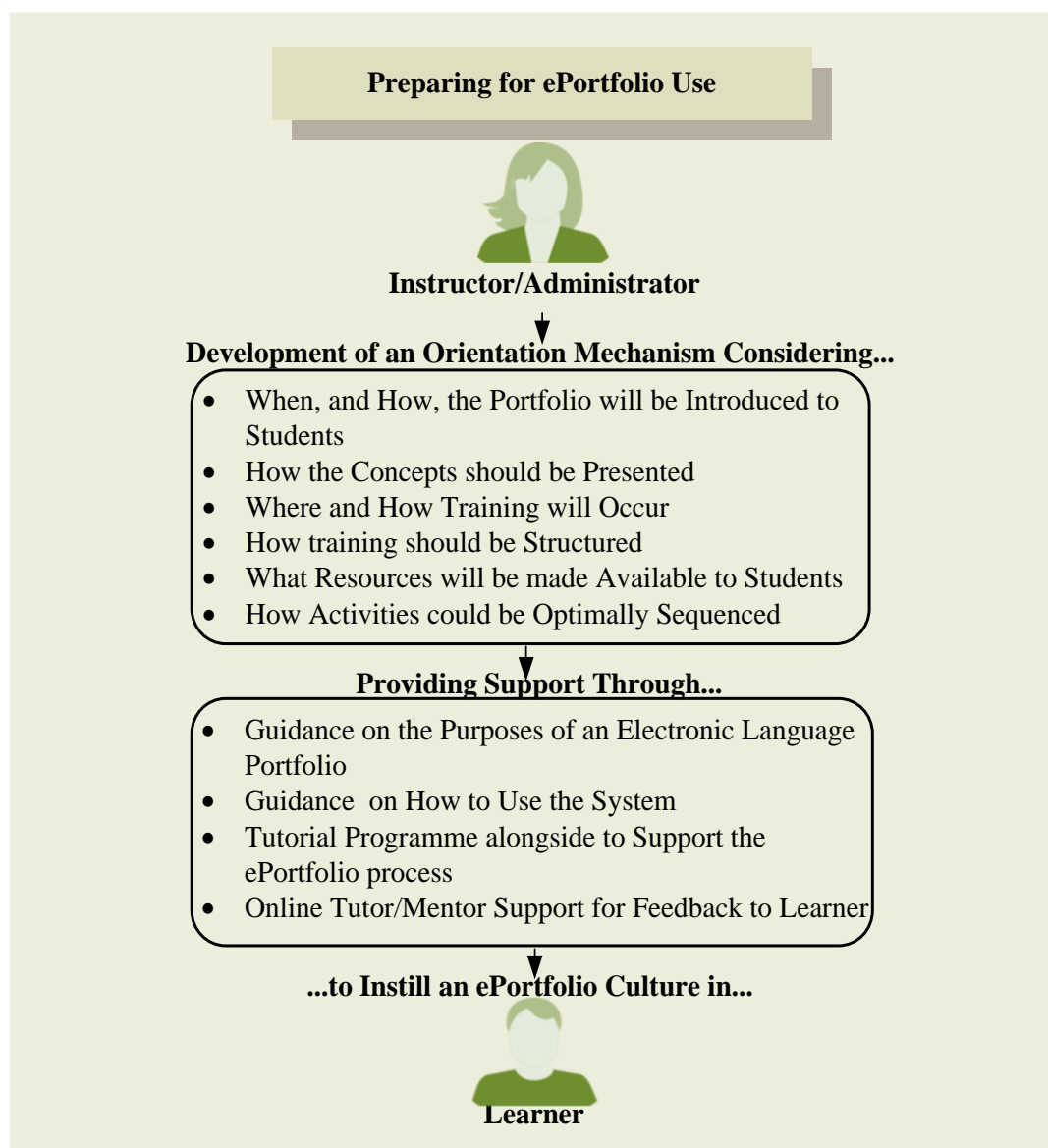


Figure 19: Process of Implementing a Language ePortfolio within the Context of an Online Course: Preparing Users for ePortfolio Use

3.9.1.6 Assessing the ePortfolio

A paradigm shift in the past decade has changed the focus of education from a teacher-centered instructional environment to a student-centered one (Brooks, 1997; Terheggen, Prabhu, & Lubinescu, 2000). Grades are no longer proof enough of learning; multiple stakeholders in education want documentation that demonstrates the entire process of learning (Heaney, 1990; Terheggen, Prabhu, & Lubinescu, 2000; Villano, 2005). Ruhland & Brewer (2001) call attention to the increased demands for accountability that emphasize assessment for student learning.

Black & William (1998) in their publication *‘Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment’*, discuss assessment for learning and how it is at the heart of effective teaching. In their extensive review, referencing over 250 published research articles on the subject, they have concluded that assessment for learning is one of the most powerful ways of improving student learning, a view echoed by others. Davies (2000) describes assessment for learning as ongoing,

requiring deep involvement on the part of the learner, and describes five key factors to make this happen. Included are that:

- learners are involved;
- learners self-assess and receive specific descriptive feedback about learning during learning;
- learners collect, organize, and communicate learning with others;
- teaching is adjusted in response to ongoing assessments;
- a safe learning environment for risk-taking and focussed goal-setting supports learning.

Already in the United Kingdom an increased focus on assessment for learning through formative assessment is occurring. The move towards formative means of assessment and away from traditional end-of course examinations points the way towards an ‘*assessment for learning*’ approach, enhancing student learning (Black & William, 1998; Torrence & Prior, 1998). This approach provides students with the opportunity to become stakeholders in their own progress and also provides an environment for deep learning to occur.

The issue of ePortfolios ought to be or not assessed is hotly debated; much of this is linked to different ideas about the primary ePortfolio role and purpose. On the one hand, there are those who favor assessing ePortfolios as a means of capturing valuable material developed from a process of learning. In contrast, those who disapprove of assessing ePortfolios stress that the process of reflecting on learning is too personal and would require complex evaluation procedures. Their arguments persist about over-assessment removing the element of learners’ independence (Atlay, 2005).

Assessing ePortfolios presents a challenge to tutors and one approach towards dealing with this matter is for tutors to ask: What is being assessed: the product or the process? Atlay (2005) suggests addressing the following issues when considering assessing ePortfolios:

- What are we assessing - Is it the product or the process?
- Are we giving it a grade - Should we use pass/fail or what?
- What weighting do we give it?
- How does it fit in with our existing approach to assessment?

As Barrett & Carney (2005) state several assessment tools and procedures are focused on the product of learning rather than the process. Barrett & Carney (2005) draw the distinction between using the portfolio product for the summative assessment of learning rather than using the process of the development of the ePortfolio to support the formative assessment for learning.

In the table below (Table 9), it is emphasized that formative assessment is essential for ePortfolio development as feedback allows the learner to reflect, change and improve work.

Formative & Summative Assessment of ePortfolios (Barrett, 2004b)	Portfolios Used for Assessment of Learning	Portfolios that Support Assessment for Learning
	Purpose of portfolio prescribed by institution.	Purpose of portfolio agreed upon with learner.
	Artefacts mandated by institution to determine outcomes of instruction.	Artefacts selected by learner to tell the story of their learning.
	Portfolio usually developed at the end of a class, term or programme-time limited.	Portfolio maintained on an ongoing basis throughout the class, term or programme-time

	flexible.
Portfolio and/or artefacts usually 'scored' based on a rubric and quantitative data is collected for external audiences.	Portfolio and artefacts reviewed with learner and used to provide feedback to improve learning.
Portfolio is usually structured around a set of outcomes, goals or standards.	Portfolio organization is determined by learner or negotiated with mentor/ advisor/ teacher.
Sometimes used to make high stakes decisions.	Rarely used for high stakes decisions.
Summative-What has been learned to date? (Past to Present)	Formative-What are the learning needs in the future? (Present to Future).
Requires extrinsic motivation.	Fosters intrinsic motivation-Engages the learner.
Audience external-Little choice.	Audience: Learner, family, friends-learner can choose.

Table 9: Formative and Summative Assessment of ePortfolios

Barrett (2004b), drawing upon the work of Paulson & Paulson (1994), highlights this dichotomy when discussing the selection of artefacts for a portfolio from the positivist or constructivist approach. The use of ePortfolios for assessment fits well with the constructivist framework that has been emerging in education as the most effective teaching and learning experience (Clark & Adamson, 2009). Paulson & Paulson (1994) further argue that a positivist approach "puts a premium on the selection of items that reflect outside standards and interests... the constructivist approach puts a premium on the selection of items that reflect learning from the student's perspective". For the constructivist theory, specifically Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, ePortfolios are perceived as a social learning environment. The learner constructs meaning through interaction with this environment whereby the portfolio represents a learning process and record of individual or collective thought. (Barrett & Wilkerson, 2004). Assessment of constructivist portfolios utilizes self-assessment through reflection and peer evaluation.

If education is moving further towards an emphasis on 'assessment for learning' and formative learning, then various approaches to paper-based portfolios and ePortfolios should naturally emerge across discipline areas. Through the use of electronic portfolios, the responsibility of learning is transferred to the students. An ePortfolio approach that spans a course of study enables participants to originate and maintain 'conversations' about their learning and by doing so they become active in formative assessment rather than passive receivers of graded results (Pelliccione & Dixon, 2008). The most valuable aspect of 'ePortfolio thinking' is that students are being encouraged to think about their learning and become more reflective thinkers in general. As students increase their meta-cognitive skills, they make progress towards the ultimate goal of becoming more skilled lifelong learners (Clark & Adamson, 2009). They are enabled to be involved and engaged in the learning process and, therefore, the focus is kept on the learner-centered environment. Hewett's (2005) research indicates that "as a model for learner-centered classrooms, ePortfolios give students ownership and responsibility for their own learning".

Rossi, Magnoler, & Giannandrea (2007) describe the purpose and benefits of the formative portfolio: “A portfolio with a stronger formative orientation would allow the individual to reflect on the ongoing learning process, on the learning styles, on the competencies he/she is acquiring so that it will improve the planning of his/her learning path”. If an eportfolio can embed the necessary range of learning artefacts, allow them to be added at anytime, allow students, teachers, peers, friends, to provide effective feedback on these artefacts from anywhere, then it engages and motivates the learner through control of their process of assessment for learning. It is believed that it is through this formative review and students’ subsequent reflection on that feedback that learners identify and achieve their learning goals, better understand their strengths and weaknesses, and recognize the intrinsic value of their ePortfolios (Ring & Ramirez, 2012). Hence, the ePortfolio, as an ever-evolving organic creation, provides a tool that allows for assessment for learning since:

- It is student centered – The learner is involved and authorized to make decisions about their learning.
- It is student directed – Students can be involved in the development of learning goals and assessment criteria.
- It emphasizes the provision of feedback by teachers and peers – Feedback, as an integral component of formative assessment, is critical to student learning. When feedback is purely driven by the teacher, students fail to engage fully with the process. When, however, the feedback process is driven by the student’s own critical reflection, it has a far more powerful and lasting effect. It also helps learners align their own learning with the intended outcomes of the unit of study (Pelliccione & Dixon, 2008). Feedback in the form of comments, as opposed to marks, is the natural and appropriate manner to help students with self-assessment and ePortfolio decisions. In the case of peer review, opportunities are provided for learners to see their work from multiple perspectives, and such points of view can provide valuable feedback as to how the reviewed students’ work can be improved (Bostock, 2000; Robinson, 1999; Topping, 1998; Perry, 1998).
- Recognition of individual learning abilities and preferences- The learners have the freedom to bring in their own interests or competencies into the assessment situation. (Hilzensauer & Schaffert, 2009)
- Demonstrates awareness of learning and growth overtime – Both student and teacher can note the changes or improvements in skills overtime.

“My Electronic Language Portfolio” embodies an ePortfolio program that has at its core language learning and approaches this goal from a student-centered perspective, providing appropriate ways to support learners in reflecting on their language learning and allowing them to make connections between learning. It also empowers learners to best engage with the curriculum through the creation of favourable circumstances that nurture their recording of their own progress, self-assessment against learning outcomes, and critical reflection upon their development over time (Robinson & Udall, 2004b).

Multiple researchers concur that the best learning occurs in the context of an active learning experience. To set an example, learning is best facilitated in environments that provide for hands-on, experiential opportunities, accentuate student participation and interaction with peers, and encourage student-teacher communication (Astin, 1985,1996; Tinto, 1987, Davis & Murrell, 1994, Kuh, 1996). Astin (1985; 1996) proposes a foundational framework, stating that students learn as a result of their involvement level and demonstrated ownership. He further claims that quality

educational programs have a learning environment that includes students actively engaged, high expectations, and continuous assessment and feedback (Astin as cited in Skawinski & Thibodeau, 2002).

Technology used for “My Electronic Language Portfolio” can support the implementation of such characteristics. To increase its effectiveness, a built-in mechanism for feedback has been furnished (Wordpress commenting function for posts- *Leave a Reply*). The exemplification of the abovementioned features warrant the engagement of all “My Electronic Language Portfolio” participants in formative assessment, rendering the measurement and recording of both formal and non-formal learning experiences and the update of -often antiquated- assessment procedures, plausible.

In Figure 20, key aspects of the constructivist theory, influencing assessment for learning, as well as the principal characteristics of formative assessment, closely related to assessment for learning, are illustrated.

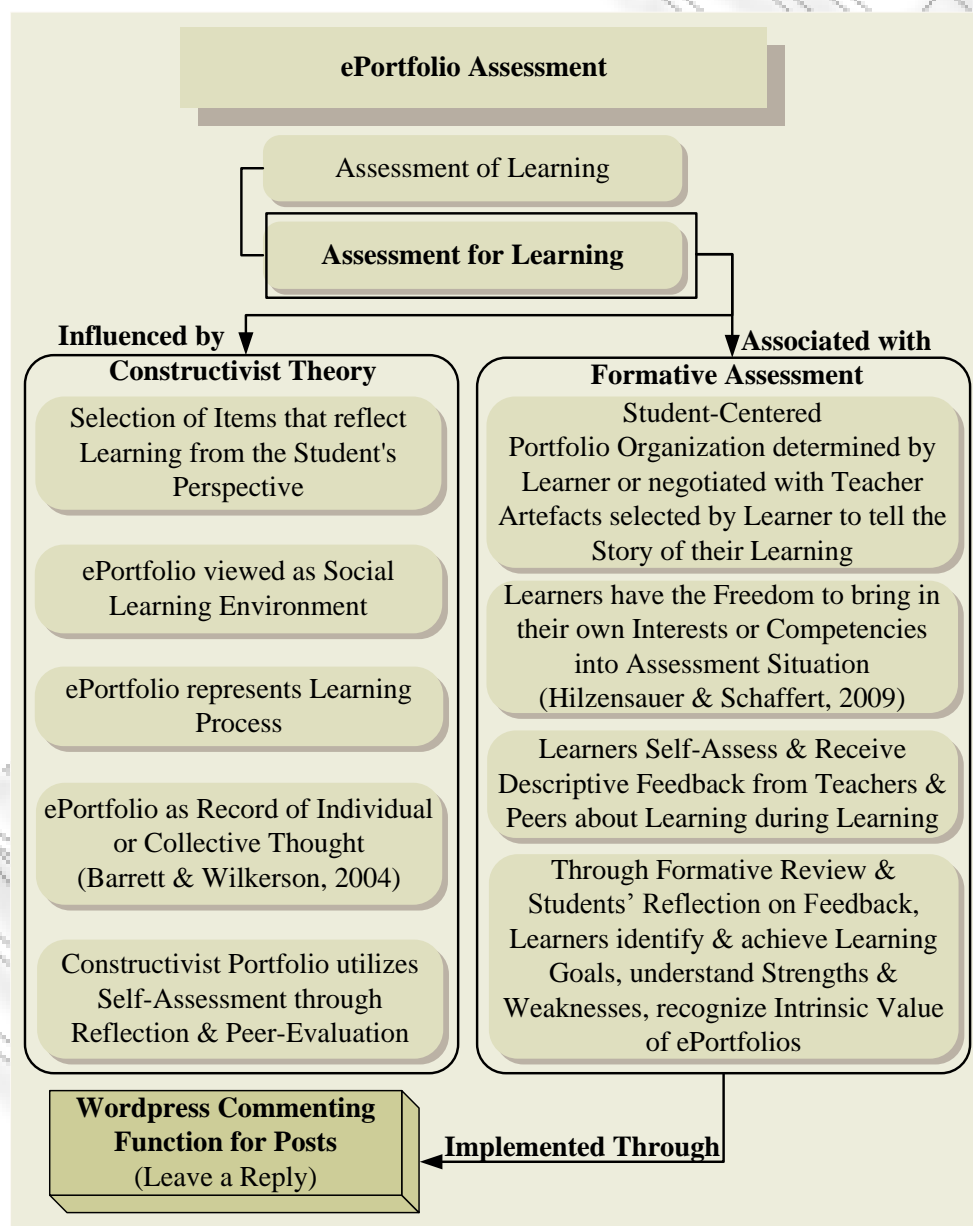


Figure 20: Process of Implementing a Language ePortfolio within the Context of an Online Course: Assessing the ePortfolio

3.9.2 Delineation of the Experimental Procedure

The experimental procedure can be distinguished in two distinct phases. The onset of the first phase (Phase A) coincided with evaluators receiving contextual information on the intended user group as well as the principal features and capacities of “My Electronic Language Portfolio”. The evaluators received orientation towards the ePortfolio creation process through a user manual, designed to communicate the intricacies of the ePortfolio system to be used. This guide to “My Electronic Language Portfolio” encompassed the following components:

- Getting Started
 - Minimal Requirements;
 - How to register;
 - How to log into;
 - How to create your Profile;
 - How to create Posts.
- Delving Deeper
 - How to find your way through My Electronic Language Portfolio.

The evaluators were then acquainted with the portfolio concept and were introduced to ePortfolios, language portfolios and the notion of self-directed learning through the “Shall We Start?” subpages contained within “My Electronic Language Portfolio” and illustrated in Figure 21.



Figure 21: The “Shall We Start?” Page and Subpages

In the course of the second phase (Phase B) of the experimental procedure, each individual evaluator inspected “My Electronic Language Portfolio” alone and investigated its true potential by attempting all twelve activities suggested. Online administrator-tutor support was available in case needed. The experimental procedure ran for a two-week period. In Figure 22 the experimental procedure is clearly illustrated.

Upon completion of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” evaluation process three different questionnaires were e-mailed to the evaluators; the latter were prompted to fill these questionnaires as honestly as possible. The results of the evaluation were supplemented with comments verbalized by the evaluators relating to improvement recommendations and the identification of potential difficulties that future users of the site may be faced with. Fairly soon after the evaluation process was completed both the filled questionnaires and the evaluators’ comments were made available to the researcher via e-mail. Only after all evaluations had been submitted were the evaluators allowed to communicate and have their findings exchanged. This procedure was deemed important in order to ensure independent and unbiased evaluations from each evaluator.

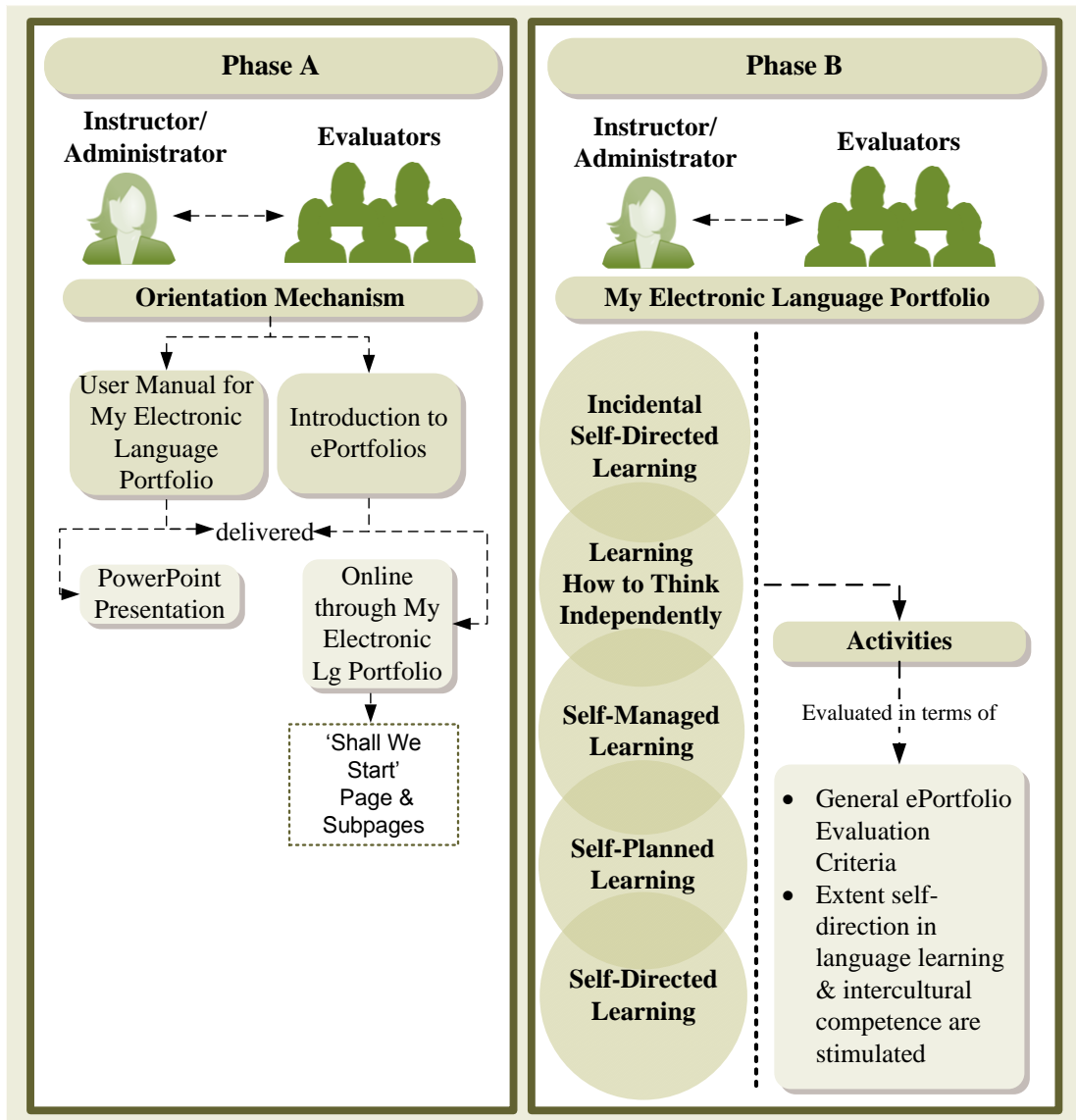


Figure 22: Delineation of the Experimental Procedure

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The results presented are based on the data analysis carried out. The data analysis was primarily quantitative, derived from the usage of the statistical software package SPSS. In addition to that, comments made by the evaluators concerning “My Electronic Language Portfolio” usability are presented in a qualitative manner.

For the results of the analysis to be manifested, twelve different variables were created, each of which represents a total score for every indicator delineated in the previous chapter.

All these variables may receive values ranging from 1 (the lowest score, meaning poor usability) to 5 (the highest score, meaning great usability). Descriptive analysis was used to identify the mean values, standard deviations as well as the minimum and maximum values for each variable.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of the Results

The following table summarizes the results regarding the first group of indicators. As shown, all four indicators have mean scores at least equal to 4, indicating evaluators’ overall satisfaction. However, it needs to be mentioned that the fourth indicator (Reflection) appears to satisfy the evaluators significantly less than the three others.

		Appearance Score	Operational Features Score	Evidence Score	Reflection Score
N	Valid	5	5	5	5
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		4,6000	4,6400	4,6500	4,0000
Std. Deviation		,50990	,26077	,41833	,88388
Minimum		3,80	4,40	4,00	3,00
Maximum		5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00

Table 10: Descriptive Analysis for General Usability Indicators

These results may be best viewed in the box-plot figure that follows.

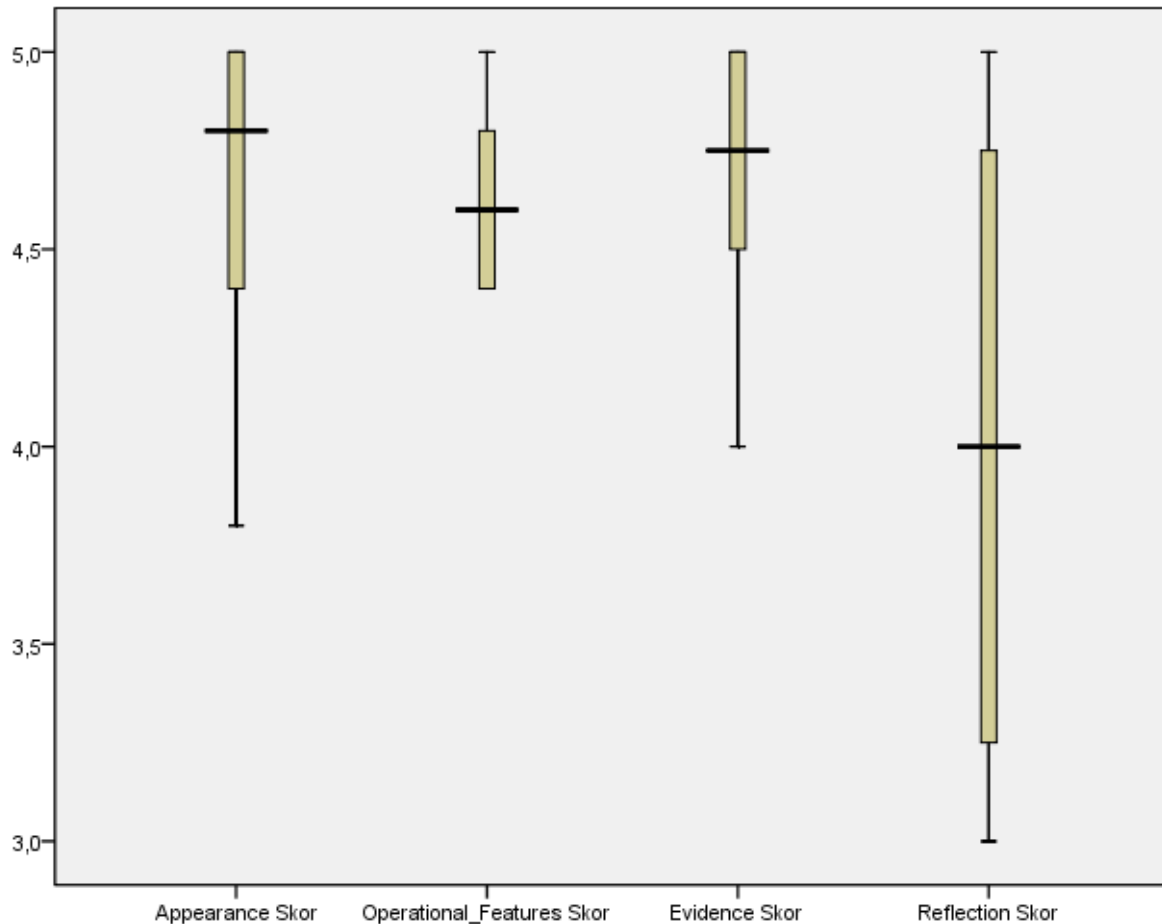


Figure 23: Box-Plot for General Usability Indicators

In the table to follow, the results regarding the second group, consisting of three indicators, are illustrated. As depicted, all three indicators have mean scores at least equal to 4, once again indicating evaluators' overall satisfaction. Nonetheless, there is one indicator (self-management and self-monitoring) where the mean score is about 0.5 less than the mean score of the other two variables, suggesting that some improvement may be needed.

		Ownership of Learning Score	Self-Management & Self-Monitoring	Extension of Learning Score
N	Valid	5	3	5
	Missing	0	2	0
Mean		4,4400	4,0833	4,6000
Std. Deviation		,43359	,57735	,28504
Minimum		4,00	3,75	4,25
Maximum		5,00	4,75	5,00

Table 11: Descriptive Analysis for Self-Directed Language Learning Usability Indicators

These results may be best viewed in the following box-plot figure.

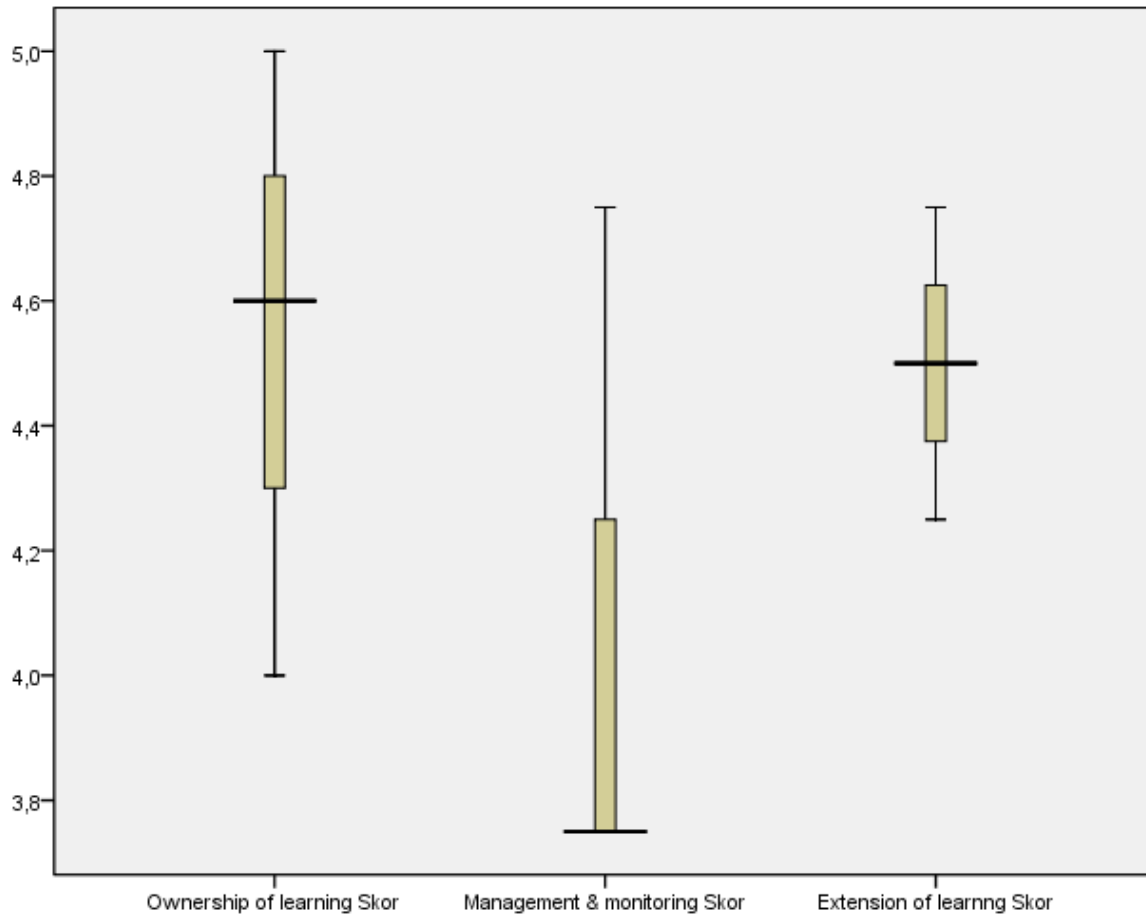


Figure 24: Box-Plot for Self-Directed Language Learning Usability Indicators

Finally, Table 12 summarizes the results for the last group about the usability of the website regarding the intercultural competence of the users that consists of five indicators. As shown, all mean scores vary from 4.16 to 4.6. The lowest score is for the attitudes indicator, while the highest one is for the external outcomes indicator.

	Attitudes Score	Knowledge & Comprehension Score	Skills Score	Internal Outcomes Score	External Outcomes Score
N					
Valid	5	5	5	4	5
Missing	0	0	0	1	0
Mean	4,1600	4,4857	4,3500	4,3125	4,6000
Std. Deviation	,51769	,21665	,51841	,47324	,43461
Minimum	3,60	4,14	3,75	4,00	4,00
Maximum	4,80	4,71	5,00	5,00	5,00

Table 12: Descriptive Analysis for Intercultural Competence Usability Indicators

These results may be best viewed in the box-plot figure that follows.

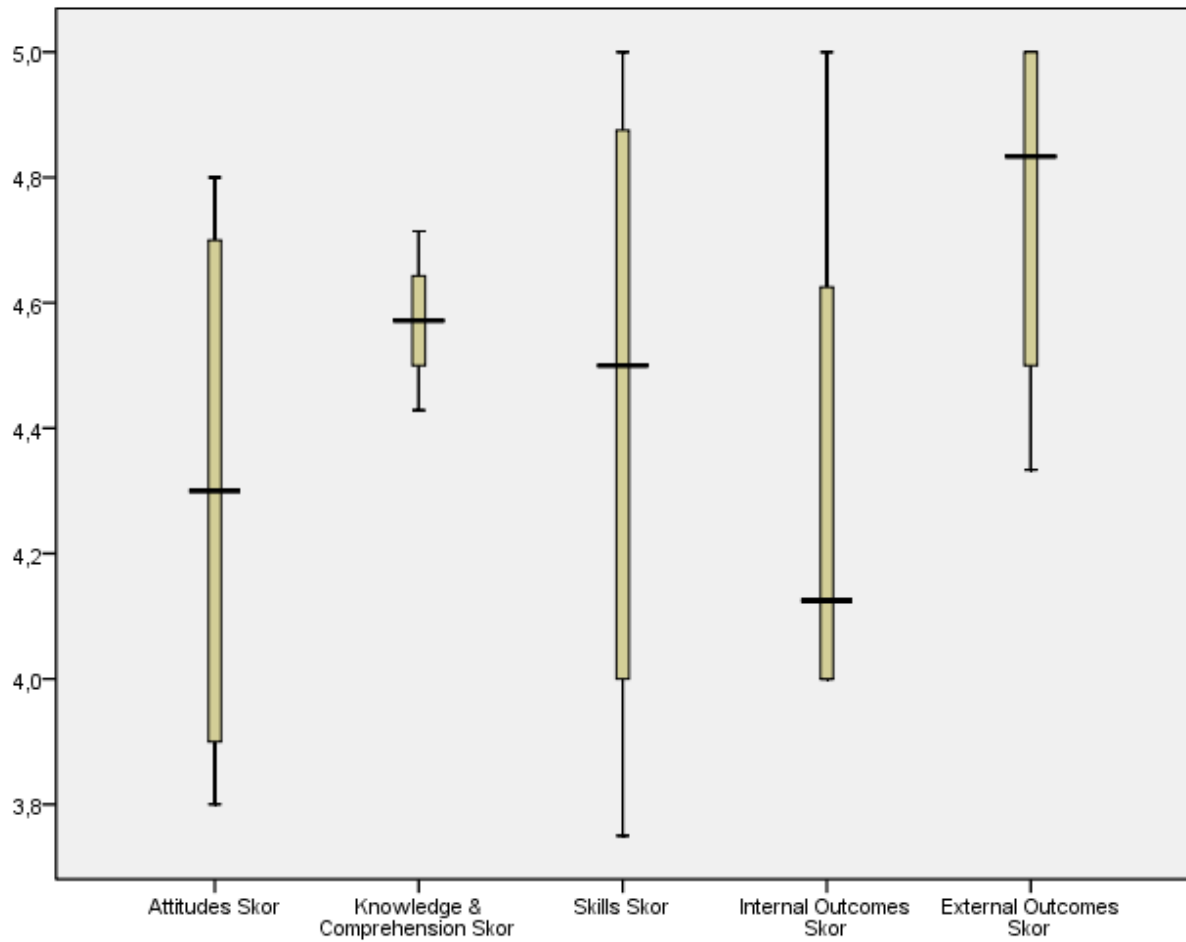


Figure 25: Box-Plot for Intercultural Competence Usability Indicators

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Results Overview

In consonance with the results already presented, it appears that the evaluators are, in general, satisfied with the website they had to evaluate with respect to its usability in several different terms.

More specifically, for all twelve indicators examined, the mean scores given by the evaluators were over 4.0, indicating an overall satisfaction for the usability of “My Electronic Language Portfolio”.

Evaluators were mostly pleased with the website’s appearance, its operational features, the evidence it can support, the extension of learning it can promote and the external outcomes-an indispensable component of an individual’s intercultural competence-it may encourage, given that the mean score for these variables was over 4.5.

However, it is worth mentioning that the reflection, self-management and self-monitoring as well as the attitudes indicators had the lowest mean values, pointing to further improvement potentially required.

5.2 Discussion

This discussion, drawing upon the output of the results data, is supplemented by a set of comments submitted by the evaluators, regarding the overall usability of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” and an amount of improvement proposals.

In the first place, the evaluators commented on the usability and appearance of the website designed in the framework of this dissertation. As stated by one of them, ‘*My Electronic Language Portfolio is an exquisite, scientifically justified and elegant piece of work*’. In more details, another evaluator noted that the tool is ‘*aesthetically appealing and is founded on a solid theoretical background*’. The same evaluator is convinced that ‘*My Electronic Language Portfolio encompasses splendid, creative activities and the purpose it has been created for is adequately addressed*’. Her dithyrambic comment is concluded by her acknowledging that ‘*My Electronic Language Portfolio is a scientifically justified piece of work*’.

On the premises of the above statements, along with the scores extensively covered and delineated in the previous chapter, it could be stated that with respect to the first research question, revolving around the eLearning experts’ views on “My Electronic Language Portfolio”, in terms of its appearance, operational features, reflection and evidence, the answer is that the evaluators were overall satisfied.

The second research question this analysis attempted to investigate was directed towards the eLearning experts’ views on the activities encompassed in the “Electronic Language Portfolio”, designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory, in support of promoting self-direction in language learning. No additional comments were made by the evaluators for the issue in case, yet in compliance with the scores measured through the statistical analysis, it could be stated that they were overall satisfied with respect to these metrics as well.

Finally, the last research question was related to the eLearning experts’ views on the activities encompassed in “My Electronic Language Portfolio”, designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory, in support of enhancing intercultural competence. As with the second research question, no additional comments were

submitted by the evaluators. However, according to the scores estimated and presented, it could be stated that the evaluators have agreed that the usability of the website with respect to that issue is solid.

The evaluators also pinpointed a few things that the designer could take into consideration to improve the usability of the website. Initially, the fact that “My Electronic Language Portfolio” requires end-users (learners) to exemplify a sound knowledge of the English language and adequate expertise in the use of ICT tools was highlighted. This, according to an evaluator’s view, might delimit the list of participants.

Another comment was submitted about the content of the portfolio, noting that it could have been enriched with more collaborative activities. In addition to the above, the introductory section could have been more practical according to another evaluator, while an extra page could have also been included in “My Electronic Language Portfolio”, informing migrants about language classes they might attend, as well as other useful information about citizenship applications, job vacancies, interesting sights or eating habits in the host country.

Some practical recommendations regarding the appearance and the usability of the website were added by the evaluators as well. For instance, the schedule page could have been placed in the right sidebar (as a widget) so that it would facilitate immediate access and a better scheduling of the learners’ actions, while the quiz could have been created with another tool rendering it more interactive. Other comments include minor corrections required regarding the ‘*Wait!!! There is more...*’ tag which is placed at the end of some activities’ pages, as well as corrections about some links that may be confusing for some of the portfolio’s users.

Summing up, it could be stated that both the presentation and usability of the adult migrants’ language ePortfolios, facilitated through an online course, designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory and supported by a website, titled “My Electronic Language Portfolio”, appear to be rather successful. Of course, some minor adjustments and corrections may be required, but overall “My Electronic Language Portfolio” seems to be significantly efficient and effective, according to the opinions of five evaluators-eLearning experts. Twelve different metrics were estimated, corresponding to twelve relevant indicators for three major -under inspection- issues, and the results clearly indicated that for all of them the designed portfolio was convincingly useful.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

The present study was designed to present and delineate the synthesis of adult migrants’ language ePortfolios facilitated through an online course, designed along the lines of the self-directed learning theory and supported by a website, titled “My Electronic Language Portfolio”. Through this online course adult, highly-educated and digitally-skilled migrants, who have already settled in the destination country or are bound to leave the country they reside in, are guided into composing their language ePortfolios in a manner that enhances their intercultural competence and their self-directed skills in terms of learning the language of the destination country. Future research should, therefore, concentrate on the investigation of the potential and effectiveness of such an online course as regards the bodies of uneducated or poorly educated adult migrants’ and children or adolescents from migrant backgrounds.

- ♦ **Language ePortfolio Development by Uneducated of Low Educated Migrants within the context of an Online Course**

All migrants have to face similar crucial challenges: communication, housing, health, work, education and last but not least integration within the host community. These people need to learn the language of the receiving society in the first place to live autonomously, to get a job or find a better one, to speak and socialize, to be able to talk to a doctor, or to their children's teachers, to pass an obligatory test that will allow them to stay in the destination country or to apply for citizenship. Many have valuable competences; many are plurilingual, speaking two, three or four languages, although they cannot write any of them. They also have the experience and skills that come from coping with the difficulties they have lived through. Hence, their language education needs to be practical, close to their goals and needs, so as to remove existing fears and perceived barriers.

As language and integration are connected, integrating language learning goals in the context of orientation to the host-community is recommended. For several migrants, especially for those who have been poorly educated (often women who migrated for family reunification or formation) literacy may have posed as a lifelong goal and a combination of language training and literacy could prove tremendously important to identifying and assessing their second-language related needs (Plutzer & Ritter, 2008).

The composition of poorly educated or uneducated migrants' language ePortfolios assisted by learning at a distance, showing consideration for their pressing schedules and location and acknowledging their social, work and family commitments, could be viewed as a vehicle towards recording the development of literacy- demonstrating, for example, good oral competence (in more than one language) along with a lower level of competence in reading and writing- and aiding the individual migrant's integration via providing language-learning options, enabling his/her adjustment to new social realities.

Towards this direction, further research needs to be undertaken in order to explore the potential of an online course, such as the one designed as part of this study to address the diverse language learning and intercultural needs of highly-educated migrants via the construction of their language ePortfolios, to offer an appropriate way of also satisfying the requirements of uneducated or poorly educated migrants. The probability of, thus, being tailored to the skills, background, demands, conditions and aspirations of uneducated or low educated adult migrants and being employed as a means of identifying and assessing literacy and language learning competencies that are useful for raising individuals' awareness of their skills, increasing their self-confidence and ultimately expediting the integration process needs to be further researched.

- ♦ **Language ePortfolio Development by Children and Adolescents from Migrant Backgrounds within the context of an Online Course**

From the perspective of social inclusion and social cohesion, the integration and education of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds is one of the most urgent challenges facing Council of Europe member states. This challenge can take various forms. Migrant children and adolescents who are already of school-going age when they arrive in the host country, are likely to be beginners in the language of schooling; whereas those who were born in the host country or arrived before starting school may be conversationally fluent in the language of schooling but find it difficult to access the academic language that is a precondition for educational success.

Attention is primarily focused on the student body of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds who come to school with little or no conversational proficiency in the language of schooling, for they encounter this language as beginners, and are more susceptible to underachievement and early dropout, that are directly linked to the problems of social marginalization, failure to integrate, and future unemployment. This does not mean that their engagement with the curriculum should be postponed until after they have developed some specified level of proficiency. However, to assign them to mainstream classes and assume that immersion alone will make them fluent in the language of schooling flies in the face of all available research evidence.

In consequence, more research is needed on the way the online course delineated within the context of the present study, assisting and guiding adult migrant learners through the compilation of their language ePortfolios, can be appropriately adapted to fit into the curriculum of a migrant education program and, thus, establish a foundation for the second-language development and cultural adjustment of migrant children and adolescents who have just arrived in the destination country. Interest can be stimulated through determining whether such an online course—prompting the synthesis of learners' language ePortfolios and being founded on pedagogical approaches that promote identity building in multilingual and multicultural environments and reflective self-awareness, an issue central to democratic citizenship—can be transformed into a powerful tool into the hands of a strategic educator wishing to support the development of migrant children and adolescents' plurilingual repertoire, their capacity for independent language learning and the introduction of the cultural dimension into language learning.

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APPENDIX A: Inventory of ICT Examples for L2 Learning for Adult Migrants

Name of Initiative	Country	Description	Website	Category
AVE	ES	E-learning platform developed by the Instituto Cervantes and currently used by some adult education centers for L2 training for adult migrants.	http://www.ave2.cvc.cervantes.es	Web-based and eLearning platforms with L2 learning courses and resources
BBC Skillswise Games	UK	Portal to all the games available from BBC Skillswise to help adults improve their reading, writing and number skills.	http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/games/	Virtual environments and games for L2 learning
E-bridge to mobility	Pan-EU	This European-funded project offers mobile applications as a supplement of the online L2 course and also as standalone items. Co-funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme the project was launched in 2009 to develop ICT-based resources in support of mobility from Poland to other EU countries, especially of young people less than 25 years old and 50+ people. Users are helped coping with mobility stress by provision of education (L2) and practical information about destination country and other measures.	http://www.2mobility.eu/	L2 courses and applications for mobile L2 learning
Kreativ Pedagogik	SE	Free access web portal with seven sections covering different sets of resources/links, ranging from news and media to specific links to learn Swedish.	http://www.kreativpedagogik.se/	Web-based and eLearning platforms with L2 learning courses and resources
Language Mentor	DK	CD and web-based tool based on pre-prepared stories in Danish whose content is drawn from the	http://www.vifin.dk/default.htm	Learner produced content (on wikis and

		individual immigrant employee's personal and practical experience.		blogs) for L2 learning and digital storytelling
My IT!	Pan-EU	This project was developed by the European-funded (Leonardo Da Vinci) project <i>The Write Skills</i> (http://writeskills.ning.com/) coordinated by the Irish company Fast Track into Information Technology (FIT Ltd). Its aim is to help learners gain ICT competencies along with literacy, L2 and numeracy skills. The learner sees and experiences what appears to be a real web site, but is in fact in a virtual environment where mistakes can be made until each step along the way is mastered. During this process, the learner also acquires L2 skills and other skills required to perform the tasks.	-	-
RAI Educational	IT	The Italian national broadcaster's educational channel RAI Educational offers Italian L2 courses for migrants to be used within classroom activities at adult education centres.	http://www.educational.rai.it/ioparloitaliano/main.htm	Video and TV series associated with L2 courses
Untold Stories	Pan-EU	This European-funded project focused on the provision by public libraries and museums of informal learning opportunities for migrant communities with a specific interest on the use of digital storytelling.	http://www.untoldstories.eu	Learner produced content (on wikis and blogs) for L2 learning and digital storytelling
YLE Mondo	FI	News in simplified and slow speed language along with listening and reading comprehension exercises.	http://www.yle.fi/selkouutiset/	Video and TV series associated with L2 courses

Table 13: Inventory of ICT Examples for L2 Learning for Adult Migrants

APPENDIX B: Relevant Literature on ePortfolio Benefits

ePortfolio Benefits	Main Points Made in the Relevant Literature
Skill development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The creation of an electronic portfolio serves to develop multimedia technology skills (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Barrett, 2000; Heath, 2002, 2005; Wade, Abrami, & Sclater, 2005; Wall, Higgins, Miller, & Packard, 2006), as well as communication and problem solving skills (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Canada, 2002).
Evidence of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios provide a '<i>rich picture</i>' of student learning and competencies (Love & Cooper, 2004), thus facilitating authentic learning (Love & Cooper, 2004; Wade et al., 2005). ▪ They actively involve students (Love & Cooper, 2004) in demonstrating past learning and current learning gains (MacDonald, Liu, Lowell, Tsai, & Lohr, 2004; Wade et al., 2005), manage their own professional development, and thus contribute to lifelong learning (Barrett, 2000; Love & Cooper, 2004; Wall et al., 2006).
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios facilitate the exchange of ideas and feedback (Lorenzo & Ittleson, 2005a). ▪ Electronic portfolios contribute to the 'feedback loop' integral to formative assessment (Cambridge, 2001).
Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students are encouraged to use reflection to integrate their learning experiences and find meaning in them (Lorenzo & Ittleson, 2005a; Ma & Rada, 2005; Young, 2002). ▪ Through reflection, electronic portfolios make meaning out of diverse and unconnected pieces of information (Cambridge, 2001).
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios engage students in the evaluation and assessment process (Wade et al., 2005), as they continually revisit and refine their portfolios.
Artefacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many kinds of artifact can be incorporated into electronic portfolios. They can integrate text and multimedia elements (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Canada, 2002; Heath, 2005; Love & Cooper, 2004; Milman & Kilbane, 2005; Wade et al., 2005).
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios are easy to maintain, edit and update (Canada, 2002; Heath, 2002; 2005)
Portability & sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whether saved to CD-ROM or to the web, electronic portfolios are easy to carry, to share with others, and to transport into a new system or new working environment (Abrami & Barrett, 2005; Strudler & Wetzel, 2005; Wade et al., 2005).
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios are easily accessible by a number of people. Students can work on their portfolios, and supervisors can review and assess portfolios, from many different sites (Ahn, 2004; Canada, 2002; Heath, 2005; Wade et al., 2005).
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios are viewable by a large audience (Ahn,

	2004; Strudler & Wetzel, 2005).
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios are easy to organise and search (Ahn, 2004; Wade et al., 2005; Young, 2002).
Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Because they do not rely on large binders full of paper, electronic portfolios are easy and efficient to store (Ahn, 2004; Canada, 2002).
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios are inexpensive (Heath, 2005).
Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Electronic portfolios can include a privacy feature (Young, 2002) to protect student work.

Table 14: Relevant Literature on ePortfolio Benefits

APPENDIX C: Territorial ePortfolio Approaches in the Field of Education

Education Type	ePortfolio Approaches
Primary & Secondary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The example of West Berkshire Council (UK) is interesting in its willingness to involve school stake-holders in treating the ePortfolio as part of an overall system including people, technologies and programs with the view that what matters is to establish networks between people. ▪ In Austria, where virtually all schools are equipped with a digital working environment, many of them have introduced ePortfolios.
Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At the University of Passau, the ePortfolio is used to collect evidence, a reflective journal and a planning tool of learning. ▪ Original development of the use of ePortfolio in higher education in the Netherlands is the initiative DigOport, an ePortfolio organization designed to facilitate the implementation of quality assurance procedures. The idea is to use the evidence produced by students as one of the basic elements of the file submitted to the auditors during the review process.
Further Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) has launched a new eCPD Programme in 2009, designed to improve and enhance teaching and learning through effective use of technology. ▪ The Institute for Learning (IfL), the professional body for further education in the UK offered its 185,000 members the opportunity to develop their own CPD ePortfolio.

Table 15: Territorial ePortfolio Approaches in the Field of Education

APPENDIX D: Online ePortfolio Tools and Services

ePortfolio Tools & Services	Website Address
Blackboard ePortfolio	http://www.blackboard.com/products/academic_suite/portfolio
Chalk & Wire	http://www.chalkandwire.com/
Desire2Learn ePortfolio	http://www.desire2learn.com/eportfolio/
Digication	http://www.digication.com/
Drupal	http://drupal.org/
EduSpaces	http://eduspaces.net/
eFolio Minnesota	http://www.efoliominnesota.com/
eFolioWorld	http://www.efolioworld.com/
ePearl	http://grover.concordia.ca/eppearl/en/eppearl.html
ePortfolio.org	http://www.eportfolio.org/
Epsilon	http://www.epsilon.com/LandingSite/Home.aspx
FolioLive	http://www.foliolive.com/
FolioTek	http://www.foliotek.com/
GoogleApps for Education	http://www.google.com/a/help/intl/en/edu/index.html
Interfolio	http://www.interfolio.com/
KEEP Toolkit	http://www.cfkeep.org/static/index.html
LiveText	https://www.livetext.com/
Mahara	http://mahara.org/
MooFolio	http://www.k12opensource.org/spdc/moofolio/moofolio.html
More Self-Esteem with my ePortfolio (MOSEP) project	http://wiki.mosep.org/Mosep/
My eCoach	http://my-ecoach.com/
OneFile ePortfolio	https://www1.onefile.co.uk/
Open Source Portfolio	http://osportfolio.org/
Passportfolio	http://www.passportfolio.com/
PebblePad	http://www.pebblelearning.co.uk/
Plone	http://plone.org/
Portfolio Village	http://www.portfoliovillage.com/
Richer Picture	http://www.richerpicture.com/
Studywiz ePortfolio	http://www.studywiz.com/
TaskStream	https://www.taskstream.com/pub/
TrueOutcomes	http://www.trueoutcomes.com/

Table 16: Online ePortfolio Tools and Services (EPAC Community of Practice, 2012)

APPENDIX E: Types of Tools Employed to Create ePortfolios

ePortfolio Tool Types	ePortfolio Tool Title	Website Address
Hosted Web services	Google Sites	http://www.google.com/sites/overview.html
	Googlios	http://sites.google.com/site/googlioproject/
	Tripod	http://www.tripod.lycos.com/
	Weebly	http://www.weebly.com/
	Yola	http://www.yola.com/
Blogs	WordPress	http://wordpress.com/
	Weebly	http://www.weebly.com/
	Blogger	https://www.blogger.com/start
Social Networking Sites	Orkut	http://www.orkut.com/Main#About.aspx
Wikis	PBWiki:	http://pbwiki.com/
	Wikispaces:	http://www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers
Common desktop tools	Adobe ePortfolio:	http://www.adobe.com/education/products/acrobatpro/video-portfolio.html?trackingid=EXAKG
	White Paper: Adobe ePortfolio	http://www.adobe.com/education/pdf/acrobat-eportfolios-wp.pdf http://www.microsoft.com/education/highered/whitepapers/classroom/OutOfTheClassroom.aspx
Microsoft SharePoint	-	http://www.microsoft.com/sharepoint/default.aspx

Table 17: Types of Tools Employed to Create ePortfolios (EPAC Community of Practice, 2012)

APPENDIX F: ePortfolio Tools Adopted by Educational Institutions

	Institution Title	Key Criteria Cited By Institutions in Considering Systems/Platforms
Blackboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Virginia State University ▪ University of Findlay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ease of use (and user friendly) ▪ Portability ▪ Cost ▪ Flexibility ▪ Multi-use across departments ▪ Multimedia support ▪ User-centered ▪ Support ▪ Accessibility ▪ Social networking features ▪ Open- source ▪ Accreditation ▪ Recommended by someone ▪ Ability to support rubrics ▪ Ability to aggregate and disaggregate data ▪ Mechanism for feedback from instructors (with or without rubrics) ▪ Summary data ▪ Ability to facilitate student learning and assessment ▪ Integration with current institution technologies ▪ Vendor reliability ▪ Ability to customize ▪ Ability to access after graduation ▪ Security ▪ Privacy ▪ Student ownership ▪ Hours, time, and cost to implement ▪ Same system across a university system ▪ No criteria: it was the default system connected to the course or learning management system
Chalk and Wire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Queens College 	
Desire 2 Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Portland Community College ▪ Memorial University 	
Diagnostic Digital Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alverno College 	
Digication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boston University College of General Studies ▪ LaGuardia Community College 	
eFolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ San Francisco State University ▪ University of Texas 	
Epsilen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Queensborough Community College 	
Google	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foothill College 	
Live Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Long Island University 	
Mahara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Western Sydney Institute 	
Sakai/OSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rutgers University 	
Task Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ St. Joseph College School of Education 	
Weebly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salt Lake Community College 	
WordPress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ University of Oregon 	
Yola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salt Lake Community College 	

Table 18: ePortfolio Tools Adopted by Educational Institutions-Criteria Cited by Educational Institutions in Considering ePortfolio Systems/Platforms (EPAC Community of Practice, 2012)

APPENDIX G: Screenshots Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio”

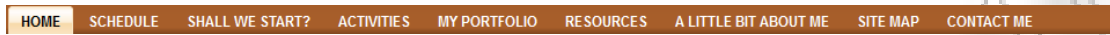


Figure 26: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Pages

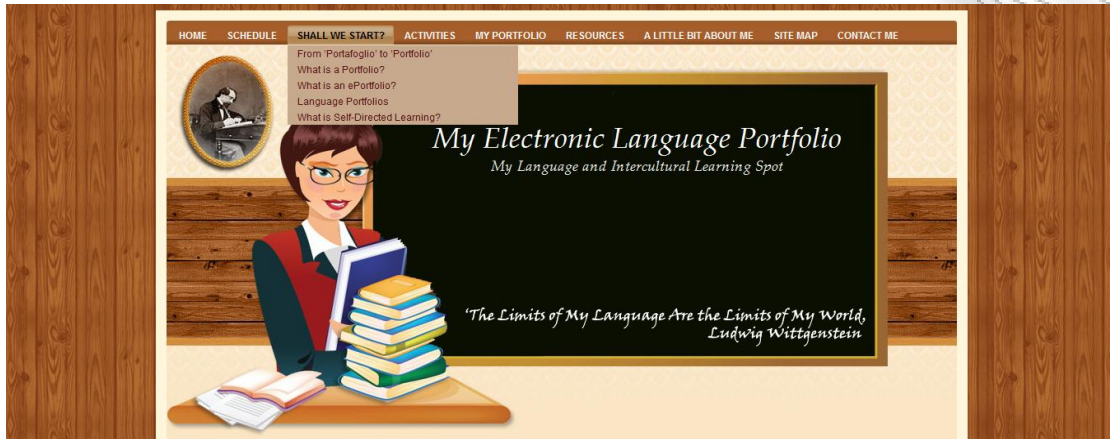


Figure 27: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Shall We Start Subpages

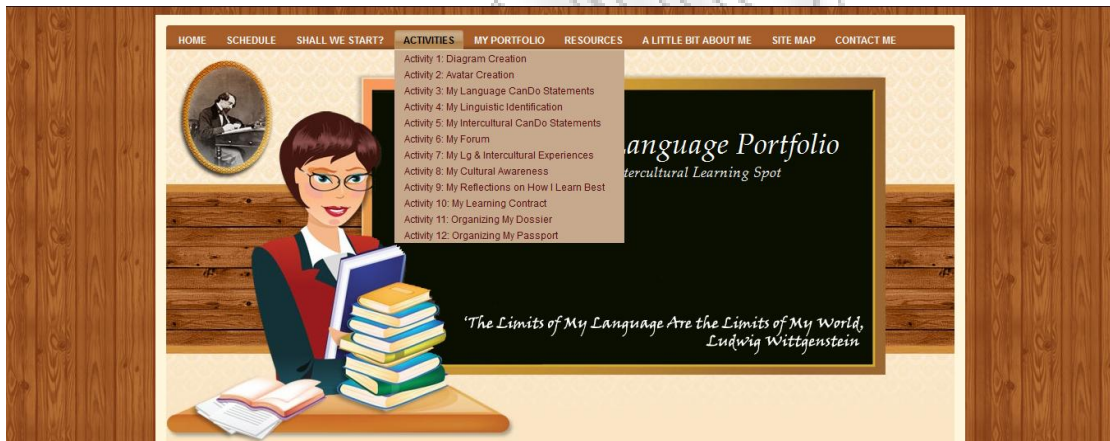


Figure 28: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Activities Subpages

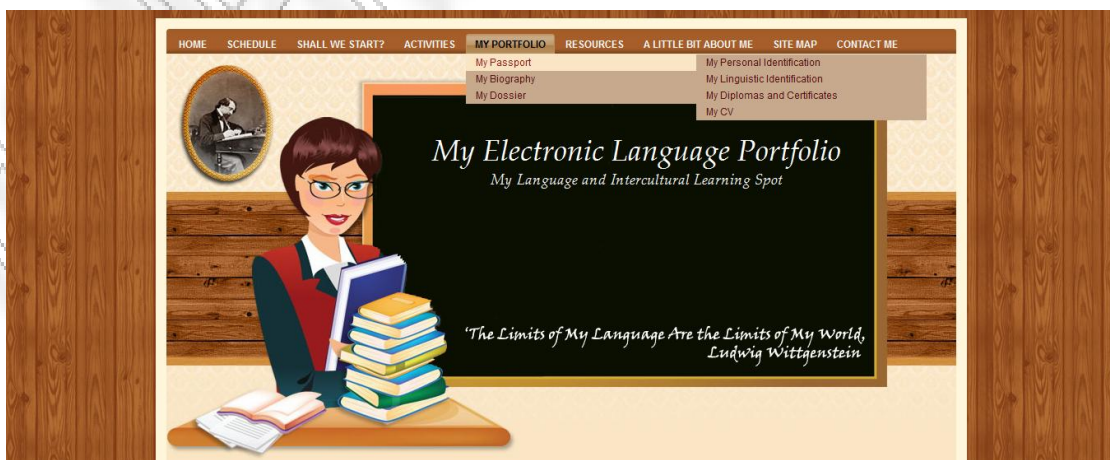


Figure 29: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” My Portfolio Subpages (My Passport)

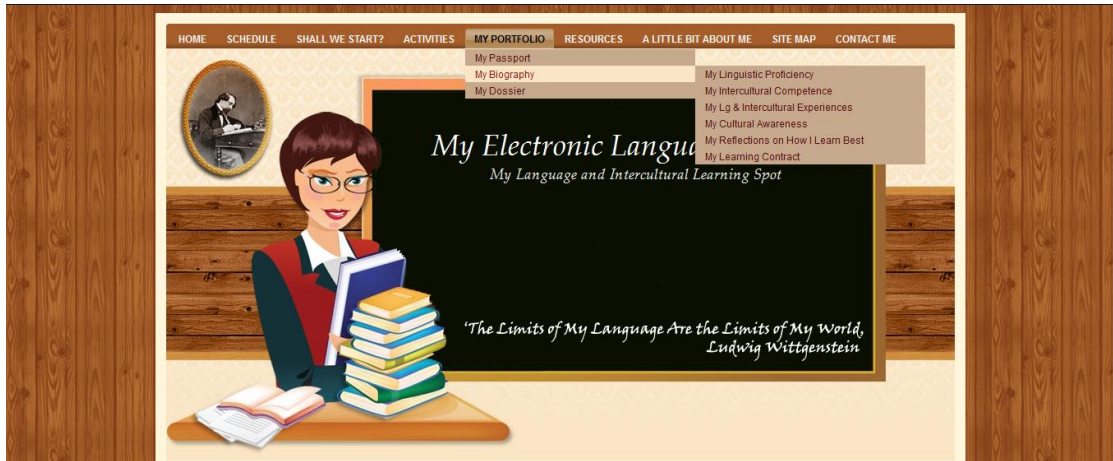


Figure 30: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” My Portfolio Subpages (My Biography)



Figure 31: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” My Portfolio Subpages (My Dossier)

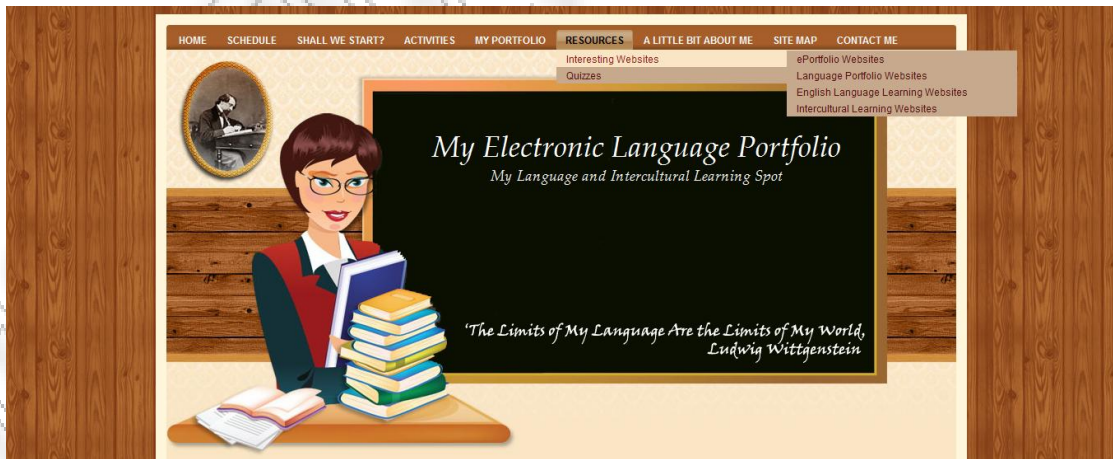


Figure 32: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Resources Subpages (Interesting Websites)

Glogster
BETA

Welcome to
'My Electronic Language Portfolio'
course

This is the right place for you if you have **language skills** which are not reflected in the qualifications or certificates you have gained- simply because they have not been assessed or learned in formal education.

At the same time, a little language can go a long way, so even basic levels of skills in another language can help you **break the ice, build relationships, orientate yourself abroad** or **get more enjoyment**

You are more than
welcome to "My Electronic
Language Portfolio"
course!!!

So, if you are interested in all this stuff, this course is just what you are looking for!!!
Sit back and enjoy this **learning journey**, just like our friends in the following video are about to do!!!

Figure 33: Screenshot Captured of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" Homepage

Schedule

[Edit](#)



Before starting off, it would be helpful to consult the schedule to make sure you do not miss or exceed any of the deadlines assigned!!!

2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

◦ [« Previous events »](#) ◦ [Next events »](#)

June 2012						
MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
				"My Reactions Towards the Electronic Language Portfolio Course" Survey (1) ▶ Shall We Start? ▶ ePortfolio Websites ▶ ePortfolio Quiz ▶ Language Portfolio Websites ▶	Shall We Start? ▶ ePortfolio Websites ▶ ePortfolio Quiz ▶ Language Portfolio Websites ▶	Shall We Start? ▶ ePortfolio Websites ▶ ePortfolio Quiz ▶ Language Portfolio Websites ▶
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Activity 1 ▶ Activity 2 ▶ Activity 3 ▶ English Language Learning Websites ▶	Activity 1 ▶ Activity 2 ▶ Activity 3 ▶ English Language Learning Websites ▶	Activity 4 ▶ Activity 5 ▶ Intercultural Learning Websites ▶ Activity 6 ▶	Activity 4 ▶ Activity 5 ▶ Intercultural Learning Websites ▶ Activity 6 ▶	Activity 7 ▶ Activity 8 ▶ Activity 9 ▶ Activity 6 ▶	Activity 7 ▶ Activity 8 ▶ Activity 9 ▶ Activity 6 ▶	Activity 10 ▶ Activity 11 ▶ Activity 12 ▶ Activity 6 ▶


18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Activity 10 ▶	Activity 10 ▶	Activity 10 ▶	Activity 10 ▶	Activity 10 ▶	Activity 10 ▶	Activity 10 ▶
Activity 11 ▶	Activity 11 ▶	Activity 11 ▶	Activity 11 ▶	Activity 11 ▶	Activity 11 ▶	Activity 11 ▶
Activity 12 ▶	Activity 12 ▶	Activity 12 ▶	Activity 12 ▶	Activity 12 ▶	Activity 12 ▶	Activity 12 ▶
Activity 6 ▶	Activity 6 ▶	Activity 6 ▶	Activity 6 ▶	Activity 6 ▶	Activity 6 ▶	Activity 6 ▶
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
Activity 10 ▶	Activity 10 ▶	Activity 10 ▶				
Activity 11 ▶	Activity 11 ▶	Activity 11 ▶				
Activity 12 ▶	Activity 12 ▶	Activity 12 ▶				
Activity 6 ▶	Activity 6 ▶	Activity 6 ▶				
		"My Reactions Towards the Electronic Language Portfolio Course" Survey (2) ▶				

Category Key

- Activities
- Interesting Websites
- Quizzes
- Shall We Start?
- Surveys

Figure 34: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Schedule Page

From ‘Portafoglio’ to ‘Portfolio’

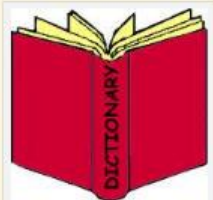


Did You Know That...

Etymologically, the word portfolio is made of the combination of the Latin words "*portare*" (to carry) and "*folium*" (paper, sheet) into the Italian word "*portafoglio*", and then transferred to English as "*portfolio*" (OED, 2007). Together they suggest a collection of papers (evidence) that are portable.

The use of portfolios in daily life is not a new phenomenon.

- *Artists* have maintained portfolios that included their best work for years, either using their collection for seeking further employment or for simply demonstrating their creativity.
- *Financial portfolios* encompass a comprehensive record of fiscal transactions and investment holdings that represent a person's monetary worth.
- Portfolios can also be found in areas such as *marketing* or *architecture*.
- Portfolios were introduced in the field of *education* as an instructional tool in the 1970s. Since then, their use has become common in teaching.







Delving Deeper into the Etymology of the word 'Portafoglio'

Resources:

OED (2007). Online Etymology Dictionary. Retrieved March 13, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/portfolio>

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Figure 35: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Shall We Start Subpage (From Portafoglio to Portfolio)

What is a Portfolio?

[Edit](#)



Very simply put, a portfolio is **a collection of evidence that is gathered together to show a person's learning journey over time and to demonstrate their abilities** (Butler, 2006).

In the context of contemporary education, the term 'portfolio' denotes collections of evidence assembled by **students, faculty members, or entire institutions** to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning, to assess learning effectiveness, and to demonstrate competence to external stakeholders.

Several types of academic portfolios have received attention in the literature, including:

1. Student portfolios: purposeful collections of examples of student work annotated with students' reflective commentary. Examples may be drawn from assignments associated with a single course, or from curricular and co-curricular activities spanning a student's entire academic career. Students may also

assemble portfolios as a way to earn academic credit for learning accomplished outside the classroom (Linn and Gronlund, 2000, Yancey, 2001a).

Thus, student portfolios constitute versatile collections of:

- students' works, tasks, display pieces and projects, representing their progress and skills as learners, compiled by the students themselves.
- students' own descriptions of the entire process of learning and their comments on it.

Apart from individual and co-operative material in one or more areas or pieces of work a student portfolio can contain:

- items connected to the student's leisure activities and hobbies, which might shed light on his/her personality;
- observations;
- evaluations of supervisors, mentors and peers and
- reflective thinking about all of these.

Thus, through their portfolios, learners:

- describe their learning context;
- introduce their best pieces of work;
- state their criteria for selection and
- illuminate their strengths and progress as well as their plans for future studies.

2. Teaching portfolios consist of course syllabi, assignments, student work, and other artifacts, collected by practicing or aspiring teachers with the intent of fostering self-reflection and peer review of teaching.

3. Institutional portfolios "contain examples of [an] institution's activities, programs, and initiatives, each expressing an element of reflection and self-assessment. Through its portfolio, an institution documents how it is achieving its stated mission by examples that speak to the interests of various audiences" (Ketcheson, 2001).

Resources:

Ketcheson, Kathi A., 2001, Public Accountability and Reporting: What Should Be the Public Part of Accreditation? In Ratcliff, James L., Edward S. Lubinescu, and Maureen A. Gaffney (Eds.), *How Accreditation Influences Assessment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 83-93.

Linn, Robert L. and Norman E. Gronlund (2000) Chapter 12: Portfolios. In *Measurement and Assessment in Teaching*, 8th Ed. Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake (2001a) Digitized Student Portfolios. In Barbara Cambridge and others (Eds.), *Electronic Portfolios: Emerging Practices in Student, Faculty, and Institutional Learning*. Washington, DC: American Association of Higher Education, 15-30.

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Figure 36: Screenshot Captured of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" Shall We Start Subpage (What is a Portfolio?)

What is an ePortfolio?

[Edit](#)



ePortfolio Definitions

A wealth of definitions exists about what constitutes an **e-Portfolio**. An electronic portfolio (also known as an **ePortfolio**, **e-portfolio**, **efolio**, **digital portfolio**, **webfolio**) is essentially an electronic version of a paper-based portfolio, created in a computer environment, and incorporating not just text, but graphic, audio and video material as well. Looking at the commonalities in a range of definitions gives us a simplified definition: **an e-Portfolio is a number of independent digital artefacts that are grouped together to demonstrate a range of skills and competencies of the creator.**

This definition is further clarified by [JISC infoNet](#) (2005), who have an in-depth [infokit on the topic of e-Portfolios](#) and define it as:

".. an e-portfolio is a **product** created by learners, a collection of digital artefacts articulating learning (both formal and informal), experiences and achievements. Learners create 'presentational' e-portfolios by using e-portfolio **tools or systems**. As part of this production process,

learners can be inherently supported to develop one or more key skills such as collecting, selecting, reflecting, sharing, collaborating, annotating and presenting - these can be described as e-portfolio-related **processes**..."

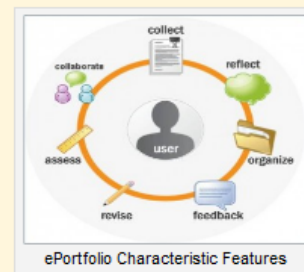
An ePortfolio is described as:

- selective and structured collections of information
- gathered for specific purposes and showing/evidencing one's accomplishments and growth which are:
 1. stored digitally and managed by appropriate software;
 2. developed by using appropriate multimedia and customarily within a web environment and retrieved from a website, or developed by CD-ROM or by DVD.

ePortfolio General Characteristics

The general characteristics of an ePortfolio (*Ward & Grant, 2007*) are described as being:

- a "repository" for "artefacts";
- a means of accessing personal information;
- a means of presenting oneself and ones skills, qualities and achievements to others;
- a means of collecting and selecting assessment evidence;
- a guidance tool to support review and choice;
- a means of sharing and collaborating;
- a means of encouraging a sense of personal identity.



Points of Difference from Traditional Portfolios

Electronic portfolios display a number of characteristics that differ from traditional portfolios. Challis (2005), Abrami and Barrett (2005) and Strudler and Wetzel (2005) have provided a variety of points of difference, which are summarised here.

Electronic portfolios:

- are easier to search and records can be simply retrieved, manipulated, refined and reorganised;
- reduce effort and time;
- are more comprehensive and rigorous;
- can use more extensive material;
- include pictures, sound, animation, graphic design and video;
- are much smaller;
- are cost effective to distribute;
- are instantly accessible;
- can have an organisational structure that is not linear or hierarchical;
- are easy to carry and share with peers, supervisors, parents, employers and others;
- allow fast feedback
- showcase the technological skills of the creator;
- provide access to a global readership if they are based on the web.

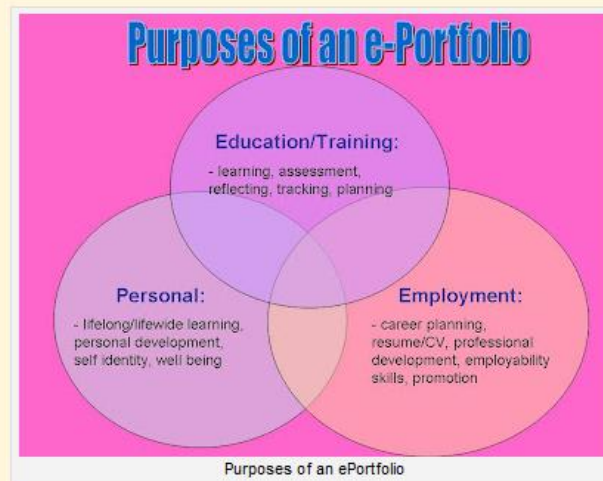
Benefits of Electronic Portfolios

The following summarises the main points made in the literature with regard to the many and varied benefits of electronic portfolios:

- **Skill development.** The creation of an electronic portfolio serves to develop multimedia technology skills, general literacy, communication and problem solving skills.
- **Evidence of learning.** Electronic portfolios provide a 'rich picture' of student learning and competencies, thus facilitating authentic learning. They actively involve students in demonstrating past and current learning. They help students learn to manage their own professional development and thus contribute to lifelong learning. They provide student-centred learning.
- **Feedback.** Electronic portfolios facilitate the exchange of ideas and feedback. Students can receive feedback quickly and regularly throughout the process of constructing their portfolios across electronic media channels.
- **Reflection.** Electronic portfolios encourage students to reflect on their work and their reasons for choosing certain pieces to be incorporated in their portfolio. Students are encouraged to be reflective throughout the entire portfolio process and to use that reflection to integrate their learning experiences and find meaning in them.
- **Psychological benefits.** For those compiling them, electronic portfolios foster a sense of pride in their work, a sense of personal accomplishment and a feeling of satisfaction.
- **Assessment.** Electronic portfolios engage students in the evaluation and assessment process as they continually revisit and refine their portfolios.
- **Artefacts.** Learners can integrate text and multimedia elements such as pictures, graphics, and audio and video recordings.
- **Maintenance.** Electronic portfolios are easy to maintain, edit and update and because of this are more likely to be constantly revised.
- **Portability and sharing.** Electronic portfolios are easy to carry, to share with others and to transport into a new system.
- **Access.** Especially when saved to the Internet, electronic portfolios are easily accessible by a number of people.
- **Audience.** Because of their accessibility, electronic portfolios are viewable by a much larger audience.
- **Organisation.** Electronic portfolios are easy to organise and search.
- **Storage.** Electronic portfolios are easy and efficient to store.
- **Cost.** Electronic portfolios are inexpensive to reproduce.
- **Standardisation.** Electronic portfolios have the potential to be standardised across regions and countries.
- **Privacy.** Electronic portfolios can include a privacy feature to protect student work.



ePortfolio Types



The fact that there are multiple purposes for ePortfolios makes the landscape complex. The [IMS Global Learning Consortium](#) (2005) has identified six major types of ePortfolio:

- **Assessment ePortfolios:** Used to demonstrate achievement to some authority by relating evidence within the ePortfolio to performance standards defined by that authority.
- **Presentation ePortfolios:** Used to evidence learning or achievement to an audience in a persuasive way. Presentation portfolios often contain instructions about how their contents should be rendered. Presentation portfolios are often used to demonstrate professional qualifications.



[An Introduction to ePortfolios](#)

Still not enough? Need more information on ePortfolios???



Then, press [here](#)...

Now that you feel pretty sure about your knowledge on ePortfolios, go ahead and do the quiz...press [here](#)...

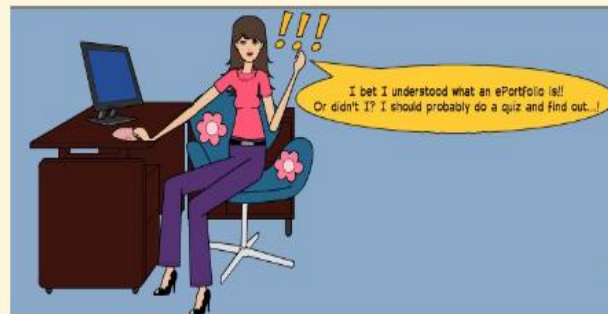


Figure 37: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Shall We Start Subpage (What is an ePortfolio?)

Language Portfolios

What is a Language Portfolio?



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

In general, a language portfolio can be defined as a:

"systematic collection work that is analysed to show progress over time with regard to instructional objectives"

or as:

"documents in which those who are learning or have learned one or more languages - whether at school or outside school - can record and reflect on their language learning and intercultural experiences" (COE, 2001).

Language portfolios constitute a collection of individual students' work put together in a file. Examples of portfolio tasks include various written texts, drawings, learning logs, student reflections and audio or video tapes, usually with teacher and student comments on the progress made by the owner of the portfolio. In portfolio assessment students are invited to select samples of their own work to show growth and learning over time (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). Language portfolios belong to the student and can be updated as language learning continues by adding to and taking away pieces of work.

Language Portfolio Aims



- Language portfolios help learners give shape and coherence to their **experience of learning** and **using languages** other than their first language.
- Language portfolios **motivate** learners by acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language skills at all levels.
- Language portfolios provide **a record of the linguistic and cultural skills** they have acquired (to be consulted, for example, when they are moving to a higher learning level or seeking employment at home or abroad).

Language Portfolio Advantages



Some of the perceived advantages entailed by language portfolio use are closely related to:

Enhancing learners' motivation by providing something personal and tangible which they can build up and develop.

Helping learners to reflect on their own learning and achievement by encouraging them to make choices, review, compare and organize their own work.

Enabling learners to look for new cultural experiences by opening their eyes to the possibilities available to them.

From a teacher's point of view, portfolios lead to greater learner autonomy since they involve self-assessment, learner responsibility and involvement;

What is the European Language Portfolio?

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) was developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe:

- to support the development of **learner autonomy**, **plurilingualism** and **intercultural awareness** and **competence**;
- to allow users to **record** their **language learning achievements** and their **experience** of learning and using languages.



In an ELP all competence is valued, whether it was gained inside or outside formal education. In addition:

- the ELP is the property of the learner;
- it is linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: It conforms to a common set of Principles and Guidelines approved by the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning Modern Languages.

Functions of a European Language Portfolio

The European Language Portfolio project serves two principal functions:

The pedagogic function:

- To enhance the motivation of the learners to improve their ability to communicate in different languages.
- To enhance the motivation of the learners to learn additional languages.
- To enhance the motivation of the learners to seek new intercultural experiences.
- To incite and help learners to reflect their objectives, ways of learning and success in language learning.
- To incite and help learners to plan their learning and learn autonomously.
- To encourage learners to enhance their plurilingual and intercultural experience.

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- To incite and help learners to reflect their objectives, ways of learning and success in language learning.
- To incite and help learners to plan their learning and learn autonomously.
- To encourage learners to enhance their plurilingual and intercultural experience.

The reporting function:

- The European Language Portfolio aims to document its holder's plurilingual language proficiency and experiences in other languages in a comprehensive, informative, transparent and reliable way.

The Three Parts of the European Language Portfolio



Passport	Biography	Dossier
Here the language learner can summarize his/her linguistic and cultural identity, language qualifications, experience of using different languages and contacts with different cultures.	The biography helps the learner to set learning targets, to record and reflect on language learning and on intercultural experiences and regularly assess progress.	In this part of the ELP the learner can keep samples of his/her work in the language(s) he/she has learnt or is learning.

1. Language Passport:

- The Passport section contains **factual information** about the language learner.
- It gives a history of the learners' language learning experiences. It therefore provides an **overview of the individual's proficiency** in different languages at a given point in time.
- It records formal qualifications and describes **language competencies** and **significant language and intercultural learning experiences**.
- It includes information on **partial and specific competence**.
- It allows for **self-assessment**, teacher assessment and assessment by educational institutions and examinations boards.

2. Language Biography:

- The Language Biography is a **personal history** of the learners' language learning experience.
- It facilitates the learner's involvement in **planning**, **reflecting** upon and **assessing** his or her learning process and progress.
- It may include **self-assessment materials**, such as the learner checklists and any aims that learners have for the future.
- It encourages the learner to state what he/she can do in each language and to include information on **linguistic and cultural experiences** gained in and outside formal educational contexts.

3. Dossier

The Dossier offers the learner the opportunity to **select materials** to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the Language Biography or Passport.

If your understanding of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) is still blurred...watching the following videos will help you clear up any potential misconceptions.

Just press on the images to watch the videos.



Still have doubts??? Then watch this [ELP presentation](#)

or you can simply catch a glimpse of what an ELP for adults may actually look like...



[Open publication](#)



Now that you are pretty knowledgeable about language portfolios and their constituent parts, it is about time you embarked on your first **ACTIVITY**... Press on the smiley icon for more..



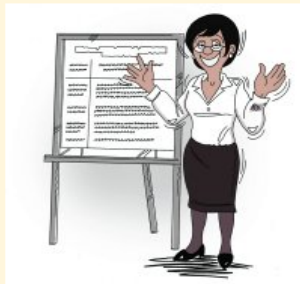
Figure 38: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Shall We Start Subpage (Language Portfolios)

What is Self-Directed Learning?

[Edit](#)



Just a few things about Self-Directed Learning...



Most of you spend a considerable time acquiring information and learning new skills. The rapidity of change, the continuous creation of new knowledge and an ever-widening access to information make such acquisitions necessary. Much of this learning takes place at the your (the learner's) initiative, even if available through formal settings. A common label given to such activity is **self-directed learning**. In essence, **self-directed learning** is seen as any study form in which individuals have primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and even evaluating the effort. Most people, when asked, will proclaim a preference for assuming such responsibility whenever possible.

A Working Definition of Self-Directed Learning...

"In its broadest meaning, '**self-directed learning**' describes:



"a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identify human and material resources for learning, choosing and implement appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (Knowles, 1975).

Known facts about Self-Directed Learning:



- (a) individual learners can become empowered to take increasingly more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning endeavor;
- (b) self-direction is best viewed as a continuum or characteristic that exists to some degree in every person and learning situation;
- (c) self-direction does not necessarily mean all learning will take place in isolation from others;
- (d) self-directed learners appear able to transfer learning, in terms of both knowledge and study skill, from one situation to another;
- (e) self-directed study can involve various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading, participation in study groups, internships, electronic dialogues, and reflective writing activities. (Hiemstra, 1994)

Figure 39: Screenshot Captured of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" Shall We Start Subpage (What is Self-Directed Learning?)

ePortfolio Websites

Edit

Check the following websites and find out more about ePortfolios!!!



ePortfolio Websites

http://academic.regis.edu/LAAP/eportfolio/basics_what.htm

<http://www.iiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/e-portfolios>

<http://www.iiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/crossmedia/advice/using-digital-media-for-your-e-portfolio>

<http://www.danwilton.com/eportfolios/types.php>

http://wikieducator.org/Advantages_of_ePortfolio

<http://members.shaw.ca/technology/assignments/presentation/2whyuse.htm>

https://www.e-education.psu.edu/files/e-port_report.pdf

<http://electronicportfolios.org/categories.html>

Figure 40: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Resources Subpage (Interesting Websites, ePortfolio Websites)

Language Portfolio Websites

Edit

If your spirit is restless and you need more information on language portfolios...go ahead...take a look!!!!



<http://www.coe.int/dq4/education/elp/>

http://www.coe.int/dq4/linguistic/Portfolio_en.asp

http://www.coe.int/DG4/Portfolio/?M=/main_pages/levels.html

Figure 41: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Resources Subpage (Interesting Websites, Language Portfolio Websites)

Intercultural Learning Websites



If you are interested in performing intercultural learning activities, take a look at the following websites.

Try to perform some of the activities suggested to formulate an idea of the current level of your intercultural competence.

<http://youth-egames.org/games/trip1/trip1.html>

<http://youth-egames.org/games/proverbs/proverbs.html>

<http://youth-egames.org/games/identity/index.html>

<http://www.fekids.com/img/kln/flash/DontGrossOutTheWorld.swf>

<http://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/>

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/culture-tests.html>

<http://www.quibblo.com/quiz/1f1UObX/Intercultural-Communication-Quiz>

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Figure 42: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Resources Subpage (Interesting Websites, Intercultural Learning Websites)

ePortfolio Quiz

[Edit](#)



Which one of the following statements is true about ePortfolios?

- An ePortfolio does not differ from a paper-based portfolio.
- An ePortfolio incorporates just text.
- An ePortfolio is a selective and structured collection of information gathered for specific purposes.
- An ePortfolio is neither digitally stored nor can it be managed by appropriate software.

Can you match the “learning” ePortfolio to its corresponding definition?

- Used to demonstrate achievement to some authority.
- Used to evidence learning or achievement to an audience in a persuasive way. Often used to demonstrate professional qualifications.
- Contains records of learning, performance and achievement which can be reflected on, and outcomes of that reflection, including plans for future development.
- Used to document, guide and advance learning over time. Has a reflective component and may be used to promote meta-cognition, to plan learning or for the integration of diverse learning experiences.

An acknowledged benefit of ePortfolio use is related to the reflective component it comprises. What does this mean?

- It means that for those compiling ePortfolios, the latter can foster a sense of pride in their work and a sense of personal accomplishment.
- It means that ePortfolios encourage students to be reflective throughout the entire portfolio process and to use that reflection to integrate their learning experiences and find meaning in them.
- It means that ePortfolios are easy to carry, to share with others and to transport into a new system.
- It means that ePortfolios engage learners in the evaluation process as they continually revisit their portfolios.

Which of the following statements is **NOT** true about open-source common ePortfolio tools?

- Students do not need web authoring skills.
- Low software costs.
- More creative ePortfolios are possible.
- ePortfolio designers can design and enter artifacts in any way they choose.

A distinctive feature of an ePortfolio is described as being a “repository for artefacts”. What might the “artefacts” look like?

- Text.
- Audio and video material.
- Graphic.
- All the above.

Show Answer

Show Results

Figure 43: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Resources Subpage (Quizzes, ePortfolio Quiz)

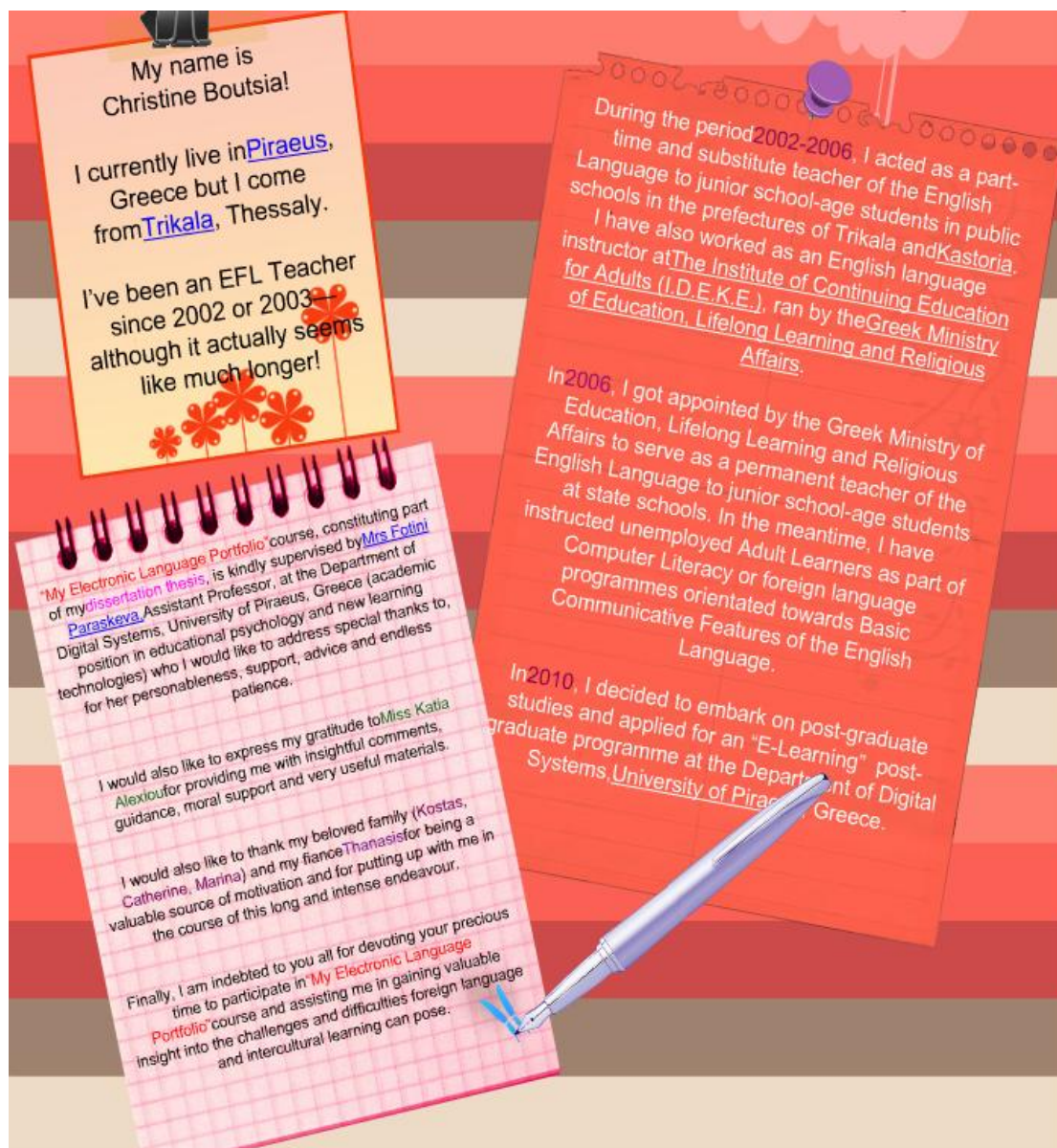


Figure 44: Screenshot Captured of "My Electronic Language Portfolio" A Little Bit About Me Page

Site Map

Options ▾ 

Table of Contents for My Electronic Language Portfolio course

Static Pages

-  Home
April 4, 2012, 22:14

-  Schedule
April 7, 2012, 00:24
Before starting off, it would be helpful to consult the schedule to make sure you do not miss or exceed any of the deadlines assigned!!!

- ▷  Shall We Start?
April 4, 2012, 22:16

- ▷  Activities
April 9, 2012, 15:08

- ▷  My Portfolio
April 4, 2012, 22:22
No description found for this item.

- ▷  Resources
April 4, 2012, 22:25

-  A Little Bit About Me
April 4, 2012, 22:25

-  Site Map
April 24, 2012, 01:52
This page contains the site table of contents. Use it to quickly find content on this website.

-  Contact Me
May 31, 2012, 21:17

Share this Page!



Rate This Page!!!

Figure 45: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Sitemap

Contact Me



Do not hesitate to contact me for any questions that arise. Your comments are also welcome.

*(denotes required field)

Name: *

E-Mail Address: *

Subject: *

Message: *



CAPTCHA Code: *

Submit

Figure 46: Screenshot Captured of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Contact Me Page

APPENDIX H: Research Tools (Questionnaires)

“My Views on My Electronic Language Portfolio” Questionnaire

Response Key: 1- Not at all 2-A Little 3- Somewhat 4-Quite Enough 5-A Lot

1.	My Electronic Language Portfolio - Appearance	Score				
1.1	My Electronic Language Portfolio is easy to read. Fonts, point size, bullets, italics, bold, and indentations for headings and sub-headings enhance the presentation. Background and colors enhance the readability and aesthetic quality of the text.	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	All images selected to frame My Electronic Language Portfolio are Web-optimized.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My Electronic Language Portfolio - Operational Features	Score				
2.1	All navigation links in My Electronic Language Portfolio are clearly labeled, function properly and are up-to-date.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2	Media display as intended within My Electronic Language Portfolio.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My Electronic Language Portfolio - Evidence	Score				
3.1	My Electronic Language Portfolio shows depth in my major and related experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	My Electronic Language Portfolio shows the breadth of my knowledge and experience.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My Electronic Language Portfolio - Reflection	Score				
4.1	The audience and purpose of My Electronic Language Portfolio are described or are made obvious.	1	2	3	4	5
4.2	My Electronic Language Portfolio addresses my own personal development.	1	2	3	4	5

Table 19: Sample Questions encompassed in “My Views on My Electronic Language Portfolio” Questionnaire

“My Electronic Language Portfolio Use Experience” Questionnaire (Self-Directed Language Learning)

Response Key: 1- Not at all 2-A Little 3- Somewhat 4-Quite Enough 5-A Lot

1.	Self-Directed Language Learning – Ownership of Learning	Score				
1.1	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help assume responsibility for own language learning.	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help identify, determine and articulate own language learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Self-Directed Language Learning –	Score				

Self-Management and Self-Monitoring						
2.1	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help explore a range of possibilities and make sound decisions as far as language learning is concerned.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help self-plan and self-manage own learning time.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Self-Directed Language Learning – Extension of Learning	Score				
3.1	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help application of what is learnt to new contexts.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help utilize the skills acquired to learn beyond the curriculum contents.	1	2	3	4	5

Table 20: Sample Questions encompassed in “My Electronic Language Portfolio Use Experience” Questionnaire (Self-Directed Language Learning)

**“My Electronic Language Portfolio Use Experience” Questionnaire
(Intercultural Competence)**

Response Key: 1- Not at all 2-A Little 3- Somewhat 4-Quite Enough 5-A Lot

1.	Attitudes – Respect , Openness, Tolerance for Ambiguity	Score				
1.1	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help value those from different cultural backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help demonstrate that I value others, even when I may disagree with their beliefs and opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Knowledge & Comprehension – Cultural Self-Awareness/ Understanding, Culture-specific Knowledge, Sociolinguistic Awareness	Score				
2.1	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help describe own cultural conditioning.	1	2	3	4	5
2.2	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help identify core beliefs and how have they been culturally influenced.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Skills – To Listen, Observe and Evaluate; To Analyze, Interpret and Relate	Score				
3.1	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio enhance listening to the views of others.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio enhance engagement in active observation of others.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Internal Outcomes – Adaptability, Flexibility	Score				
4.1	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help adapt own behavior and communication style to accommodate others’ from different culturally-conditioned communication styles.	1	2	3	4	5

4.2	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help view knowledge, cultural artifacts, or a situation or issue from multiple perspectives.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	External Outcomes – Communication, Behavior	Score				
5.1	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help increase my cultural appropriateness in my interactions with others.	1	2	3	4	5
5.2	Activities encompassed in My Electronic Language Portfolio help meet my goals in an appropriate and effective manner.	1	2	3	4	5

Table 21: Sample Questions encompassed in “My Electronic Language Portfolio Use Experience” Questionnaire (Intercultural Competence)

APPENDIX I: “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Storyboard

“My Electronic Language Portfolio” Storyboard	
1.Title	Developing self-direction in language learning and enhancing intercultural competence via composing “My Electronic Language Portfolio”.
2.Learning Objectives	<p>Aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To promote self-direction in language learning and enhance intercultural competence. <p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To help learners assume responsibility for their own language learning. ▪ To enable learners to identify, determine and articulate their language learning goals and needs. ▪ To help learners understand individual strengths and weaknesses in language learning. ▪ To help learners self-plan and self-manage their learning time. ▪ To enable learners to choose how to plan their language learning according to their individual learning style. ▪ To help learners chart their language learning processes. ▪ To help learners critically reflect on their language learning. ▪ To promote learners’ future independent language learning. ▪ To enable application of what is learnt to new contexts. ▪ To enhance learners’ eagerness and curiosity to learn about different cultures. ▪ To encourage openness to those from different cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds. ▪ To help learners view knowledge, cultural artifacts, or a situation or issue from multiple perspectives. ▪ To enable learners to adapt their behavior and communication style to accommodate others’ from different culturally-conditioned communication styles.
3.Learners’ Characteristics	<p>This storyboard is intended for enabling prospective - or already settled in the destination country - adult, highly-educated, digitally-skilled migrants to develop their self-direction in learning the language of the receiving society and enhance their intercultural competence via composing their own language ePortfolios.</p> <p>Therefore, this storyboard can efficiently address the needs of learners, who share the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They are prospective-or already settled in the destination country-adult, highly educated migrants. ▪ They wish to develop self-direction in learning the language of the host society. ▪ They wish to develop intercultural competence. ▪ They exemplify adequate expertise in the use of ICT tools and a solid knowledge of the English language that will facilitate navigation throughout “My Electronic Language Portfolio”.
4. Learning Activities	The learning activities proposed, have been included in Gibbons’ (2002) stages or degrees of movement toward SDL, as

follows:

- **Incidental Self-Directed Learning**
 - Activity 1: Diagram Creation
- **Learning How to Think Independently**
 - Activity 2: Avatar Creation (My Personal Identification)
- **Self-Managed Learning**
 - Activity 3: My Language CanDo Statements
 - Activity 4: My Linguistic Identification
 - Activity 5: My Intercultural CanDo Statements
 - Activity 6: My Forum
 - Activity 7: My Language and Intercultural Experiences
 - Activity 8: My Cultural Awareness
- **Self-Planned Learning**
 - Activity 9: My Reflections on How I Learn Best
 - Activity 10: My Learning Contract
- **Self-Directed Learning**
 - Activity 11: Organizing My Dossier
 - Activity 12: Organizing My Passport

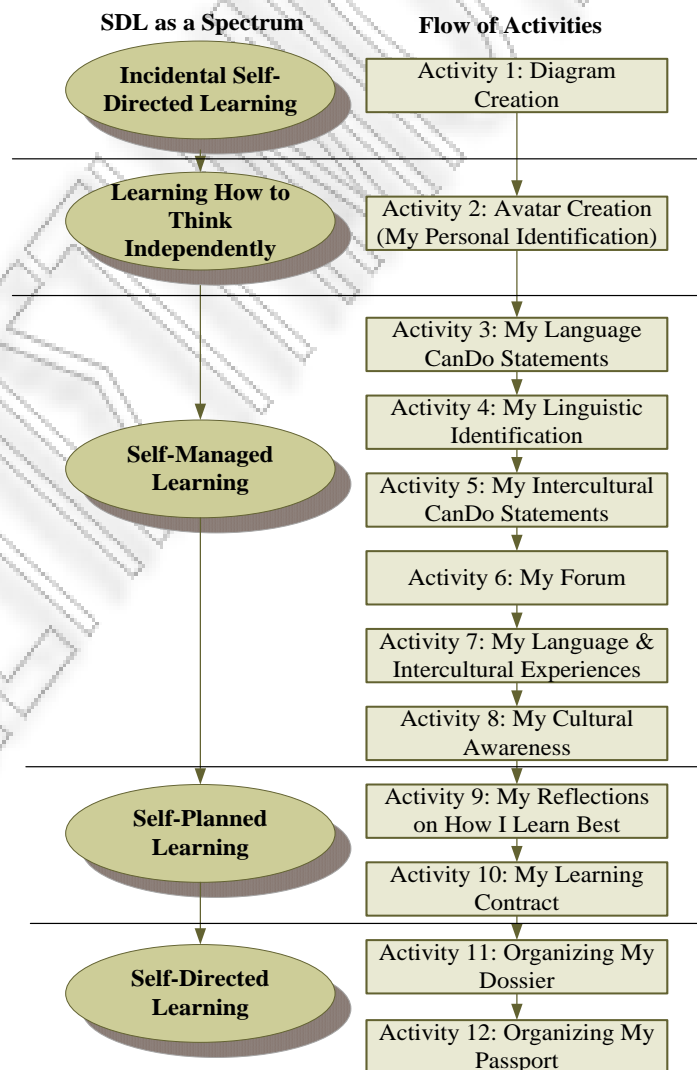


Figure 47: Diagrammatical Representation of the Flow of “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Learning Activities

5.Roles

Instructor:

- To facilitate high quality, holistic student-centred learning.
- To be willing to give up control and allow learners to take charge of the learning process.
- To involve learners in co-creating learning opportunities thus increasing their motivation to learn and to be involved.
- To find incentives for learners to participate actively.
- To confirm learners' engagement, comprehension, participation.
- To coordinate the learning experience.
- To guide learners through the learning process.
- To enable learners to express their personality and identity.
- To support learners in taking responsibility for their learning.
- To facilitate self-directed language learning opportunities.
- To enable the promotion of learners' intercultural competence.
- To establish a culture for productive interaction.
- To answer to the questions learners pose and clarify emergent misconceptions.
- To provide constructive and non-threatening feedback.
- Facilitative role rather than that of a knowledge dispenser (Shelton, Lane, & Waldhart, 1999). Roles of consultant, guide, and resource provider (Markel, 1999).

Administrator:

- To ensure that appropriate technology is used to effectively engage learners and communicate course information.
- To create new knowledge relevant to the content and maintain a standard of quality education.
- To upload course materials and enable learners' access to them.
- To facilitate understanding of the course materials.
- To guide learners into performing the learning activities suggested.
- To track and maintain records of student activity and attendance.
- To provide feedback in a timely manner.
- To provide learners with one on one advice/counseling when requested.

Learners:

- To move from being passive receivers to controlling their own learning.
 - To be highly motivated, know what they want to learn, set their objectives, find resources and evaluate their learning progress to meet their goals (Cranton, 1994).
 - To become responsible for their own learning, which means being autonomous and proactive rather than reactive.
 - To self-monitor their efforts, actions and progress.
 - To be self-disciplined: to adhere consistently to their goals and time scheduling.
 - To think of ways to improve their organization and management of learning.
-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To learn in a reflective way and with critical thinking. ▪ To be willing to share their ideas, opinions, feelings. ▪ To be tolerant towards other learners' opinions. ▪ To learn from mistakes (own and others'). ▪ To take into account classmates' and teacher's ideas and criticism. ▪ To seek feedback and learn from it. ▪ To give feedback in order to learn.
6.Resources, Tools, Services	<p>“My Electronic Language Portfolio”. Available at: http://www.nikosmdtps.com/wordpress/</p>

Table 22: “My Electronic Language Portfolio” Storyboard