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Digital Portfolio.

Improving Portfolio in High
Education Levels

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An Introduction to ATINER's Conference Paper Series

ATINER started to publish this conference papers series in 2012. It includes only the papers submitted for publication after they were presented at one of the conferences organized by our Institute every year. The papers published in the series have not been refereed and are published as they were submitted by the author. The series serves two purposes. First, we want to disseminate the information as fast as possible. Second, by doing so, the authors can receive comments useful to revise their papers before they are considered for publication in one of ATINER's books, following our standard procedures of a blind review.

Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos President Athens Institute for Education and Research

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Digital Portfolio. Improving Portfolio in High Education Levels

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Abstract

This paper has as ITS main objective to introduce the "digital portfolio" as a tool for monitoring and evaluation in Spanish language courses that are currently taught at the University of Cyprus.

Our objective is to show how with the help of the digital portfolio and the benefits of Web 2.0 we can work and evaluate the different skills, while enabling our students to participate and be aware of their own learning process. Similarly, we offer a new treatment for the correction of errors and we help students' integration into the topics that we will develop and include in their portfolio, so that is a true reflection of their personality, your progress, achievements, skills and aptitudes.

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Into context.

First of all, what are we meaning when we say digital environment? Can our language class be a digital environment in which we are all in and nobody out? That was our main objective at the University of Cyprus when we decided to create a website as a base from which to work all together: teachers and learners.

Currently, at the University of Cyprus, we work with the A1 and A2 levels of the CEFR, so we wanted to create an affordable, manageable and comfortable place to work and where our students could cope in a more or less easy way and advance in their learning of the language and the world around it. Also, one of our permanent objectives throughout the years at the University of Cyprus has been to promote the autonomous and meaningful learning for our students.

Since the creation of the website "La clase de español (Ucy)"¹, we have developed a variety of activities that allow us to work all the skills. So the student receives, in many different ways, an input and is capable, in turn, of producing an output (orally or written).

The achievement of the contents will be collected in a digital dossier with activities and reflections, which will remain active and alive throughout the learning process. This favors the teacher-student interaction beyond the classroom.

Thus we noticed how important is for the students to have an individual work space that can be shared as they want, where they can collect those special exercises and productions which they share with other students and the teacher as deemed. Of course, all in one place, without need for multiple programs and files.

It is important that the student, in addition to the received feedback, thinks about their learning process in different ways (significant questions, evaluative balloons...) which will reflect their involvement and help them in their evaluation.

This whole process will give the student a more continuous view of their "starting point" and "final point" and may evaluate their entire evolution.

Finally, the student will create a digital portfolio, accessible from anywhere and at anytime, that will eventually reflect the significant steps in their learning process (what they have done and how they have done it) and will also show what may be done from that time onwards.

What do we mean by portfolio?

Following the criteria proposed by Arter and Spandel, we can *grosso modo* define the traditional portfolio as "a collection of papers of a student that clearly shows the effort, progress and the achievements that have been obtained in specific areas". Hamp-Lyons and Condon add that the portfolio must fulfill

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three main features that are interrelated: the collection of information, the reflection and the collection of written texts. This collection of texts, apart from including multiple samples, must include information about the context of writing, not only information about the text itself.

The use of portfolios is proposed as a new concept of evaluation, which proposes the use of folders or portfolios as an alternative methodology, viable and promising to implement the new requirements: both instruction and assessment on writing. With the new evaluation model, the student becomes an active agent and no longer only the evaluated object.

The use of portfolios is also changing the traditional structure of the class, decentralizing the teacher. This one comes to occupy a role of guide and counselor. The teacher focuses more on guiding students to choose appropriate texts and helps them to establish certain standards of creativity, reasoning and reflection. Students, meanwhile, become self-assessors of their texts.

Another benefit of using portfolios is that this evaluation model not only encourages the process of self-reflection, but it also promotes the development of cognitive skills. Because the student has to develop a reflection on their own productions, this process allows them to view their work from a different perspective to appreciate their strengths and weaknesses. The portfolio gives students the opportunity to develop sensitivity to language that allows them to articulate their thoughts and feelings, while refining their analytical skills.

On the other hand, it supports and creates a learning environment, because it emphasizes the idea of continuous effort and improvement, instead of feeling that they are being penalized with a bad grade.

All this production must be seen as a process that includes real-world tasks that occur within and outside the classroom. A process in which both, teacher and student, are involved. We cannot just simply see the final product; we have to evaluate the complex process that includes five levels: planning, production, reflection, editing and evaluation. It must be a recursive process, not a linear activity.

Objectives of the use of portfolio.

For Bullock and Hawk there are four basic components which define a portfolio:

- It has certain objectives.
- It is developed for a particular audience.
- It contains work done, commonly known as evidences.
- It includes personal reflections on the evidences incorporated.

Among the main objectives can be pointed out also:

- To evaluate both the process and the product.
- To motivate the students to reflect on their own learning process, participating in the evaluation process.
- To develop collaborative skills among students.

- To promote the problem-solving ability.
- To structure learning tasks (Establishing what is mandatory and what is optional.)
- To provide information for teachers to adjust course content to students' needs.

Different kinds of portfolio.

There are different kinds of portfolio according to several authors¹, which are:

- Process Portfolio: With this type of portfolio a sequence of events
 designed to the achievement of objectives previously set is reflected in
 a document.
- **Product Portfolio:** This kind of portfolio tries to analyze the results of an action or actions, in this case academic, and looks for a comprehensive analysis, taking into account the objectives, rather than the simple presentation of successful results.
- **Showcase Portfolio:** This particular portfolio collects the best results from a process. Its objective is personal marketing, and it is the type of portfolio used by artists.
- **Learning Portfolio:** It makes possible to offer information on learning objectives and self-reflections, incorporating both the student and the teacher.
- Transition Portfolio: It makes possible to provide evidence and records which prove useful in times of transition or passage from one academic level to another.
- **Assessment Portfolio:** It makes possible to assess the achievement of specific criteria for a qualification or work.

In education, this classification covers, in general, the different kinds of portfolios that are used, assuming that a portfolio is always seen as an instrument or assessment tool.

In a broader sense, without taking into mind at this point a typology of digital portfolios, we can say that within the educational context, they must contain:

- Relevant information (personal data, profiles of the learner and the tutor, etc.) about the process of teaching and learning or self learning.
- Works and drafts.

Reflections and comments from stored works.

• Resources of interest to trainees (as facilitators for other students with similar interests).

¹ (Bullock and Hawk, 2000; Love, McKean and Gathercoal, 2004; Jones, 2008)

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It is suggested that portfolios should be reviewed periodically to keep them current with technology, interchange formats and learning.

Let's go to the digital portfolio.

The digital portfolio or e-portfolio contains essentially the same material that we could find in a traditional portfolio. However, it should not remain into a mere digital copy of its paper brother. It should go further and assume the functions of learning management. The emerging technology now allows us to bring together and combine a number of different tools and applications so that one package will:

- Contain relevant information.
- Store produced works, drafts, attempts ...
- Add reflections and comments.
- Declare objectives, methods and timetables for action.
- Store and manage basic educational materials or referral.
- Store and manage other resources of interest made by the trainees.
- Display graphically and clearly the processes and activities undertaken.
 - Store full records.
 - Manage shared tutoring processes.
 - Learning in Virtual social environments.
 - Extract date information.
 - Give a meaningful feedback.

Moreover, there are several disadvantages that we have to take into account when we work with a tool like this one. Language learning is not a process limited to a few years, but has to last a lifetime, so the portfolio:

- Cannot be dependent on a particular institution exclusively.
- Must meet the standards of usability and compatibility.
- Must be easily sustainable.
- Must suffer periodic review.
- Must allow a single use, school use, labor and social use.

One of the main advantages offered by current technology in order to carry out an eportfolio project is to add different applications or tools to develop an activity or make a final task, which can meet the above criteria as parts or elements and essential characteristics of the digital portfolio. Is not the same to use each tool separately than combine them all, which certainly requires some computer skills not very widespread but that can be acquired easily, with perseverance and courage.

The use of open source software reduces costs that might result from the acquisition of licenses and passwords. However, these softwares are also subject to sustainability and not having it may cease to exist, which eventually generates another set of problems.

The digital portfolio is an instrument that combines the technological tools in order to work together to allow monitoring and evaluation of student learning process.

With the possibilities now offered by Web 2.0, a tool for much more than simply evaluating written productions, the advantages of digital portfolio, then, are the following ones:

- The focus of the portfolio is the learner and the learning process as well as its evolution, at the same time that reflects the personal viewpoint of the student on their learning.
 - Encourage experimentation, reflection and research by the student.
- The digital portfolio is a flexible tool that allows easily to add new products and to update the contents in order to adapt the student's curriculum to the European labor market.
- It breaks the isolation of the classroom, digitally publishing materials that are generated in it, as well as the processes that have generated them and made them available to the academic community via the Internet.
- It gives transparency to the educational process and promotes the exchange of experiences between institutions.
- The numerical rating of the products made by the student is relegated to the background in favor of the analysis of these as a sign of learning. They highlight the key moments of the teaching and learning: problems, solutions, achievements ...
- The concrete examples of learning allow us to identify skills or competencies that the student has developed in each case and make, if necessary, appropriate adjustments in their training. It reflects the teacher's assessment about student's performance in the construction of learning.

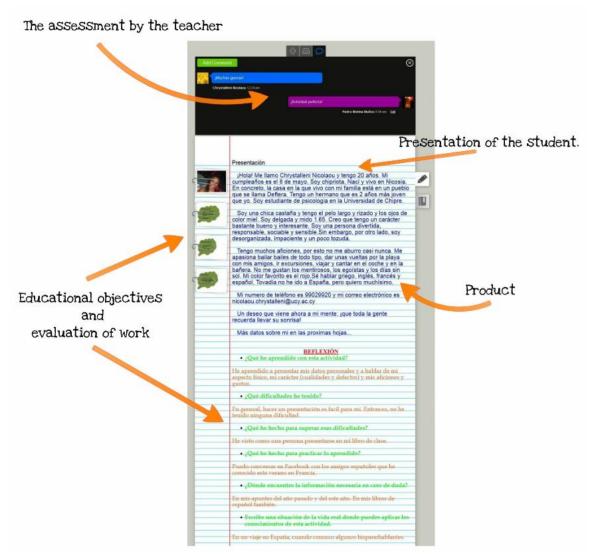
What we work with the digital portfolio.

Following Jorge Jiménez Ramírez and Celia Rico Pérez, let us now what are the contents that shape the digital portfolio.

1. Presentation of the student.

As mentioned before, the portfolio shows student work and focuses on their learning. Thus, it is logical that the entrance to the portfolio is marked by a presentation of the student which may include, among others, a welcome letter, a personal picture, etc. and their language passport. It is meant that both the student and all those who may approach their work perceive it as the result of a personal effort in the formation process of the student.

2. Products. This section should include:



- **2. a.** The product itself. The repertoire of products that may appear on the portfolio is wide and varied. Just keep in mind that the use of digital portfolios or eportfolios allows us to evaluate the different skills in many different ways.
- 2. b. Educational objectives and evaluation of work. The first consideration about the level of achievement of the proposed task should be done by the student. How they have faced the difficulties that may have arisen and how they have solved them. The student self-assessment is one of the key aspects of the portfolio as it contains the student's reflection on the work done. We can offer the student some questions for reflection that will lead to focus on the process itself and in their work, about difficulties faced, solutions and implementation of this activity in real life. That is, an analysis of the degree of difficulty that has led to the development of the product.

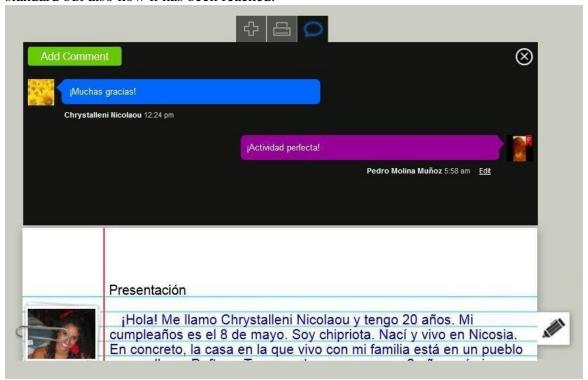
	REFLEXIÓN			
_	• ¿Qué he aprendido con esta actividad?			
	He aprendido a describir cómo es una casa. Además, he aprendido los			
	nombres de las habitaciónes y los muebles que están en una casa.			
	• ¿Qué dificultades he tenido?			
	He tenido una pequeña dificultad con el vocabulario de la casa.			
	• ¿Qué puedo hacer para superar esas dificultades?			
	Puedo repasar este vocabulario de mi libro de clase.			
	• ¿Qué puedo hacer para practicar lo aprendido?			
	Describir la casa de un amigo.			
	• ¿Dónde encuentro la información necesaria en caso de duda?			
	En mi libro "Aula 2" o en mis apuntes de octubre.			
	Escribe una situación de la vida real donde puedes aplicar los conocimient de esta actividad.			
	Buscando un piso para alquilar en un país hispano.			

We must keep in mind that these are activities that constitute the map of their learning under a clear training according to specific objectives previously established by the department or faculty. It is imperative that students know them, understand them, know how to incorporate to their digital portfolio and relate each one of the products they produce with them. Similarly, the public statement of these objectives in the digital portfolio allows everybody else to consult and evaluate the students' performance in accordance with them. Self-evaluation must include an analysis of the product regarding the training objectives and competencies, so that the student may become aware of whether they were fulfilled or not and to which extent.

2. c. The assessment by the teacher in the form of comments. These comments allow the student to redo their work in order to achieve the proposed standards and objectives of the activity.

At this point, the strong points and weaknesses of the work should be analyzed together with the process that has led to it, so that the student has a

learning guide. It comes to evaluating not only if the student has met the standard but also how it has been reached.



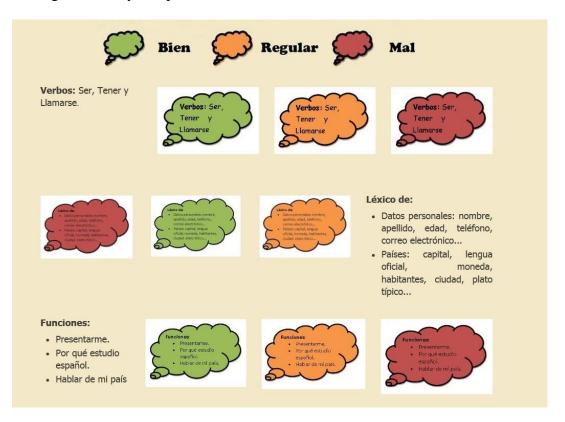
Portfolio assessment system.

Considering the above, we should mention that at the University of Cyprus, where we have developed in a more extensively way this eportfolio project, the assessment by portfolio represents the 30% of the final grade of the student. In this way portfolio assessment is done according to quality criteria in the development of activities as well as improvement and evolution.

From a series of rubrics, which are available on the website of the Spanish class, the student and the teacher can make an evaluation of the performed work while also know what is expected in every task.

	4	3	2	1
Ύλη:	a) Γράφω σωστά	a) Γράφω σωστά	a) Λείπουν 1/2	a) Λείπουν 2 ítems
	τα 3 πράγματα που	τα 3 πράγματα που	ítems από τα	από τα πράγματα
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	1000 UCO 100	547 1921 864	ζητούνται.	100 00
	b) Ρωτάω σε 5	b) Ρωτάω σε 3/4	No. of the Control of	b) Ρωτάω μόνο σε
	συμμαθητές μου τι	συμμαθητές μου τι	b) Ρωτάω σε 3/4	½ συμμαθητές μου
	αγοράζουν και το	αγοράζουν και το	συμμαθητές μου τι	τι αγοράζουν.
	γράφω.	γράφω.	αγοράζουν και το	1.05
	- A	300000	γράφω.	
	4	3	2	1
Γραμματική:	Σωστή η	Σωστή η	Σωστή η	Χρησιμοποιώ
95 394 94	γραμματική:	γραμματική με	γραμματική με	ακατάλληλες
	- persona	μερικές	λάθη:	εκφράσεις και έχω
	- verbo	ανακρίβειες:	a) ονομαστική	συνέχεια λάθη ή δεν
	- numeral/artículo	a) ονομαστική	συμφωνία.	υπάρχει συμφωνία.
	- sustantivo	συμφωνία.	b) συμφωνία με το	
	- adjetivo.	b) συμφωνία με το	ρήμα.	
		ρήμα.	c) κλίσεις ρήματος	

Following the reflection questions raised, the student values their productions with a variety of "color clouds" with the contents worked in class. This preliminary assessment will be considered by the teacher in order to evaluating the activity and process.



The student receives feedback and can modify their products to improve their work in the same place where they created it, no need to redo the work from the beginning.

In turn, the teacher, through feedback on the work done, may invite learners to improve their productions and repeat the process of reflection and evaluation, so that the error is not penalized, but becomes part of the learning process and correction is simply another part of the production.

This means that the activity holds a reflection, an evaluation, an improvement and an assessment. In this assessment, the student interacts in the process of knowledge construction and reflects critically on their own learning, on the involved processes and on their final productions.

The quality of these processes has been evaluated using different criteria:

- Volume of remembered information.
- Information from a personal understanding explained.
- Ability to solve problems from the information obtained.
- Transformation, change and improvement by the student as an active participant, autonomous and independent.
 - Improvement of competencies and communication skills.
 - Creative and critical analysis of personal experiences and others.
 - Teamwork in multicultural contexts.

Benefits gained.

Among the benefits obtained we must emphasize the quality of:

- the productions, in oral production as well as in writing, of the provided evidences.
- the reflections of the students about the learning progress and usefulness of the work done.
 - the reflections on personal learning strategies.
- the integration of technologies for communication that has helped to improve their digital competence
 - learning how to structure and organize the information submitted.
- the consultations of experiences between students and teachers during the process.
 - the criteria provided to other students or teachers about the work.



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