



EFL Students' Experiences and Attitudes Toward Situated e-Portfolio English Writing

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Abstract

Electronic portfolios make new possibilities of making students to write differently in the new era. In this study, 36 Tourism and Hospitality major students participated in Situated e-Portfolio English writings in a Practical English class using Wix.com. This study aimed to investigate students' experiences and attitudes toward this e-Portfolio writing in a situated learning context. Research question one asked how Taiwanese EFL students perceive the e-Portfolio writing activity. Research question two asked about students' attitudes toward their e-Portfolio. Questionnaires and reflection entries were utilized for data collection. The result shows positive experiences and attitudes. The results show that EFL Taiwanese Students positively affect English e-Portfolio writing and enthusiastic attitudes.

Keywords:

e-Portfolio, English Writing, Language Learning Situated Learning

INTRODUCTION

Electronic portfolios have drawn much attention in EFL contexts recently. Electronic portfolios, also known as e-portfolios, refer to a purposeful collection of students' tasks demonstrating their efforts, progress, and performance in one curriculum (Hurdori et al., 2020). In a second language (L2) writing classroom, e-portfolios assessment is "one of the most prevalent alternatives in assessments, especially within a framework of communicative language teaching (Brown, 2000, as cited in Hudori et al., 2020. p.1). E-portfolios also help teachers document students' learning development formatively regarding their production and performance (Fernandez, 2022; Lam, 2020; Yancey, 2009). Researchers agreed that e-Portfolios improve learners' communication among teachers,

students, and parents (Birgin & Baki, 2007), increase the feeling of autonomy among students (Crisol Moya et al., 2021), and develop students' writing proficiency (Barrot, 2020). In second language education, e-Portfolio utilizations have grown rapidly, particularly in the past fifteen years.

However, e-Portfolios are not a panacea. Most studies investigated the effectiveness of e-Portfolios, which served as an alternative assessment in L2 writing (Barrot, 2021; Pourdana & Tavassoli, 2022). These studies mainly measured whether e-Portfolio interventions could enhance students' learning outputs, self-efficacy beliefs, and self-reflective language skills. Despite these results, more research needs to be done on e-Portfolios and situated learning in an EFL writing classroom. Studies on using web-based e-portfolios in EFL writing contexts receive relatively scholarly attention. To fill these much-needed gaps, the current paper discusses how e-Portfolios can support situated learning in second language writing. Situated learning refers to the context being important in learning and teaching. When learners are familiar with the context, they can better understand new information and make connections to prior experiences.

Similarly, when a suitable schema is not engaged, learners have trouble understanding the learning contents and are compelled to remember or learn by rote (Korthagen, 2010). Learners need help to apply what they know to the field. More specifically, this study explores Taiwanese EFL college students' perspectives on the situated learning and e-Portfolio in an EFL writing classroom.

The researcher set out from tourism and hospitality majors of the nature of students' professional fields. According to the situated learning in EFL e-Portfolio writing, the researcher had a pedagogical design. This study sought to address two research questions (RQs)

RQ1: How do Taiwanese EFL students perceive the e-Portfolio writing activity?

RQ2: What were students' attitudes toward their e-Portfolio writings?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Electronic portfolios are also known as e-portfolio, e-folio, digital portfolios, or webfolios and are the outcomes of Internet technologies. Previously, Norton and Wiburg (1998) defined a portfolio as "a systematic and selective collection of student work that has been assembled to demonstrate the student's motivation, academic growth, and level of achievement" (p.237). The difference between paper-based and e-portfolios is that students can save a lot of media files in electronic portfolios, and they can be used to reference learners' work (Namaziandost, Hosseini, et al., 2020). E-portfolios allow interaction between students and teachers via discussion groups or online classrooms, and teachers also provide detailed feedback on their students' tasks are two main advantages of implementing e-portfolios into teaching-learning contexts (Ahn, 2004; Lam, 2013).

Situated Learning

In order to understand how students proceed and acquire knowledge and skills through an e-Portfolio activity, this study utilized the Situated Learning theory to investigate students' learning experiences of e-Portfolio English writing and their attitudes toward this situated writing project.

Based on an anthropological view of natural learning in natural settings, the situated cognition theory was chosen as a theoretical framework for this research. Based on the

theory, situated learning has the potential to (a) place learners in real-life settings in which socially acquired ways of knowing are often valued, (b) increase the likelihood that similar contexts can be applied, and (c) apply the learner's prior knowledge to a particular topic in a strategic manner. (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

A key characteristic of learning viewed as a situated activity is what Lave and Wenger (1991) called legitimate peripheral participation; this process defines it as a situated activity. (p. 29) Many researchers and teacher educators have influenced the theory. As a natural consequence, the theory has opened a wide range of new perspectives on education. (Korthagen, 2010, p. 98) As part of the situated learning process, students engage in cooperative activities where their critical thinking skills and their ability to use kinesthetic senses are challenged. In order to make these activities meaningful to students, they must be adapted and translatable to their homes, communities, and workplaces (Stein, 1998). While immersed in the experience, students are able to reflect upon their previously held knowledge, which serves as a springboard to challenge other students' assumptions. Creating a meaningful context for learning allows students to practice what they have learned in a real-life situation and apply what they have learned. As a result, it also encourages collaboration and communication between the students as they work together to solve problems and develop creative solutions. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 64; Stein, 1998, p. 6) In addition to Jean Lave, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey, and Étienne Wenger, numerous other theorists, like Jean Lave, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey, and Bertrand Russell, believed that learning occurs in situational contexts.

The framework of Situated learning, thus, should be reduced to a pedagogical and instructional scope. The framework of Situated learning typically involves the following key elements:

1. **Authentic tasks and contexts:** The learning activities must be authentic, that is, coherent, meaningful, and purposeful, in terms of how they relate to the everyday practices of the domain culture in which they are embedded. (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989) Situated learning emphasizes the importance of learning in authentic contexts that are meaningful and relevant to learners' lives. This involves providing learners with real-world tasks and problems that are situated in the context of their everyday experiences. (Polly, Recesso, & Hannafin, 2021, p. 3)
2. **Social participation:** Learning is a social process, and situated learning emphasizes the importance of participation in social communities of practice. Schell and Black (1997) described that "all of this takes place in a social world, dialectically constituted in social practices that are in the process of reproduction, transformation, and change." (p. 123). This involves providing learners opportunities to engage in collaborative activities and learn from more experienced community members. (Schell & Black, 1997)
3. **Knowledge construction:** Situated learning emphasizes the active construction of knowledge and the importance of learners' prior experiences and understandings. Schell and Black (1997) explained that "... a logical ordering is constructed in the knowledge formed before the relationships within one's schema are studied, or several schemata are connected into one coherent theory." (p. 102). This involves building on learners' existing knowledge and experiences and providing opportunities for them to actively construct new knowledge through their interactions with others and with the environment.

4. **Multiple modes of representation:** Situated learning recognizes that knowledge is represented in multiple ways, including through language, symbols, images, and other forms of media. This involves providing learners with multiple modes of representation to support their learning and understanding. (Clancey, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991) In addition, Lave and Wenger (1991) described the process as "understanding the "multiple and mutually constitutive characters of problem-solving processes" (p. 165).
5. **Assessment and feedback:** Situated learning emphasizes the importance of ongoing assessment and feedback to support learners' progress and development. This involves providing learners with timely and meaningful feedback on their work and progress and using assessment to support their ongoing learning and growth at the "schema level." (Korthagen, 2010, p. 102)

The situated learning framework emphasizes the importance of providing learners with authentic, social, and culturally relevant learning experiences that support their active engagement in the learning process and their ongoing development as members of their communities.

e-Portfolio

An e-portfolio, or electronic portfolio, is a digital collection of learning artifacts and evidence demonstrating a student's learning, growth, and achievements over time. E-portfolios can include various materials, such as written assignments, multimedia projects, reflective essays, and other evidence of learning.

E-portfolios are often used in educational settings, such as schools and universities, to help students track their progress, reflect on their learning experiences, and showcase their accomplishments. They can be created using various tools, including web-based platforms, mobile apps, and digital portfolios.

One of the benefits of e-portfolios is that they provide students with a more personalized and flexible approach to learning assessment. E-portfolios allow students to demonstrate their learning in ways that align with their learning styles, interests, and strengths. They also provide teachers with a more holistic view of student learning, as they can see evidence of student progress across various learning domains and over time.

Another advantage of e-portfolios is that they can be easily shared and accessed, making them useful for career development and job applications. E-portfolios can showcase skills, achievements, and work samples to potential employers or graduate school admissions committees.

Types of e-Portfolios

There are several types of e-portfolios, each with different features and purposes. Here are some of the most common types of e-portfolios (Alexiou & Paraskeva, 2010, pp. 3049-3050):

1. **Developmental e-portfolio:** This e-portfolio is designed to track a student's progress over time. It typically includes a range of artifacts demonstrating the student's growth and development in a particular area, such as writing or mathematics.
2. **Assessment e-portfolio:** This type of e-portfolio is used to assess student learning outcomes. It typically includes artifacts demonstrating the student's mastery of specific learning objectives or competencies.

3. Showcase e-portfolio: This type of e-portfolio is designed to showcase a student's accomplishments and achievements. It typically includes the student's best work and can be used for college or job applications.
4. Reflective e-portfolio: This type of e-portfolio encourages reflection on learning experiences. It typically includes artifacts demonstrating students' thinking and learning processes and reflective essays or journal entries.
5. Career e-portfolio: This type of e-portfolio is designed to showcase a student's professional skills and accomplishments. It typically includes artifacts demonstrating the student's work experience, projects, and achievements and can be used for job applications or professional development.
6. Learning e-portfolio: This e-portfolio documents students' learning experiences, including coursework, research, and projects. It typically includes artifacts demonstrating the student's engagement in learning and can be used for personal or academic purposes.

E-portfolios are based on constructivism theories (socio-cognitive dimensions), student-centered learning, and authentic activities. (Stefani, Mason, & Pegler, 2007) The type of e-portfolio used will depend on the intended purpose and audience and the specific features and functionalities required by the user.

Platforms Used for Writing e-Portfolios.

In the past decade, various web-based platforms have been available for students to create e-portfolios. Several popular web-based e-portfolios are as follows: *Edmodo* (Karami et al., 2019), *Facebook* (Barrot, 2021), *Good Docs* (Tonogbanua, 2018), *Google Sites* (Dunn Jr, Luke, & Nassar, 2013), *Mahara* (Chui & Dias, 2017), *wiki* (Akbari & Erfani, 2018), and *Wix. Com* (Lee, 2018). Besides, many researchers conclude that e-portfolio can help students develop their critical thinking by reflecting on their writing processes (Farahian, Avarzamani, Rajabi, 2021), increase learner autonomy (Lam, 2013), improve writing proficiency (Barrot, 2021), and encourage more interactions with teachers and peers (Crisol Moya et al., 2021). Nicolaidou (2013) suggests that weblog-based e-Portfolios, for example, *Wix* or *WordPress*, appear to be appropriate for teachers to facilitate students' literacy and communicative skills such as social learning; therefore, these digital tools were in synchronize with the development of composing, editing, and revising skills collaboratively.

Use of E-portfolios in Taiwan

E-portfolios have been widely implanted in second or foreign-language classrooms. In Taiwan, where English is learned as a foreign language, many learners only have a few opportunities to write in English and provide feedback to their peers. Taiwanese scholars and teachers have implemented e-portfolios in English teaching and learning (Chen, 2005; Hung, 2012; Lo, 2010; Cheng, 2022). Two studies are investigated in a writing class (Chen, 2005; Cheng, 2022), while other studies focus on different disciplines. In view of this, the researcher was concerned that there is a need to require further study.

METHOD

Participants and Setting

The participants were tourism and hospitality majors required to take a Practical English course for one academic year (sophomores) in a private university in southern Taiwan.

This study conducted one class of sophomore students (n=36) for one semester. The students all signed the consent form and voluntarily participated in this study. At the beginning of the study, the students were asked to complete a background study. Most students indicated they had never had experience creating English blogs in high schools, and no one had used e-Portfolios.

Over one semester, the participants practiced three writing tasks, including traveling, cooking, and endangered animals. The researcher discussed the second task in this study because students gave more feedback. When they posted their tasks on their e-Portfolios, they received feedback from the teaching assistant or the teacher regarding the accessibility and executability of the tasks. Also, they were arranged to review peers' tasks and give feedback.

Instruments

To acquire the quantitative data, one questionnaire was administered to students. At the end of the semester, 36 students were given a questionnaire to ask e-portfolio writing experience. This questionnaire used in the current study was adapted from Asadullah (2014) with some modifications. This questionnaire included 27 items comprising nominal and ordinal variables: personal details, including individual identification number, major, the length of English learning, and 14 items dedicated to students' English writing activity. The numerical values were assigned to the participants' responses for one questionnaire item. Thus, if a learner marked strongly agree, he received 5 for that item. For agree, numerical values of 4, neutral, 3, disagree, 2, and 1 for strongly disagree.

The second instrument is Wix.com, an open-source online e-portfolio system. The developers of Wix made it free to be used worldwide for educational assessment. The researcher chose this platform for the following reasons. First, Wix.com is a ready-made website that allows users to upload works in different formats, such as texts, audio, and video files. It is very accessible and user-friendly. Wix.com has many design features (e.g., templates, menus, styles). Both computers and mobile devices are available for users to edit anywhere. Second, Wix.com is popular in Taiwan. Users can have access to tutorial videos about build-up procedures on YouTube. Finally, only two studies were conducted by Cheng (2022) and Lee (2018). For three reasons, the researcher uses Wix.com as an e-portfolio writing tool.

To obtain the qualitative results, 36 students were invited to write their reflective entries at the end of the semester. As Johns (1995) defines, reflection is a personal process that enables the practitioner to assess, understand and learn through their experience. This results in some change for the individual in their situation perspective. The main question was regarding students' attitudes toward using e-portfolio writing.

Writing Procedures

Stage 1: Writing preparation and discussions:

Since students were from the Tourism and Hospitality major, a recipe design of their interested food was discussed. After food is chosen, a fully workable recipe is

expected. This English recipe writing was published on Wix.com, free for limited usage. The teacher and students discussed the assignment guideline (from the textbook chapter – chapter 6, Recipe to Party With, Reading Pioneer: give samples, Recipe Writing instruction, group discussion about food preparation, prepare ingredients for cooking.

Stage 2: Recipe Writing:

Recipe writing consists of different parts, but the instruction for this study focused on the ingredients and directions (procedures for preparation).



Stage 3: Cooking:

In real cooking, students followed the English recipe they wrote. They describe while cooking or narrate afterward by post-video production. The video is later uploaded as part of their e-Portfolio.



Stage 4: Sharing with Classmates and Discussing with the Teacher:

After the video was uploaded, links to students' Wix were shared so they could read and watch each other's work and give comments. The teacher also made appointments with students to improve their e-Portfolio English writing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

EFL Taiwanese Students Have Positive Effects on Writing E-portfolio Writing.

This section reports results based on two parts of the final questionnaire: closed-ended and open-ended items. From the closed-ended item (5-point Likert scale), many students

reported positive feedback on e-portfolio writing. Items 3 to 8 received relatively moderate ratings from the participants, mentioning that the Wix allowed them to write their receipts and demonstrate their cooking skills (item 6; $M=3.62$). Furthermore, they felt a sense of achievement after they post their cooking video on Wix. They agreed that classmates gave them feedback after browsing their Wix websites (item 7; $M=3.46$). As for communicative skills, participants noted that they could communicate with people from different countries and build a Wix website with English content (item 11; $M=3.54$). Items 12, 13, and 14 showed that students would like to consult dictionaries, classmates, or teachers when they have difficulties expressing their thoughts ($M=3.38, 4.08, \text{ and } 3.62$, respectively, especially because they prefer online English dictionaries. Regarding the learner's autonomy, the participants presented that the Wix website is useful for sharing their thoughts with others (Item 5; $M=3.85$). See Table 1 for details.

Table 1:
Results of Questionnaire

Question Items	Mean	SD
1. I find it easy to build my website with Wix.	3.62	0.87
2. The content of the Wix website is easy to modify and maintain.	3.85	0.69
3. I would like to publish articles on my Wix website.	3.69	0.75
4. I would like to publish English articles on my Wix website.	3.38	0.87
5. The Wix website is a useful tool for me to share my thoughts with others.	3.85	1.14
6. I will invite my friends or classmates to browse my Wix website.	3.62	1.04
7. I hope my friends or classmates will give me feedback after browsing my Wix website.	3.46	0.97
8. It would be a good idea to publish my articles on the Wix website.	3.31	0.75
9. I will post photos on the Wix website.	3.54	0.97
10. Using the Wix website in English class is a good idea.	3.46	0.97
11. I will communicate with people from different countries for myself or my community and build a Wix website with English content.	3.54	0.78
12. When I write on the Internet, I consult a paper English dictionary when I do not know how to express my thoughts in English.	3.38	1.3
13. When I write on the Internet and do not know how to express my thoughts in English, I consult an online English dictionary.	4.08	0.95
14. When I write online, I ask others if I need to learn to express my thoughts in English.	3.62	1.04

Concerning the open-ended question in the final questionnaire (i.e., How do you like the Wix writing?), most students gave positive feedback on the e-portfolio writing experience. See the excerpts below for example:

Student 23: Using Wix to write homework in English textbooks helps me think in English.

Student 31: I am very glad to have the opportunity to come into contact with the Wix website this semester. It is the first time I have encountered this

type of website. After using Wix, it is easy to set up a website, which is quite interesting.

Student 18: The design of this homework on the website is great. After all, it will be the era of computers in the future, and you can learn some different things.

Student 5: Wix is a great platform. While making web pages, I also improved my English to a certain extent.

Students reported that it was an interesting learning experience, and they had chances to present their cooking videos on the Wix website. This finding corroborates the prior studies (Kongsuebchart & Suppaseterree, 2018). Students felt positive they could present their cooking videos on Wix in English and appreciated the chance to view classmates' tasks. Moreover, as was reported by Student 18, the e-portfolio can demonstrate his webpage edit skills which can develop soft skills in the workplace.

Student 5 stated that he improved his English while making the webpage. Overall, most participants had positive effects on e-portfolio writing and valued the opportunities to use e-portfolio to learn English.

Most Students' attitudes are positive toward e-Portfolio English writing in Situated Learning.

Research question 2 asked about students' attitudes toward Situated English e-Portfolio writing. Reflective entries were made by students after receipt writing and situated practice, which is cooking according to recipe writing, were made. It shows that most students' attitudes about situations and interactions regarding English writing skills, cooking, and web media production are positive and enthusiastic. However, a few students are skeptical or even resistant to this situated e-Portfolio English writing instructional design. At the same time, a couple of them needed to be more active and apathetic in this learning process.

1. Enthusiasm

Some individuals may be excited about using an e-Portfolio to document and showcase their learning and achievements. *Students were joyful and had fun.*

"It is funny. It let me learn many things." (Student's Reflection 11)

"It is a fresh idea now. Because the covid19, I have a choice to make some different things." (Student's Reflection 12)

"I can learn different things using Wix, and the information can be searched more clearly." (Student's Reflection 23)

Some students feel that this learning task is difficult but rewarding after they go through it. After exploring ways of problem-solving and being assisted by the teacher and other students, they finally conquered difficulties and had a sense of achievement.

"So interesting learned very more Very good but so tried." (Student's Reflection 14)

"Wix I was hard for me, but I also learned a lot." (Student's Reflection 19)

"It is homework, but it can let me learn." (Student's Reflection 28)

"I do not have much experience in making a video before, but after doing this homework." (Student's Reflection 29)

"When I cook and cut video, I feel so tired. But when I see my final video. I feel very happy." (Student's Reflection 33)

"It is difficult for me. But the homework let me learn more knowledge." (Student's Reflection 36)

Students had different learning achievements.

Although the Situated e-Portfolio English Writing assignment was aimed at students' writing skills development, students had different attitudes toward learning. Some students appropriated their English learning achievements with the cooking situated learning.

"I think I can practice cooking and also my English-speaking ability." (Student's Reflection 18)

"It is homework · but it can let me learn. The cooking homework can help me enjoy the cooking process." (Student's Reflection 20)

"I learned how to edit. I more use of the Wix website. English has improved." (Student's Reflection 21)

"I think the homework on Wix this semester were useful, especially the cooking video. I find it so interesting. I have opportunities to practice English speaking and make the videos more beautiful." (Student's Reflection 25)

"The cooking process is very special." (Student's Reflection 24)

"Very good. Let me understand more food recipes." (Student's Reflection 27)

Students appreciated the homework greatly.

"I have never done much baking, so I was happy to be able to bake through the recipe assignment." (Student's Reflection 28)

"Using English to shoot cooking video is very innovative." (Student's Reflection 30)

"I think teacher's assignments make me more helpful." (Student's Reflection 34)

"For the first time, I saw a teacher set up a website to learn English. I think it is very special, which gives us the motivation to learn." (Student's Reflection 29)

It is noted that some students found web-based sharing simple and easy to share ideas between students to improve their English.

"I think this homework is simple. Making Wix is also fun." (Student's Reflection 35)

"Two homework on Wix taught me a lot about animals and recipes. At the same time, I also saw the excellent works of many students." (Student's Reflection 1)

"I think the teacher's assignment has made me more familiar with computer control, and my English has gradually improved!" (Student's Reflection 10)

Students saw this situated e-Portfolio English writing as an opportunity to personalize their learning and reflect on their growth.

2. *Skepticism:*

Some individuals may be skeptical about the value of e-Portfolio and may be hesitant to adopt new technologies or methods of assessment.

“It's hard, but I try my best” (Student's Reflection 31)

“I have to learn another skill; it's really not easy.” (Student's Reflection 2)

Some students may question the effectiveness of e-Portfolio in promoting learning and feel passive about this assignment.

3. *Resistance*:

Some individuals may resist the implementation of an e-Portfolio due to cultural or institutional norms, lack of training or support, or other factors.

“Cooking is difficult and never unsuccessful.” (Student's Reflection 3)

“It's hard to do it. No fun.” (Student's Reflection 5)

Students may view it as an additional burden or requirement that takes away from their other responsibilities.

4. *Apathy*

Some individuals may not feel strongly about e-Portfolio and may simply see it as another requirement or task to complete.

"Often forget to go to Wix.com to hand in homework different way." (Student's Reflection 4)

This student may lack motivation or interest in using e-Portfolio and may not see its relevance to their learning or career goals.

In addition to those students, one student had physical difficulties with their eyes, making it hard for him to do the assignments.

“I have no idea because I didn't do it.” (Student's Reflection 7)

The teacher used alternative assignments for this physical disadvantage student's learning needs.

Attitudes toward implementing an e-Portfolio can significantly impact its effectiveness and success. To promote positive attitudes and engagement, it is important to provide adequate training and support, communicate the benefits of e-Portfolio clearly, and ensure that it aligns with learners' goals and interests.

CONCLUSION

The current study was an attempt to explore the feasibility of implanting e-portfolio writing activity in the Taiwanese EFL context and scrutinize students' attitudes toward using Wix as an English writing tool. Furthermore, this study set out to determine the extent to which the e-Portfolio can help students develop their communicative and writing skills when their peers provide feedback. Students in this study showed positive attitudes toward situated e-portfolio English writing. Most students have positive and enthusiastic attitudes. They were engaged and joyful with English learning, cooking, and web media production. Few of them show skepticism or even resistance. That negative attitude results from technical issues, but they are not English language-related. To sum up, situated e-Portfolio English writing had a positive impact on students.

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