



Using ePortfolios to Develop Students' Learner Autonomy in a Chinese Language Class

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Introduction

Learning a new language as an adult is a slow and challenging task, which makes it unrealistic to bring students to an advanced proficiency level from ground zero within a few semesters of classroom instruction. It is therefore extremely important to help them develop their autonomous learning skills so that they can keep learning after their graduation. ePortfolios have been used as an assessment tool and a showcase platform for a long time, however, they can and should be integrated into the curriculum and become part of the learning process. This study explored the possibility of using ePortfolios as a learning tool to help learners of Chinese Language develop their learner autonomy as measured by students' self-evaluation and reflections. It also explored students' perception of ePortfolio as part of their learning experience.

Objectives

- The main purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness of integrating ePortfolios into the curriculum to students develop their learner autonomy. Specifically, this study attempted to collect feedback on the following aspects:
- Students' **perceived gains** in their learner autonomy after completing the project
 - Students' perception on the **set-up** of the ePortfolio culture project
 - Students' **overall experience** with the ePortfolio culture project
 - Students' reflections on **other gains** from the ePortfolio culture project

Data Collection

In order to collect data to find answers to the aspects listed above, this study used the following methods to collect data:

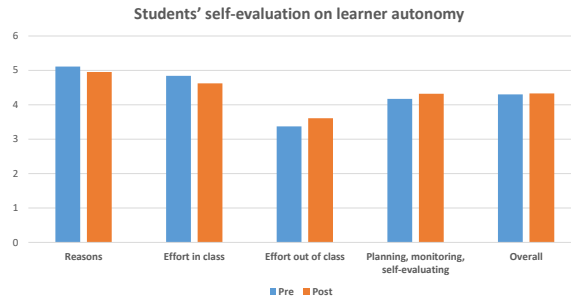
- **Survey** on learner autonomy: 30 questions on a six-point Likert scale (adapted from Nguyen (2008)) that cover the following aspects:
 - Reasons for learning Chinese
 - Efforts in class
 - Efforts outside of class
 - Planning, monitoring, self-evaluating
- Students' **reflective essays**: feedback on the set-up of the ePortfolio project, their perceived gains as an independent learner, their overall experience with the project (workload, platform, feedback, discussion, etc.)

Methods

- **Participants**: students enrolled in Advanced Chinese in Fall 2021 (n=7)
- **Procedure & tasks**: students completed a semester-long ePortfolio on **Chinese culture** by creating their own folder using **Padlet** (www.padlet.com)
 - Students completed a **pre-survey** on learner autonomy (30 questions in 4 sections)
 - Students picked a **theme** of their own interest or used the topics discussed in class
 - Students found **resources** (e.g. articles, pictures, videos, infographics, etc.) on the topics they picked
 - Students posted in their own ePortfolio on **Padlet** (They created their own free account and then linked their Padlet board to the host Padlet board created by the instructor)
 - 1) a paragraph in **Chinese** to **summarize** the resources they found (250 characters);
 - 2) a paragraph in **English** to **reflect** on this resource with **guiding questions** (What surprised you? Why? How do you interpret what you have learned? How did the resource help you understand Chinese culture or help you reflect on your own culture, etc.) (300 words)
 - Students posted **5 times** on their Padlet boards over the semester
 - After each posting, students were given two days to read their **peers'** postings and leave some **comments**
 - Students **shared** their ePortfolios with their peers **in class** after three postings and after five postings
 - Students submitted a **reflective essay** on their experience with this project (guiding questions provided)
 - Students completed a **post-survey** on learner autonomy
- **Data analysis**
 - Data from the pre and post surveys on learner autonomy
 - Students' reflective essays to identify themes regarding their perceived gains and their experience with this ePortfolio project

Results

Pre and Post Surveys on Learner Autonomy



Results (cont.)

Positive feedback from students' reflections:

- More practice on **choosing** topics and resources for study
- More practice on **self-discipline** and **self-motivation**
- Good practice on **prioritizing** attention and focus
- Engaged in **individualized** learning

Changes in the ePortfolio project students hoped to see in the future

- Change the due dates and enforce them more strictly
- More **class discussion** on those posts

Conclusions

Some tentative (the sample in this study was very small) conclusions can be made based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected:

- Students had mostly **positive feedback** on the ePortfolio project
- Students perceived **growth** as an **independent learner** and **researcher**, which gave them a good start for life after their graduation
- Students considered the **workload** as **reasonable**
- Students enjoyed the **written** and **verbal exchanges** with their peers on their posts
- Students liked the **platform** used to create their ePortfolio project

References

Nguyen, L. (2008). Learner autonomy and EFL proficiency: A Vietnamese perspective. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 18, 67-87.

James, K. S.; Scida, E. E.; and Firdiyew, Y. (2019). ePortfolios in a world language learning program. *ePortfolio as Curriculum* (K. B. Yancey, Ed.). Stylus.

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