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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Exploring the Dual Role of the Student Portfolio: Enhancing Learning While Assessing Student Performance**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This study explores the dual role of the student portfolio as both a learning enhancement tool and an assessment instrument in English language teaching. In response to the growing demand for 21st-century skills, particularly critical thinking, education systems are increasingly moving beyond traditional teaching approaches that emphasise rote memorisation and passive learning. Within this context, student portfolios emerge as an innovative pedagogical strategy that integrates instruction and assessment in a single reflective process. The study investigates how portfolios contribute to improving learners' engagement, self-reflection, and autonomy while simultaneously providing teachers with an authentic means of evaluating student progress and performance over time. Drawing on relevant literature, the paper highlights the conceptual foundations of portfolio-based learning and assessment, emphasising its role in documenting student growth, encouraging self-evaluation, and fostering deeper cognitive engagement. The study argues that integrating student portfolios can transform classroom dynamics by positioning learners as active participants in both learning and assessment. Ultimately, this dual-function approach supports the development of critical thinking skills and prepares students for the academic and professional demands of contemporary society.

**| KEYWORDS**

Student portfolio; Portfolio-based assessment; Learning enhancement; Formative assessment; Critical thinking; Learner autonomy; Reflective learning; English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

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### **1. Introduction**

The language-teaching field is undergoing a significant transformation, characterised by a shift in expectations and the emergence of essential skills that enable students to succeed in both educational settings and life beyond the classroom. This dynamism underscores the critical need to equip students with robust critical-thinking skills, which are vital for learners to navigate the challenges of the future job market (Rothenstein et al., 2007; Walker, 2000).

In light of these developments, relying solely on traditional teaching methods, which often prioritise rote memorisation and passive learning, is no longer sufficient. The transition toward innovative and creative teaching approaches is becoming increasingly vital, particularly in secondary education, where students prepare for higher academic engagement and future careers. However, despite such necessity, many Moroccan middle school English teachers frequently overlook the importance of integrating these modern strategies into their curricula, particularly when fostering critical thinking and implementing student portfolios as practical assessment tools, because the use of the student's portfolio remains an innovative and authentic tool (Yang, 2003). In this connection, critical thinking skills emerge as some of the most essential competencies for 21st-century learners in Moroccan middle schools. These skills empower students to analyse information, evaluate different viewpoints, and develop unique insights, enabling them to engage with the world in a more nuanced and informed way. Moreover, employing the portfolio task assignment as a pedagogical tool offers the chance for students to develop their critical thinking abilities in a

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structured way. Portfolios make students reflect on their learning over time, showcase their development, and encourage self-assessment (Yang, 2003). By integrating this practice into the educational framework, teachers can create an environment conducive to fostering critical thinking and reflective thought, motivating students to take ownership of learning journeys. Thus, embracing student portfolios as a fundamental element of teaching and assessment represents a progressive step forward. This method transforms students from passive to active participants who engage thoughtfully with the learning process. More importantly, it prepares them for the complexities of contemporary life and the job market (Hinchcliff, 2009).

Reviewing the literature on the portfolio, informative definitions can be cited for this pedagogical tool commonly used for learning and assessment. Merriam–Webster dictionary (2020) defines a portfolio as “a selection of a student's work (such as papers and tests) compiled over some time and used for assessing performance or progress”. The portfolio takes various definitions in the literature that appear to have much in common. Citing some of the definitions, Hancock (1994) asserts that portfolio assessment refers to “an ongoing process involving the student and the teacher in selecting samples of student work for inclusion in a collection, the main purpose of which is to show the student's progress.” (p. 4). In light of the earlier assertion, it is concluded that a portfolio is a collection of students' work and documents. It represents a selection of performance. Simply put, a portfolio may be defined as a folder that contains a student's selected pieces of work and his/her evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the pieces selected. It can also include some works-in-progress which demonstrate the process of writing an essay, for instance. In line with this, Paulson and Meyer (1991) define a portfolio as a deliberate compilation of work that demonstrates the student's endeavours, advancement, and accomplishments in learning.

In light of the previously stated definitions, a portfolio can be regarded as a growing collection of student work in which every additional piece has a purpose and a specific reason. Students need to select every addition carefully. The primary purpose behind a portfolio is to allow the student to show and demonstrate his / her learning and progress to others. Besides, it is also understood that while students build their portfolios, they become learners and active participants in learning and assessment processes. The portfolio, therefore, is widely recognised as a pedagogical instrument and an organised compilation of students' work. It is intentionally implemented in the classroom to track students' progress, evaluate their performance, and showcase their endeavours and accomplishments across one or more subjects. From this standpoint, portfolios can be considered a showcase of students' skills and productions, which display students' creations, views, and attitudes. They can also be regarded as a piece of work reflecting students' decisions about the learning process as a whole (Paulson & Meyer, 1991).

## **2. The portfolio task as a teaching and assessment tool**

Recently, the portfolio has been emphasised as a teaching and assessment tool, primarily a classroom-based performance tool for authentic assessment. In this context, Buckley et al. (2009) describe the portfolio as a tool for learning and assessment, indicating that it is a compilation of evidence demonstrating that the learning process has occurred. Unlike traditional tests, portfolios do not take time from teaching but support and complement it. They are also more effective than tests for measuring students' academic performance. In this context, the student's portfolio is believed to monitor the progress of the foreign language learning and the student's performance as it is regarded as a continuous procedure involving the student and teacher in making judgments and decisions about the learners' language progress (Hancock, 1994).

The portfolio task has been widely accepted as a pedagogical tool, purposefully implemented in class to track students' progress and evaluate their performance and achievement, and to display their efforts and achievements in one or more subjects as outlined by Paulson & Meyer (1991). The main aim of this study is to show the value of the portfolio as a teaching and assessment tool. However, it is helpful to situate the portfolio task within its general scope, which is portfolio-based learning and portfolio assessment. From this viewpoint, portfolios can be considered student productions that reflect students' creations, views, and attitudes. They can also be considered a piece of work that reflects students' decisions about the learning process as a whole.

Considering the recent improvements in teaching methods, the need for alternative evaluation tools has noticeably increased. Therefore, classical evaluation tools such as tests and quizzes, which mainly aim to evaluate the students' products, have become insufficient in evaluating learning since the learning process and the student's development are ignored. In this context, innovative teaching methods have necessarily advocated implementing alternative assessment methods and have particularly called for using portfolios and performance-based evaluation tools as essential parts of the teaching program. Hinchcliff (2009) further contends for the use of portfolios. The researcher argues that the portfolio is pedagogically beneficial because it can help students recognise their personal learning needs. That is, it offers students a chance to reflect on what they are learning and what might help them deepen their understanding of FL learning. Similarly, Barakos and Carnahan (2008) explain that portfolios help assess students' learning outcomes and identify their needs. They also add that portfolios are reflective classroom teaching practices (Barakos & Carnahan, 2008), indicating the appropriateness of teaching materials, students' progress, and overall performance.

In the ongoing effort to find innovative methods for evaluating student performance and enhancing second-language (L2) learning, student portfolios emerge as a particularly valuable and authentic assessment tool. This is because portfolios provide a comprehensive way for students to showcase their learning progress, reflect on their skills, and engage in self-assessment, which can lead to deeper understanding and motivation in their language acquisition journey (Yang, 2003). The portfolio serves as a

folder for students to compile various assignments aimed at achieving specific goals and competencies set by their teachers. According to Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p. 159), the portfolio, typically a continuous collection of diverse writing assignments stored in a folder or workbook, has emerged as a pivotal tool for enhancing writing skills and offering teachers a fairer and more insightful method of assessing students.

A thorough review of the existing literature on the effectiveness and impact of implementing portfolios in educational settings reveals a range of insights from leading researchers in the field. For instance, Chen (2002) discusses the benefits of integrating portfolios into L2 instruction, highlighting how they promote learner autonomy and facilitate meaningful feedback. Mokhtari (2014) examines the correlation between portfolio use and improved language skills, suggesting that portfolios encourage students to take ownership of their learning processes. Rochelle (2008) adds to this discussion by illustrating how portfolios can serve as a bridge between formative and summative assessment, allowing educators to gauge student growth over time. Through this exploration of various scholarly views, it becomes evident that student portfolios can play a significant role in shaping effective teaching practices and fostering a more personalised learning experience for L2 learners.

The use of the portfolio is believed to facilitate a deeper understanding of students' needs, aid in identifying learning deficiencies, and inform the planning of targeted instructional activities to enhance the overall learning process (Barton & Collins, 1997; Norman, 1998). Additionally, several studies indicate that numerous educators have integrated portfolios as a complementary method for both teaching and assessment. Notably, a study conducted by Beyhan et al. (2012) examined the awareness of pre-service teachers regarding portfolios, taking into account various factors such as gender, university affiliation, and area of study. The results indicated that the awareness among pre-service teachers was at a moderate level, suggesting that there are opportunities for further development in this area (Beyhan et al., 2012).

Arap (2008) carried out a research project to examine the contributions of electronic portfolio applications for English teachers and determine if they affect achievement scores. The same study revealed that the practice of e-portfolios for English teachers positively affected students' performance, as they received positive achievement scores. Similarly, Erice (2008) used an electronic portfolio to examine its effects on intermediate-level students' English language skills, particularly writing. Results showed that students who kept electronic portfolios were more successful and performed better than those who did not (Erice, 2008).

Tonbul (2009) studied students' perceptions and attitudes towards implementing the electronic portfolio as a learning and assessment tool in ELT classes. The study sought to investigate students' attitudes towards developing the electronic portfolio and to propose an electronic portfolio model for educators and students. At the end of the experience, results showed that students liked e-portfolio practice and that the student-teacher and student-student interactions using their e-portfolios were effective. It was also found that learners' writing skills developed thanks to the process of preparing e-portfolios. Although using portfolios for teaching and assessment purposes is recommended, there is still a need to look for evidence to show that such an assessment tool supports and encourages learning. Previous studies have shown that the students assessed using the portfolio evaluation method can construct more knowledge than those who do not work on their portfolios. Therefore, the portfolio seems to be a vital source of advantages, as Dudley (2001) puts it, "portfolios are a simple yet powerful idea" (p.19).

### 3. Traditional and alternative assessment tools

Assessing students' performance in foreign language learning contexts is one of teachers' most crucial and critical responsibilities, given that assessment is an integral part of the teaching process. In fact, the purpose of assessment can be twofold: to provide progress records for parents and to gather students' growth data to enhance learning. Teachers in language classrooms can use various assessment tools, both traditional and non-traditional. Their choice of appropriate assessment techniques in class heavily depends on their awareness of these techniques. Unaware of substitute evaluation methods, some teachers use traditional assessment tools only, preferring to administer in-class quizzes and tests. However, others are aware of more types of assessment, which are referred to as alternative assessment tools. They implement them in their classes to support learning and track students' growth and development while learning a given language (Hughes & Wade, 1996).

In recent years, several alternative assessment tools have become more popular. In this case, Huerta-Macias (1995) says alternative assessment methods include checklists, journals, logs, videotapes and audiotapes, self-evaluation and teacher observations. In addition to these tools, other options can be included, namely portfolios, diaries, conferences, self-assessment and peer assessment. Since these evaluation forms engage students in learning and call for thinking skills, they are consistent with cognitive theories of learning, motivation, and societal needs to prepare students for an increasingly complex workplace (Maeroff, 1991).

Based on previous studies on alternative assessment, it is concluded that some teachers may attempt to use alternative assessment techniques in their classes. In contrast, exams remain the sole assessment tool for others because of time constraints. In this respect, Brooks (1993) argues that in educational environments where students are assumed to construct knowledge, it is not enough to use the traditional approaches exclusively. Instead, there is a need for other assessment tools. Stone (1990) also contends that new practices and strategies are needed to develop a suitable assessment method, emphasising the use of alternative assessment methods rather than conventional ones.

Century's (2002) study findings revealed that traditional testing focuses on cognitive content learning in contrast to alternative assessment, which is process-oriented. The latter emphasises educational aspects such as cooperative learning and critical

thinking skills. However, Century (2002) recommended that traditional testing and alternative assessment methods can be combined as they complement each other.

Zessoules and Gardner (1991) state that traditional assessments, such as classical tests or exams, do not indicate students' development and growth. Therefore, alternative assessment methods, which are more student-centred than conventional evaluation, should be implemented, including open-ended questions, exhibitions, demonstrations, in-class activities, experimental practices, concept maps, performance evaluation, self-peer assessment, and portfolios, to evaluate the learning process, as explained by Dietel et al. (1991).

Considering the above-mentioned study's findings, it is evident that there is a preference for a shift from traditional to alternative assessment, which primarily measures attitudes, skills, and knowledge based on both the process and the results. That is, this latter type of assessment is likely to make students evaluated based on what they produce and integrate rather than what they recall, memorise and reproduce by placing more emphasis on the learners' progress, as claimed by Coombe et al. (2012). Hand in hand with the findings of this study, Zessoules and Gardner (1991) found that students supported alternative assessment because the latter emphasises students' developmental process more. They added that alternative assessment placed greater emphasis on learning styles. Therefore, Zessoules and Gardner (1991) supported the idea of having alternative assessment types in schools. Similarly, Johnstone et al. (2000) demonstrated in another investigation that students agreed that alternative assessment measures meaningful learning, stressing that exams cannot show the exact results of students' progress. Such a standpoint among students is in line with Gamor's (2001) claim that alternative assessment makes students more motivated and creative by encouraging them to use their creative skills more.

Although students supported alternative assessment, Kizilkaya (2014) observed that they still preferred some traditional types of assessment in this changing world. The study results showed that students preferred traditional tasks, such as fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice questions, and answering short questions, since they were more familiar with such testing techniques. In contrast, certain students expressed a preference for alternative assessment. According to the study, these individuals exhibited a strong inclination towards the notion that alternative assessment places greater significance on students and their individual learning styles and processes. Further, Kizilkaya (2014) concluded that students were not very clear about which assessment type to promote, as they supported alternative and traditional assessments. Consequently, students need access to alternative assessment methods so they can make a concrete decision in this regard (Kizilkaya, 2014).

According to a study conducted by Dochy et al. (1997) about students' perceptions of assessment, findings proposed that the learning approaches used in class influence students' views on assessment. That is, the way students receive learning impacts how they perceive assessment. In addition, results showed that students hold strong views about different forms and assessment methods, especially about alternative assessment, which they perceive as fairer than the traditional, usual assessment methods (Dochy et al., 1997).

Unlike traditional assessment, alternative assessment techniques are unique in that they share certain common characteristics. For instance, such forms necessitate applying problem-solving skills and advanced cognitive processes, are real-world and meaningful, and emphasise both processes and outcomes (Aschbacher, 1991). In the same context it is added that that alternative assessment tools necessitate that students get engaged in activities using higher-order skills. In addition, alternative assessment tools evaluate students using their typical everyday classroom activities and offer insights into students' strengths and shortcomings (Huerta-Macias, 1995).

Based on characteristics previously outlined by various authors, the portfolio, as an alternative assessment technique, allows students to be assessed on what they do daily in class by providing information about learners' strengths and weaknesses. They also help students perform tasks and produce materials that represent meaningful instructional activities using real-world contexts. Students can demonstrate their higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills through alternative assessment methods, as these methods assess both processes and products. Alternative assessment, therefore, calls upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles (Aschbacher, 1991; Huerta-Macias, 1995).

Traditional evaluation approaches neglect the student's learning process. For this reason, assessment, including the evaluation process, is needed to better link what students learn from real-life experiences with what is taught in the classroom for effective performance-based assessment. As a result of this, various changes have emerged in the field of evaluation. In this specific regard, alternative assessment approaches are among the evaluation methods that utilise results and the evaluation process. Self-assessment, peer assessment, performance assessment, authentic assessment, portfolio assessment, and project-based assessment are the assessment tools imposed under this approach. Meanwhile, alternative assessment is not an approach that excludes traditional evaluation methods or can be used instead; rather, it is complementary to traditional evaluation (Maeroff, 1991).

Language educators have recognised some limitations of traditional assessment methods and have begun to consider new innovative ways to assess their students, which have been subsumed under alternative testing methods. Alternative assessment forms, therefore, are believed to be the new, promising and innovative generation of test forms in education today. These assessment forms differ from traditional testing techniques because they are more student-centred and process-oriented. For this reason, alternative assessment is believed to have a positive washback effect on education, as demonstrated by Hamp-Lyons (1997), by promoting students' learning.

According to Hamayan (1995), alternative assessment procedures provide valuable information for stakeholder groups. For instance, teachers can assess students appropriately in more natural settings, and they can obtain and collect data about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching practices, which, in turn, gives teachers a chance to revise and modify their teaching methods at any time during the course based on students' accomplishments and their ongoing requirements. Besides, alternative assessment allows students to observe their progress. Therefore, they can assume responsibility for their learning (Hassel & Lourey, 2005). In addition, parents can also obtain a clear idea of their children's performance and learning through the work they have produced. Last but not least, alternative assessment products can also serve as a valuable tool for administrators to trace students' progress, achievement and success (Hamayan, 1995).

In addition, assessment plays a vital role in the teaching and learning processes because teachers are required to evaluate their teaching to determine the extent to which their course objectives are achieved. Therefore, they have to assess students' learning and performance. However, the traditional way of assessment, namely testing, is not practical for many reasons, as it is more concerned with the scores than with the students' needs. More than that, tests do not reflect learners' actual abilities, since they are mostly administered under time pressure. Besides, testing makes learners passive since it is a teacher-centred practice, considering the teacher is the only one who prepares and corrects the tests. Another limitation concerning traditional testing is that it does not consider the individual differences among students. Instead, one test is designed for all students regardless of their abilities and talents (Maeroff, 1991).

Due to these limitations, teachers need to opt for alternative ways to assess their students effectively by involving them and fostering their awareness of learning. This way, students can assess their learning, knowledge, and skills by emphasising self-assessment, peer assessment, self-reflection, self-esteem, confidence, and responsibility. Therefore, a possible alternative to traditional testing is portfolio assessment.

#### 4. Characteristics of an effective portfolio

Moya and O'Malley (1994) demonstrate that five features characterise a model portfolio procedure. They identified the following characteristics of an effective student's portfolio:

- **Comprehensiveness.** (Comprehensive data collection and analysis).
- **Predetermined and Systematic.** (Planned prior to implementation).
- **Informative.** (Meaningful information to teachers and students).
- **Tailored.** (Tailored portfolio to the purpose for which it will be used, to classroom goals and objectives and individual student assessment needs).
- **Authentic.** (Reflect authentic activities used during classroom instruction).

The following are entries to be included in portfolios to shed more light on the content of an effective student's portfolio.

**Table 1**

*Portfolio entries*

| The portfolio entries    |                                        |                                  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Samples of creative work | Student's diary entries                | Table of contents                |
| Tests                    | log of work on a particular assignment | Dates (to show growth over time) |
| Quizzes                  | Self-assessments                       | Students' written reflections    |
| Homework                 | Comments from peers                    | Students' written assignments    |
| Projects work            | Comments from teachers                 | Extracurricular activities       |
| Audiotapes of oral work  | Cover letter                           | Student's video recording tasks  |

*Note:* This table displays the type of content for an effective portfolio

#### 5. Portfolio assessment process

Considering the assertions mentioned earlier, it is concluded that the use of portfolios has commonly been advocated as a teaching tool that should have a place in teachers' classroom strategies. However, the question of how to evaluate the students' portfolios is worth raising in this regard. In this context, Brown and Hudson (1998) argue that evaluating students' portfolios remains a time-consuming process that can be demanding for teachers. They also add that results from portfolio assessments may not be valid or reliable for measuring students' performance (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

The same point was seriously raised by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000), who stress the necessity of considering the principles of validity and reliability while evaluating students' portfolios. Similarly, Williams (2000) argues that using portfolios without standardised implementation principles will undoubtedly result in unfair assessment of students' work. According to the same researcher, the absence of such elements, including validity and reliability, is likely to be a source of subjectivity on the part of the teacher (Williams, 2000).

In line with this, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) see that reliability in assessing students' portfolios is a process which has to be based on students' performance instead of any score and that the evaluation of portfolios should involve standardised rubrics, comprising development and organisation and fluency of ideas, along with description and mechanics. Hand in hand with this, Defina (1992) claimed that to determine a credible grade for portfolio evaluation, the teacher should develop a valid, well-designed scoring guide. Also, the students should know about the guide before embarking on their portfolios.

Along the same lines, Song and August (2002) contend that, when evaluating students' portfolios, there is an increase in subjectivity and bias because students' work is not based on giving correct or incorrect answers by making the right choices or answering directly addressed questions. In light of this, it is understood that the credibility and consistency of grades remain questionable. Showing some flexibility towards the portfolio assessment process, Tierney et al. (1991) contend that for portfolio evaluation to be more valid and reliable, it can be combined with traditional assessment tools.

## **6. Factors affecting the use of the portfolio task**

As an alternative teaching/learning and evaluation method, the portfolio has become widely known as an innovative tool among teachers. It is used as a teaching and assessment tool that brings students' work together to enable them to monitor their development and progress. However, some factors influence the use of the portfolio in EFL classrooms. Some factors are related to the type of curriculum adopted, others are connected to students' willingness and readiness, while more factors are strongly linked to the teacher's perception and attitudes.

### **6.1. Curriculum-related factors**

During the last few years, the conceptual framework guiding the development of curriculum and instruction practices in the English as a second (henceforth ESL) or a foreign language (henceforth EFL) classroom has undergone considerable development. Changes in pedagogical and methodological theories have significantly increased the use of student-centred communicative approaches, which focus on language functions, meaning, and learning processes. Educators in favour of process-oriented instruction promote the use of alternative forms of student assessment. In this sense, Flood and Lapp (1989) note that the portfolio is increasingly used as an alternative to standardised testing to assess students' achievement and competencies.

Alternative assessment is sometimes implemented in some schools because the curriculum recommends it and is part of evaluating students' performance. For example, educators in California are examining portfolio assessments of reading and writing across the curriculum as part of the California Assessment Program (Shepard, 1989).

### **6.2. Self-regulated learning-related factors**

Self-regulated learning is a factor which affects the use of portfolios among students. Pintrich (2000) demonstrates that self-regulated learning has become a significant area of research attention. In this regard, self-regulated learning is referred to as the proactive effort of the students to mobilise emotional, cognitive and environmental resources during learning, and it also refers to self-observation and self-reflection, allowing students to judge and react to their progress. According to Schunk and Zimmerman (1994), self-regulation is reciprocal to motivation, and they define it as "the process whereby students activate and sustain cognitions, behaviours, and affects, which are systematically oriented toward the attainment of their goals" (p. 309). The self-regulated learning theory describes the factors that make people accomplish different complex capabilities in different domains. Self-regulated learners can "set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment" (Pintrich, 2000, p. 453). For student-centred self-regulation to be promoted, assessments need to be part of formative evaluation because assessments generally generate feedback about students' performance, which leads to the reinforcement of self-regulated learning, as demonstrated. Accordingly, the portfolio can be regarded as an essential tool to improve students' development and to facilitate self-regulated learning since learners acquire and demonstrate skills such as planning, monitoring, reflecting and evaluating.

Portfolio assessment plays a vital role in fostering self-regulation among students. By using portfolios, students have the opportunity to showcase their skills, development, efforts, and accomplishments over time. This form of assessment not only highlights their individual growth but also encourages them to take an active role in their learning journey. Through the process of compiling and reflecting on their work, students can better understand their strengths and areas for improvement, ultimately promoting a deeper engagement with the material and the assessment process itself. Additionally, portfolios allow for personalised feedback, enabling educators to tailor their guidance to each student's unique needs and learning goals (Carter et al., 1991).

### **6.3. Student's willingness**

Portfolios positively affect the learners' attitudes and perceptions of the teaching process because they raise their motivation towards learning. Sometimes, students can associate their success with using the portfolio as a learning and evaluation tool. Students get more motivated to interact with teachers and feel a need for their ideas to be evaluated within the course because

the portfolio allows them to conduct research, learn new concepts and develop skills such as self-esteem, self-assessment, responsibility and creativity. This benefit of the portfolio system is widely held to foster intrinsic motivation and responsibility, individualise learning, provide tangible evidence of a student's work, offer opportunities for collaborative work with peers and facilitate critical thinking (Brown, 2004).

### 7. Challenges in using portfolios in the classroom

Portfolios offer numerous advantages, especially in enhancing students' learning capabilities and functioning as efficient instruments for evaluating their development. Nonetheless, educators sometimes encounter difficulties while striving to apply alternative evaluation techniques. This is primarily due to insufficient resources and information regarding the effective integration of various evaluation methodologies in the classroom. However, they try to implement them according to their experience and understanding. Both Davis et al. (2009) and Lo (2010) argue that portfolio assessment is a very demanding process that takes students much time and interferes with their learning process. Hence, the portfolio is sometimes challenging to implement because of the time it entails, the large number of tasks involved, and the lack of a precise organisation and selection process. Besides, most teachers are still unaware of how to structure students' portfolios and how to grade portfolio files and activities. This makes them face difficulties and challenges regarding portfolio use in class. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should be trained on how to implement portfolio assessment in EFL classes effectively (Harmer, 2007).

Another challenging obstacle to the creation of portfolios is the fact that the portfolio procedure is time-consuming, which is one of the shortcomings of alternative assessment compared to paper-and-pencil tests, as contended by Kusimo et al. (2000). In this regard, Struyven et al. (2002) see that the most harmful side about creating a portfolio is the fact that students spend much time on the required assignments. However, Slater (1996) reported that students enjoy reviewing the needed materials and readings to create their portfolios, as they believe they learn new concepts and develop their skills. In the same context, Harmer (2007) also claims that a portfolio is time-consuming and requires some training on the part of teachers on how to select items from the portfolio and how to grade them. Further, students may not work systematically throughout the course, but they may leave their portfolios until the end of the course and prepare their final product quickly, expecting their work to be at its best. Moreover, it is not always clear if the students' work reflects their efforts or if other people have helped them, since the work is usually done when students are away from the classroom. Above all, some parents and the community are still unaware of the portfolio assessment system, so they disapprove of such a new and unfamiliar evaluation system (Harmer, 2007).

### 8. Conclusion

The conclusions derived from this study carry important theoretical implications for educators and teachers. It is crucial for them to understand the significance of the student portfolio and to promote the adoption of the portfolios not only among secondary school students but also among those in university. This approach will equip students to be leaders in addressing the challenges and demands of the 21st century and the evolving technological age. In light of the findings of the present study as well as those of the various studies reviewed in the literature, portfolios, as both a teaching and an assessment tool, have many positive contributions to teaching and evaluation. Portfolio development is one of the most popular alternative types of assessment, especially within the communicative language teaching framework. Portfolios help students develop their critical thinking skills and foster their learning responsibilities, which can help students become more autonomous, reflective, and independent learners and thinkers. Besides, portfolios are practical tools for involving learners, improving teaching and learning, and reflecting assessment reform. Portfolios are recognised as an authentic assessment of students' learning because they demonstrate classroom experience, link the knowledge studied in class to the student's skills, reflect students' ability and achievement, and involve realistic and relevant materials, making students create real-life products, which gives the stakeholders evidence of the student's ability.

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