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Application of Speaking Portfolios for Formative Assessment in English as a Foreign Language
Classes
(The case of secondary schools of Georgia)

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INTRODUCTION

Many language learners regard speaking competence as the measure of knowing the language. These learners define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read or write. They regard speaking as the most important skill they can acquire, and they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication. In the communicative model of language teaching, instructors help their students develop this body of knowledge by providing authentic practice that prepares students for real life communicative situations. Educators help their students to develop the ability to produce grammatically correct and logically connected sentences. Students need to produce sentences which are appropriate to specific context. The goal of developing speaking skills is communicative efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest.

In the 21st century, the communicative approach to teaching and learning emphasizes the importance of speaking skills. It involves students in efficient communication. The purpose of speaking is to develop children's thinking skills, extend children's vocabulary, help sequence and structure children's thoughts, develop children's ability to be good speakers and listeners, and engage them in the purposeful dialogue. Speaking can give all children the opportunity to express themselves regardless of ability and language, also to develop social skills and to enjoy speaking. It is also believed that speaking improves children's self-esteem and confidence (Brown, 2004). There can be different ideas for supporting speaking, open-ended questioning, encouraging healthy debates and discussions, talking about personal interests and experiences. Teachers are supposed to encourage children, help students develop communicative efficiency in speaking from the very beginning. Nowadays, in Georgian schools, greater importance is attached to improving speaking skills and consequently, to finding the best and least time-consuming ways for assessing speaking.

Traditionally, teachers have used assessments to measure how much their students have learned up to a particular point in time. This is called the assessment of learning or what teachers use to see whether their students are meeting standards set by the state or the school. These summative assessments are conducted after a certain time period to determine how much learning has taken place. Although the assessment of learning is important if we are to ascribe grades to students and provide accountability, teachers should also focus more on assessment for learning. This type of assessment known as formative assessment supports learning during the process. Since formative

assessment is considered as a part of the learning, it should not be graded like summative assessment. Formative assessment serves as a practice for students, just like a meaningful homework assignment. Formative assessment checks for understanding along the way and guides teacher decision-making about future instruction. Teachers they also provide feedback to students, so the latter can improve their performance. Feedback from teachers to children in the process of formative assessment is a prime requirement for progress in learning. Formative assessment is that process of appraising, judging or evaluating students' work or performance and using this to shape and improve their language competence. Feedback is defined as a particular way to highlight its function in formative assessment. For students to be able to improve, they must develop the capacity to monitor the quality of their own work during the actual production. With the meaningful feedback, students will possess the appreciation of what high quality work is, as they have the evaluation skills necessary for them to compare with some objectivity and the quality what they are producing in relation to the higher standards.

Formative assessment helps teachers to differentiate instruction and thus improves students' achievement. The crucial question is how to make formative assessment less time-consuming. Formative assessment does not have to take a huge amount of time, it is often quick and easy to use on a daily basis. The best way to make formative assessment less time-consuming is to implement digital applications, particularly electronic portfolios. This type of formative assessment can be individual, pair, small group or a whole class. The opportunity to work with others before working on their own leads students towards mastery of different skills, in particular speaking. The group assessment process is a part of the learning, so teachers do not have to grade it. Different types of assessment strategies can be implemented, like summarizing and reflection, list charts and graphic organizers, visual representations of information, also collaborative activities. Formative assessment could be used as a source of information for both students and teachers. It is convenient, since students should always be given a second chance to demonstrate success.

One of the best ways of assessing students' speaking competence is implementing electronic or digital portfolios. Portfolios are practical means of assessing students' work throughout the entire year. With this method descriptive records of a variety of students' work can be systematically collected over time, which reflects growth towards the achievement of specific curricular

objectives. Portfolios include information, sample work, and evaluations that serve as indicators for student performance over time. Portfolios are a better way to crosscheck students' progress than just one measure alone. Speaking assessment can be done through tapes of oral work, such as role play, presentations and oral account of a field trip (Huang & Hung, 2010). E-portfolios can include teacher descriptions of student accomplishments, such as oral performance tasks. Student portfolios can help a teacher to make instructional descriptions and report consistently and reliably (Brown, 2004). It helps to collect the same kind of data for each student. In this way, teachers will be able to assess both the progress of one student and of the class as a whole. Students have a most active role in the portfolio process, as they can select samples of their own work and reflect on their growth over time, which makes them more autonomous learners. Teachers and students can together set concrete, realistic improvement goals for future projects. Students as a class, in groups or individually can create their own rubrics for assessment. Some researchers view learners as active participants of not only the overall learning process, but also the assessment process. In order to involve learners in their own assessment, Little (2007) points out that they need to be a part of the process of determining their aims and selecting the appropriate activities. The implementation of speaking portfolios can help teachers in classroom management and organization issues, since students become more engaged in the learning process. Teachers should step back from the traditional approaches towards assessment and follow for learner-directed assessment.

Considering the benefits of involving students in the assessment process, some institutions in Georgia are starting to implement portfolios as a tool of authentic assessment in congruence with their objectives, curricula and instructions. This kind of portfolios is intended to assess speaking skills. They can take different forms:

- On-paper portfolios;
- Technology-based portfolios - where different technological tools can be used;
- Electronic portfolios, which is in our interest- where learners use Internet to upload their artifacts, products or any work.
- Video and audio portfolios.

Learning does not mean mere accumulation of basic skills, but making use of multiple strategies and pathways to construct one's own progress and express that progress in a portfolio assessment (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Portfolios contribute to learning in a variety of aspects: they provide the instruction with a link to assessment, foster learner autonomy, self-assessment skills, self-monitoring, motivation and self-confidence (Castañeda & Rodríguez-González, 2011). They also enable learners to see gaps in their own learning and to take some risks (Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000). Moreover, they promote learner-centered practice in a collaborative environment, and help increase learning rather than to rank or punish students (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Problem Statement

The problems stated in the research are:

1) As a groundbreaking practice, electronic speaking portfolios for formative assessment still need a deep and thorough research on their effectiveness. Its effect on learners' academic performance, advantages, disadvantages, means to escape disadvantages, change of attitudes, etc. are supposed to be investigated.

2) Many teachers are absolutely unaware of portfolio assessment methods, some who are aware still do not utilize them in their practice.

3) Traditional assessment of speaking is not very accurate, since it is difficult to assess speaking and provide all learners with constructive feedback; however, electronic speaking portfolios can be supportive.

Goal Statement

The dissertation aims to achieve the following specific goals:

1. To increase the communicative competence among secondary school children in Georgia.
2. To investigate the effects of applying electronic portfolio in the process of formative assessment.
3. To focus on productive skills and increase students' motivation to improve their speaking competence.

4. To investigate students and teachers' attitude towards applying electronic portfolios in the process of assessment.

Research Objectives

The purpose of the research is to identify the benefits as well as the downsides of electronic speaking portfolios, to emphasize the positive effect of portfolio assessment and to learn about some disadvantages. Also, the research aimed at finding out different stakeholders' attitudes such as teachers, parents and learners', towards portfolio assessment and to pinpoint how useful is it in practice. The main objective of the research was to investigate whether the application of speaking portfolios:

- affects the secondary school students' academic performance,
- boosts learners' motivation
- increases the positive attitude toward speaking skills in English
- helps students develop into more autonomous learners and encourages them to work and study independently
- encourages self and peer-assessment
- encourages co-operative teaching and learning
- encourages learners' contribution in the process of learning and assessment

The main objective of the research was to identify all possible advantages and disadvantages of portfolio assessment and to find out whether the application of electronic speaking portfolio for formative assessment could boost learners' motivation and eagerness to practice speaking; whether portfolio was able to improve students' academic performance and grow a positive attitude towards speaking skill.

Research Questions

The research aims to answer the following research questions

1. Does the application of speaking portfolios for formative assessment affect the students' academic performance positively?

2. Does the application of speaking portfolios for formative assessment increase students' motivation?

Novelty and actuality

Little research has been done in Georgia concerning portfolio assessment and particularly electronic speaking portfolios. This study has novelty because it shows a new up-to-date approach towards formative assessment. The implementing of modern educational technologies in the process of speaking assessment will be a challenging and interesting process for teachers, and motivating for learners. The utilization of electronic speaking portfolio in the process of teaching and assessing speaking skills will also be a novelty, since not many schools in Georgia use it. Not many studies held in the region are dedicated to speaking skills, therefore, investigating the development of this skill via portfolio formative assessment is a novelty for Georgia. The study introduces a new model designed to assess EFL learners' speaking skills and it reveals significant results (an increase in motivation among the learners). A new, less time-consuming and convenient model of speaking assessment was developed in the dissertation. The topic is new for Georgia where the study was held. Using electronic portfolios for speaking assessment is not a widely spread practice in Georgian secondary schools. The research is supposed to show how the application of speaking portfolios for formative assessment will be beneficial for the teaching and learning process.

Significance of the Problem

Language is used for communicative purposes, therefore, improving speaking skills is the crucial factor in language teaching and learning. In Georgian secondary schools, not enough attention is paid to the development of speaking skills, one factor might be that speaking skills are not assessed in the unified national exams. Also, doing speaking activities and assessing speaking is quite time-consuming, especially in the large classes. The significance of the study will be increasing the motivation among school children, emphasizing the importance of speaking activities, and finding less time-consuming ways of assessing speaking by educational technologies, namely electronic portfolios. New approaches towards formative assessment will be significant for both teachers and students. Additionally, implementing speaking portfolios could permit the learners to prepare themselves for taking the responsibilities of both their own and their peers' learning process, to

become co-operative and life-long learners. All the above-mentioned factors could be valuable in Georgian educational system.

Practical value

The use of electronic portfolios for formative assessment is a significant issue which should be given a great deal of attention. The research has a very high practical value as it directly addresses this issue in the language classroom and focuses on implementable strategies and classroom activities. The findings may have an influence on instructors' practices and, therefore, contribute to improvement of the educational process in terms of practicality. The practical value of the research is shaped by the fact that the dissertation is an up-to-date resource for teachers, reflecting on the issues of modern pedagogy, teaching and assessment. A new syllabus was designed which aims at increasing the number of speaking activities. From practical point of view, special activities were designed which had a clear aim and the procedures were organized. These types of activities will have a practical usage in EFL classes and promote speaking. The research can serve as a handbook for the teachers, who are willing to implement electronic portfolios in their practice and to use the speaking activities offered by the researcher.

Theoretical value

Theoretically, the dissertation will contribute to the belief held by some educators that application of speaking portfolios for formative assessment has a positive effect on language teaching in that it allows learners to acquire the language and have a positive effect on their academic performance, as well as increase learners' motivation. The theoretical bases of the current research are:

- Constructivism Theory (Piaget, 2013)
- Theories about the communicative competence (Hymes, 1973; Canale, 1983; Canale, & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1995;
- Ideas of communicative teaching and learning (Rogers, 1983; Johnson. & Morrow, 1981. Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Littlewood, 2011; Richards, 2006; Savignon, 2007).
- Ideas of learner-centered teaching and assessment (Armstrong, 2012)
- Ideas of alternative assessment (Hancock, 1994; Hanson, 1993; Tannenbaum, 1996)
- The importance of educational technologies (Chou, & Chen, 2009).

- Theories of motivation (Deci, & Ryan, 1985; Chandler, Connell, 1987).

These bases were developed in connection with the issue of electronic portfolio design and application for the development and assessment of speaking skills. A model for this was suggested by the researcher.

Hypothesis

The hypotheses of the study are:

1. The usage of speaking electronic portfolios for formative assessment will improve students' speaking skills.
2. The usage of speaking electronic portfolios for formative assessment will improve students' academic performance in speaking.
3. The usage of speaking electronic portfolios for formative assessment will increase students' motivation

Research Methods

The research employed the following research methodology and methods:

1. **View and analysis of existing literature on the topic**- the literature review was analyzed concerning the topic.
2. **Questionnaire** - was held with stakeholders such as students, teachers and parents at secondary schools. The questionnaire discussed students', teachers' and parents' attitudes, feelings and approaches towards the importance of speaking and communicative, student-centered study and assessment. Also, their attitudes towards implementing different educational technologies for formative assessment and particularly electronic speaking portfolio.
3. **Experiment** - Was held at the private school, British-Georgian Academy, in Tbilisi, Georgia. In the experiment two groups participated, one of which was the experimental group and the other - the control group.
4. **Interview** – was held after the experiment with the experimental group of students to understand their attitude towards portfolio assessment and their feelings about the implementation of electronic portfolios.

Dissertation structure

The dissertation has the following structure:

The dissertation consists of the following parts: Introduction, 4 chapters, conclusion, and appendixes. The introduction of the dissertation presents the goals, objectives, novelty, practical and theoretical values of the research, research questions and research hypothesis. Chapter 1, the literature review, creates the theoretical basis for the dissertation and discusses the importance of communicative competence, different aspects of communicative competence. Various types of learner-centered assessment and the strategies of assessing the communicative competence in English as a foreign language teaching. Chapter 2 deals with investigating the effects of application of speaking portfolios for formative assessment in EFL classes. Chapter 2 is a theoretical overview of portfolio assessment, the advantages and disadvantages of electronic speaking portfolios, types of speaking portfolios and the process of their implementation in practice. Chapter 3 deals with the practical strategies used to integrate speaking portfolios in EFL classes. It looks at the practicalities of applying electronic portfolios in the process of assessing speaking skills, within the school setting and offers practical activities for portfolio assessment. Chapter 4 includes research methodology and data analysis. It presents a detailed description of the research methodology used for the research and analyzes the obtained primary and secondary data. The final chapter discusses research findings and provides conclusions and recommendations. There are 26 tables and 26 figures in the dissertation. The dissertation is printed on 165 pages.

CHAPTER 1. Theoretical Overview of Developing Speaking Portfolios for Formative Assessment

Modern approaches suggest that the main purpose of learning foreign language is to use it in the process of human intercourse, since learners are supposed to use language in real-life situations. Knowledge of English language has become vital in almost every field of education, science and technology. First chapter represents theoretical framework of communicative competence, grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competences are discussed. The emphasize lies on the significance of developing a communicative approach towards foreign language acquisition. Communicative language teaching has gained vast popularity since it was regarded as one of the most effective methods in achieving communicative competence. There are discussed three main phases of development teaching methodology in EFL: traditional approach, classical communicative language teaching, and current communicative language teaching. All the phases are discussed separately within the chapter. As mentioned above, nowadays, communicative competence remains the aim of foreign language teaching and studying. Consequently learner-centered approach is appreciated. The priorities are given to creative, meaningful and purposeful interaction through language. The main focus is on learner autonomy, social nature of learning, diversity, meaningful feedback, curricular integration, technology integration and alternative assessment. The student-centered approach is implemented in order to increase motivation and promote collaborative learning, where teachers also acquire different role. However, there is not one unique method that meets the needs of all types of learners and achieves all objectives, therefore CLT is rooted not only one but a variety of methods and approaches. Different approaches such as knowledge- oriented approach and skill -oriented approach, as well as meaning -based approach were discussed in the chapter. The focus is not only on the advantages of CLT but also the challenges which educators face while implementing this approach in their practice. Within learner-centered framework together with various changes the approach towards assessment has also changed. Learner-centered assessment strategies embrace the perspective of the learner as the person closest to the learning process and consequences. Due to that, learners became responsible for their own learning and learning outcomes by co-creating assessment experiences. Learner-centered assessment includes collecting self-assessment information, which notifies instructional design and the choice of technology tool that are used to meet learner needs

and learning goals. The integration of modern technologies affects the assessment process. Learner-centered principles became a framework for determining how to use technologies for alternative assessment for more effective teaching. Fourteen learner-centered principles are discussed in the chapter. The attention is paid to such important factors as learners' motivation and elements needed to achieve intrinsic motivation. The definition of assessment is provided. Different types of alternative and learner centered assessment are distinguished. Separate subchapters are dedicated to summative and formative assessment. The importance of formative assessment is emphasized since formative assessment is regarded as learner-centered and highlights the need of continuous improvement. Formative assessment focuses on process, monitors students' learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their learning. This type of assessment helps to identify student's strength and weaknesses and target areas that need work. Such important types of assessment as peer assessment and self-assessment are emphasized and discussed. There are mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of peer assessment and self-assessment. Positive and negative feedback and their meanings are determined. A significant issue in modern education is to assess communicative competence in EFL teaching. The terms "Authentic assessment", "Performance based assessment", and "Alternative assessment" are used interchangeably and discussed separately. However, throughout the experiment the term "Alternative assessment" was utilized. These assessment forms share similar features for learners, such as their self-monitoring, self-assessment and peer-assessment skills, therefore all of them take into account learner's individual differences and contribute to their high-order thinking skills (Brown, 2004). The most significant features of alternative assessment are that it is student centered and it upturns student motivation, these factors are important in educational settings nowadays.

Chapter 2: Portfolio Assessment

Properly applied educational technologies improve education and achievement as well as promote collaborative learning. Learners identify their own problems, receive meaningful feedback and test ideas. Implementing modern technological approaches such as electronic portfolios gives learners and educators greater opportunities for reflection, feedback and revision as well as self-assessment and peer-assessment. Via portfolios learners can build global and local communities that might include all stakeholders, as it was done in the experimental study with the help of "Schoolbook".

As presented in this chapter, the application of portfolios in assessment focuses on learner's personal and motivational needs. It supports: engagement, frequent interaction, group participation, constructive feedback and connection to real world. The findings of previous studies have shown that portfolio assessment is a continuing process which inspires learners: 1. to grow into more autonomous learners; 2) to be in control of their own learning; 3) to make judgments; 4) to be engaged in self-assessment; and 5) to increase their problem-solving skills.

The studies concerning electronic portfolio assessment revealed that electronic portfolios were less time-consuming, easy to arrange, easily approachable for different stakeholders and highly appreciated by parents, since they liked being involved and seeing themselves as partners in the process of learning.

Based on the literature review the questionnaire for parents' opinions on portfolio assessment was compiled. Portfolios are used to demonstrate, present and reflect (Cennamo, Ross, & Ertmer, 2010). As presented in this chapter, it is highly significant to follow the steps of electronic portfolio development. Based on the presented analysis, electronic portfolios will be used in the experiment as a learning and assessment tool, as well as a record of achievements.

Based on the literature review for this and previous chapter, the following figure can be recommended in order to develop and apply electronic speaking portfolios.

Figure 1. The stages of electronic portfolio development



(developed by the researcher)

It is possible to see that portfolio application requires several steps: defining the purpose, audience and development tool for the portfolio, determining its goals, designing portfolio organization, developing the portfolio, choosing assessment tasks, defining criteria for the tasks, assessing the portfolio and delivering it to its intended audience. The chronological ordering of materials was a good way to demonstrate the growth of the students throughout the experiment.

Reflection, peer-assessment and self-assessment are key components in implementing portfolio assessment. Two types of portfolios were utilized during the experiment: working portfolio and showcase portfolio. Students collaborated with the researcher to identify their needs. For showcase portfolios students had to self-evaluate in order to select their most representative and appropriate tasks for this kind of portfolio.

The studies revealed that portfolios are significant to comprise the learners more effectively in the process of assessment by encouraging their reflection skills and autonomy; however, the application of portfolios involve some challenges as well. The disadvantages of assessment via speaking portfolios such as the issues of validity and reliability, subjectivity were taken into consideration by the researcher during the experiment. The analyzed empirical researches provide contradictory findings on these aspects of oral portfolios. Furthermore, the conducted studies do not point a wide enough range of exploration of both the benefits and the downsides to this kind of assessments from the point of all stakeholders.

In Georgia, research concerning portfolio at the school level is very limited, since the portfolio assessment is not very popular and widespread in secondary and high schools of Georgia. However, it is worth the effort and time to explore the effect of the use of electronic portfolios with secondary school pupils on their speaking achievements and to revise the students' approaches towards using portfolios in learning and assessment.

The implementation of electronic speaking portfolios for teaching and assessing EFL learners positively affect both learners and teachers. This modern approach is meant to stimulate teacher and learners to try out the methods to connect their work, to shift to learner-centered approach and to look beyond their community and to cooperate with each other and with a more globalized world community.

Chapter 3. Practical strategies to Integrate Speaking Portfolios in EFL Classes

The chapter dealt with discussing practical strategies of application of e-portfolios for formative assessment in EFL classes. In the chapter strategies of choosing digital applications for implementing electronic portfolios were presented. The emphasis was made on SchoolBook - an up-to-date school managing system. The British–Georgian Academy where the research was carried out utilizes the Schoolbook software. It is user-friendly, since stakeholders have an unlimited access to it at any time from all parts of the world.

In the chapter strategies to teach in experimental and control groups, the role of the teacher and the management strategies used throughout the experiment were discussed. The teacher’s role during the experiment varied. The teacher was a facilitator and a role model in order to encourage the students during the experiment. The mainstream textbook (Super Minds, Level 4) and supplementary materials were discussed. The textbook comprised interesting communicative activities which were used during the experiment. Supplementary materials were also selected carefully, in order to enhance the learners’ communicative competence and increase their motivation. The activities were used as an extra material to back up the course book.

The chapter provides a number of activities which were used during the experiment. The activities were divided into: 1) Individual activities (Activity 1 “Golden cat”. Activity 2 “My world Collage” Activity 3 “Jim’s adventure”); 2) Pair work activities (Activity 1 “Visit from the cat”, Activity 2 “The day the sea went out”, Activity 3 Emergency, Activity 4 “How we spend our free time”); 3) Group activities (Activity 1 “Finding out about an animal”, Activity 2 Music in our class”, Activity 3 “Reading Habits”); 4) Homework Activities (Activity 1 “My favorite outdoor place.” Activity 2.”Fire safety”. Activity 3 “Book Review.” Activity 4 “Wonder”). The content of the activities was linked to the different units in the book. Through gently-paced communication activities the learners developed their speaking skills. They were chosen to make both teaching and learning fun. Activities were appropriate to different teaching and learning styles and specially designed to encourage learners to develop communication skills.

The suggested activities can be used by other teachers or researchers, in order to implement electronic portfolio in their practice. It can save their time and serve as a guide book for their work.

Chapter 4. RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The aim of the experiment was to define learners' headway during the implementation of electronic speaking portfolios. The test results of the control and the experimental group were compared in order to disclose the difference (if any) of the efficiency of the traditional (without a speaking portfolio application) and the suggested (with a speaking portfolio application) methods of teaching speaking.

A significant aim of conducting the experiment was to answer the research questions: whether the application of electronic speaking portfolio for formative assessment was an effective means of assessment and whether this method affected the students' academic performance and gave a more precise measure of learners' headway.

The main objectives of the experiment were the following:

- To improve learners' academic performance through application of electronic speaking portfolio;
- To help students develop into more autonomous learners and encourage them to work and study independently;
- To encourage self and peer-assessment;
- To encourage co-operative teaching and learning and teacher-student conferencing.

In order to answer the above-mentioned research questions quantitative research methods were applied. The quantitative method was used to collect, evaluate and compare the data. The experiment's duration, to increase the results' reliability, was two semesters or seven months. The experimental study was held at British-Georgian Academy, Tbilisi, Georgia. 24 students 12 in experimental group and 12 in control group, as well as two EFL teachers took part in it.

The experiment lasted for 7 months, 28 weeks. 24 speaking lessons were delivered and 4 homework tasks were presented by the students. The experimental group was taught with the application of speaking portfolio, while the control group was taught without the application of speaking portfolio. In the experimental group, two types of portfolios, working portfolio and showcase portfolio were used. Otherwise teaching in both groups were identical. The pre-test was held on September 12th in both groups. The while-test 1 was held on December 18th 2017, after 13

weeks of experiment. The while-test 2 was held on February 21th 2018, after 22 weeks of experiment. The post-test was held on March 29th, 2018, in the 27th week, which was the final week of the experiment. The delayed test was held on April 30th. After one month since the experiment was finished.

Both groups utilized the same textbooks and supplementary materials. The similar method of material presentation, the same activities were used, however, the groups experienced different methods of assessment. The textbook as well as supplementary textbook contained speaking tasks and activities at the end of every unit which were used for portfolio assessment. Students in the experimental group had an opportunity to peer-assess and self-assess their performance based on rubrics.

A speaking pre-test, 2 while-tests, a post test and a delayed test were used to measure and compare the scores of the students.

Experiment results

The assessment was done in a ten-point system. The results of the five tests for the experimental and control groups are presented in the table 2 and 3 below.

Table 1. Pre-test, while-test 1, while-test 2, post-test and delayed test results for the experimental group

Student	Pre-test	While-test 1	While-test 2	Post-test	Delayed-test	Added value
Student 1	4	5	7	8	8	+4
Student 2	5	5	6	8	7	+3
Student 3	9	9	10	10	10	+1
Student 4	7	7	8	9	8	+2
Student 5	6	7	8	8	8	+2
Student 6	5	7	8	9	9	+4
Student 7	8	9	10	10	9	+2
Student 8	4	4	5	6	6	+2
Student 9	3	5	6	8	8	+5
Student 10	6	8	8	10	10	+4
Student 11	6	8	8	10	9	+4
Student 12	7	7	9	10	10	+3
Mean	5.83	6.75	7.75	8.83	8.55	2.72
Median	6	7	8	9	8.5	2.5
Standard deviation	1.74	1.65	1.54	1.26	1.24	

Table 2. Pre-test, while-test 1, while-test 2, post-test and delayed test results for the control group

Student	Pre-test	While-test 1	While-test 2	Post-test	Delayed-test	Added value
Student 1	3	3	5	4	4	+1
Student 2	8	7	7	8	8	0
Student 3	7	8	8	9	8	+1
Student 4	5	6	6	6	5	0
Student 5	6	6	6	6	7	+1
Student 6	6	7	6	7	7	+1
Student 7	10	9	10	9	9	-1
Student 8	7	4	5	4	4	-3
Student 9	8	7	8	7	7	-1
Student 10	6	6	7	6	6	0
Student 11	8	7	8	8	8	0
Student 12	4	5	6	6	5	+1
Mean	6.5	6.25	6.75	6.67	6.3	-0.2
Median	6.5	6.5	6.6	6.7	6.6	+0.1
Standard deviation	1.93	1.65	1.42	1.66	1.72	

The mean results of the pre-test showed that the level of the speaking skills in the experimental group (5.83) was to a certain degree lower than in the control group (6.5). However, already after the while-test 1 the situation changed. Not only did the experimental group get a higher mean result (6.75) than the control group (6.25), but also it increased the result while the control group's result decreased.

According to the while-test 2 statistics the students of the experimental group again increased their language competences more than students of the control group. The average language competence and skills' level of the experimental group rose up to 7.75 points (or by 1 point) in the experimental group. As for the control group, the average language competence and skills' level rose less (to 6.75 or by 0.5 points). Accordingly, after a six-month period, there was more improvement in the experimental group than in the control group. The standard deviation in the experimental group was 1.54 and in control group it was 1.42. This level of standard deviation demonstrates that dissemination of "weak" and "strong" students was approximately the same. In both groups the level of standard deviation was decreasing, which means that the groups were becoming more homogeneous, so the teaching method had an equal impact on all students.

According to the post-test statistics, the students of the experimental group again increased their language competences more than students of the control group. The average language competence and skills' level of the experimental group rose up to 8.83 points in the experimental group. As for the control group, average language competence and skills' level rose only to 6.7. Accordingly,

there was more improvement in the experimental group than in the control group. Standard deviation in experimental group was 1.26 in experimental group and in control group it was 1.66. This level of standard deviation demonstrates that the experimental class was becoming more homogenous, and more students got higher results.

We can see that the learners of the experimental group were progressively improving their results (see the added value results, which are all positive), while in the control group not all students improved their results (some maintained the same level, while some students' grades decreased by one to three points).

The delayed test showed a certain decrease of skills' level, for the experimental group, from 8.83 to 8.55, which is normal, as during that period no special treatment was offered, and for the control To be sure of the obtained results, not only means, but also medians were calculated. They show the same tendency: eventual improvement by 2.5 points for the experimental group (the median increased at each step) and by 0.1 for the control group.

The results demonstrate that the grades in this experimental group were persistently improving. Not only the mean, but also the mode (most often received grade) was growing. Median demonstrated growth as well. The standard deviation is decreasing from time to time, which shows that the level of skills in the group not simply increase, but become more even from student to student, which means that the development of the average is not obtained because of the effort of a few students, but due to the development of skill level of majority of students.

As the significance of comparing post-tests in control and experimental groups is 0.02, which is smaller than

$P < 0.05$, it can be determined that there is a significant difference between the two groups' test results.

Table 3. T-test for equality of means

		t-Test for Equality of means		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Pre-test	Equal variances assumed	0.860	0.364	3.581	22	0.002	0.67	0.60	-0.911	3.421
	Equal variances not assumed			3.581	20.516	0.002	0.67	0.60	-0.906	3.426

not assumed									
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It is obvious that the students of the experimental group have shown more progress in total performance. The results designate that the difference is substantial.

Qualitative outcomes of the research, in particular, the students' post-experimental interview also revealed that the application of electronic speaking portfolios for formative assessment in EFL classes instigated students' positive response to it; learners regarded portfolio assessment as beneficial, interesting and motivating for them; whereas in the control group students had very low improvement in EFL speaking skills during the period of the research. The chapter presented the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study.

After completing the experiment and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, we can emphasize on the implication of the current research for all stakeholders, students, teachers, parents and researchers of the field. One significant finding of the research is that speaking portfolio was beneficial for development of speaking skills. Portfolio as an alternative assessment can be recommended as a means of enhancing speaking skills. This kind of assessment serves not only for evaluating or testing students but also for developing their speaking skills. Consequently, according to Cole at al. (2000), portfolios may be used to address learners' strength and weaknesses. Portfolio encourages authentic communication in EFL classrooms, however, students get more nervous while giving spontaneous speeches, therefore, throughout the experiment the balance was maintained between spontaneous and prepared speeches, but mostly students were performing prepared speeches according the given activities. It is worth mentioning that portfolio assessment highly contributes to the development of learners' autonomy. Students are able to observe their headway easily, thus, it was easier for them to take responsibility for their own learning. Another finding is that portfolio assessment improves learners' skills to self-assess and peer-assess. An important implication is that learners might be encouraged to assess their peers' performance, however it is highly recommended to have more positive assessments and comments rather than negative. It is worth mentioning that learners seemed more motivated and less anxious while being assessed through speaking portfolio. As a result of the experiment, we can say that the outcomes of the experiment are in agreement with the hypothesis of the present study that application of portfolio assessment produces higher motivations and congruently, higher level of

language skills. The findings prove that portfolio assessment affect student motivation to learn in a positive way and develops students as autonomous learners.

CONCLUSION

1. Contemporary approaches advise that communication is the main purpose of studying foreign languages. English has become a lingua franca, therefore, the ability of speaking English is vital in almost every field of science, technology and education. The theoretical framework of communicative competence includes sociolinguistic, grammatical and strategic competences. In the study the importance of developing communicative approach towards studying English as foreign language is highlighted. Learner-centered approach is highly appreciated, since it leads to learner autonomy. Learner-centered approach focuses on the social nature of learning, meaningful feedback, alternative assessment and technology integration.

2. Portfolios are important in order to encompass the learners in the process of self- and peer-assessment more actively by encouraging their reflection skills and autonomy. Based on the literature analysis it can be concluded that the major advantages of portfolio assessments are the following: it advocates collaborative assessment and learners' self-assessment, it is learner-centered, reduces anxiety, boosts learners' motivation, is systematic and emphasizes the improvements rather than comparison with others. The application of electronic speaking portfolios for teaching and assessing EFL learners has a positive impact on both learners and teachers who become acquainted with alternative methods of learning and teaching English in Georgia. However, portfolios present some challenges as well, such as: they are time-consuming and require certain technical skills. To apply them effectively, we need limit their application time and to provide beforehand the technical skills to both teachers and students.

3. The types of electronic speaking portfolios viewed in the references are working portfolio and showcase portfolio. The format in which the portfolio was used during the experiment was electronic working portfolio (the show-case portfolio was used once, at the end of the semester). Practical strategies of application of E-portfolios for formative assessment are discussed in the dissertation.

4. The tasks dealing with portfolio application presented in the dissertation are: 1) Individual activities (Activity 1 "Golden cat". Activity 2 "My world Collage" Activity .3 "Jim's adventure"); 2) Pair work activities (Activity 1 "Visit from the cat", Activity 2 "The day the sea went out",

Activity 3 Emergency, Activity 4 “How we spend our free time”); 3) Group activities (Activity 1 “Finding out about an animal”, Activity 2 Music in our class”, Activity 3 “Reading Habits”); 4) Homework Activities (Activity 1 “My favorite outdoor place.” Activity 2.”Fire safety”. Activity 3 “Book Review.” Activity 4 “Wonder” They can be utilized by practitioner teachers in their classes while teaching speaking and assessing formatively the speaking skills. Individual, pair work and group activities enhance students’ autonomy, co-operation and social skills.

5. Questionnaires were held with stakeholders: 30 teachers and 12 parents. The questionnaires discussed stakeholders’ awareness and attitudes towards electronic speaking portfolio as a means of assessment of speaking skill. Their outcomes indicated that the majority of the participant teachers were not aware or have not used portfolios as a means of assessment. This may be caused by insufficient knowledge of educational technologies and different applications and computer software while teaching. From the teachers’ perspective, they are supposed to undergo some special and appropriate trainings to enhance their knowledge of modern educational technologies. Teachers are supposed to be open to innovations and respond to challenges of modern teaching methods. Only a small number of teachers utilize e-portfolios in their practice for formative assessment. It can be concluded that teachers need to be better informed of innovative methods of teaching and assessment. However, teachers expressed interest towards portfolio assessment, which gives hope that they will use more effective ways of speaking skills’ assessment.

The awareness of parents concerning portfolio assessment is low. However, they are highly interested in education results and need to be better informed about the benefits of the modern and innovative methods of assessment and teaching used with their children.

6. The post-experimental questionnaire and interview with students revealed that learners are enthusiastic to use electronic portfolios as a means of assessment during their studies. Utilizing digital technologies made the lessons more motivating and engaging. The learners of the experimental groups recognized this method as innovative, which is another significant finding of the research. As the students’ answers reveal, using electronic portfolios led to communicative teaching and learning of speaking in English, the students became more self-confident speakers, they were more actively involved in learning and self-assessment and developed team work skills, they became more autonomous learners, however they did have some difficulties while dealing with self-assessment and uploading the recordings to the SchookBook system. This emphasizes

the need to introduce learning autonomy step by step and to develop for this the students' ability to use technologies for self-education and self-assessment.

7. The main objective of the current research was to determine learners' headway during the implementation of electronic speaking portfolios. The obtained results are in agreement with the results received by other researchers. Huang and Hung (2010), for example, held a quantitative and qualitative research with 30 students in Taiwan, which showed that the application of speaking e-portfolio improved their students' fluency and increased their vocabulary. Besides, Safari and Koosha (2016) held a study with 72 students studying at Kowsar Language Institute in Esfahan, Iran, which showed that intermediate and advanced level students' speaking skills improved as result of application of speaking portfolios. Cepik and Yastibas (2013) studied the application of e-portfolios in order to increase 17 preparatory class university students' speaking skills in Turkey and came to positive conclusions. In another, qualitative, study (Yastibas & Cepik, 2015) the same authors found that language teachers also support the application of portfolios for teaching speaking in a foreign language. However, it is necessary to note that the role of portfolios has been more studied for the development of writing, reading and listening skills, besides, most of publications deal with university students, so more investigations of the issue dealing with school children should be held.

8. The main objective of the current research was to determine the learners' headway during the implementation of electronic speaking portfolios. Consequently, the outcomes of this study, as well as the literature analysis carried out in the dissertation indicated that learners benefit from the use of electronic portfolios as a means of assessment of their speaking skills during their studies. Thus, it can be concluded that the application of e-portfolios is beneficial for the enhancement of speaking skills and increases students' motivation.

The major results of the dissertation were published in the following articles:

1. Cheishvili, S., (2017). Electronic Speaking Portfolios as a Means of Alternative Assessment in English as a Foreign Language Classes. The 7th International Research Conference on Education, Language and Literature. IBSU, (2), 861-869.

2. Cheishvili, S., (2018). The Role of Electronic Portfolios in Learner-centered Teaching and Alternative Assessment in English as a Foreign Language Classes. The Scientific Journal Association 1901 SEPIKE, (21), 5-11.
3. Cheishvili, S., (2018). The Development of and the Effect of Electronic Speaking Portfolios on Learner's Academic Performance in English as a Foreign Language Classes in Primary Schools. Journal of Education in Black Sea Region (JEBS), Vol. 4 (1), 53-66