

European Language Portfolio

Literature Review

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The literature review identifies, critiques, and documents best and promising practices of the European Language Portfolio (ELP). The ELP will be used as a model to develop a Language Portfolio for Internationally Engineering Graduates. The research is based upon 28 electronic databases locating a total of 114 documents. Out of the 114 documents, 36 were identified with being directly relevant to the review. Two types of research studies emerged: 1. qualitative studies with data results and analysis, and 2. expert opinion articles.

Seven themes developed out of the research:

- **Reflection**, the ELP is designed to promote learner reflection on language learning.
- **Self directed learning/Learner Autonomy**, the ELP promotes life-long learning and as such relies upon learner autonomy as a means to maintain the ELP.
- **Teachers**, instruction on the ELP is critical for learners to learn about how to use the ELP and promote learner autonomy.
- **Employers**, for the ELP to remain credible and relevant it needs to extend to employment.
- **Plurilingualism**, the ELP is vehicle for lifelong learning of languages and for intercultural understanding.
- **Student Motivation**, the learner should be engaged as personal motivation is contingent upon a success development of the ELP.
- **Intercultural Competence**, higher levels of language competence is measured by the learner's ability to understand intercultural competence.

The future direction which ELPs are progressing toward are: creating a Canadian version, integrating the ELP principles and templates for Manitoba's Collaborative Portfolio, producing various electronic versions, specifically web based, moodle based, and downloadable software.

The literature review made planning and programming recommendations. The planning recommendations were grouped into two types: ELP design and suggestions for implementing teaching strategies. Some of the recommendations included creating a flexible ELP with transparent learner qualifications and validations, easy to scan and simple to read passport, using reflective questions, creating summary checklists, and teaching strategies to promote learner autonomy. As for the programming recommendations, some were developing clear expectations for teachers, professional development for teachers about ELPs, using the ELP as a pedagogical tool as much as a

recording tool, incorporating intercultural competence into the biography section, and creating supports for teachers.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) is a community agency that assists immigrants and refugees new to Edmonton to “achieve full participation in the community, contributing their experiences and skills to strengthen and enrich the lives of all Canadians.”¹ EMCN regularly conducts reviews of research, literature and practice to ensure ongoing quality of services. This literature review will help inform the development of a language portfolio which is based upon the European Language Portfolio (ELP). This is an extension of the research conducted for the *Benchmarking the Language Demands of the Engineering Profession in Alberta (Benchmarking)* project.

The primary intent of this literature review is to develop a framework based on the current literature to guide the planning, development and implementation of the language portfolio that would be “embedded in the engineering bridging programs found around the province, and could also be applied in similar programs across Canada.”² The language portfolio would be an Alberta based portfolio, which would allow for a client’s understanding of their language ability. Essentially, the language portfolio would highlight the language standards needed for the Engineering profession. These standards are based upon the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) levels and the finding that developed out of the *Benchmarking* project.

This document:

- Identifies, critiques, and documents the evidence and best and promising practices in the literature as it pertains to the quality, effectiveness, and continuation of a language portfolio.
- Identifies future direction toward which language portfolios are moving.
- Includes specific commentaries in each area of discussion regarding Reflection, Self-Directed Learning/Learner Autonomy, Teachers, Employers, Plurilingualism, Motivation, and Intercultural Competence.
- Presents a framework for developing a facilitator’s manual.
- Makes recommendations based on a critique of the evidence and best and promising practices identified in the literature.

LITERATURE SEARCH AND REVIEW PROCESS

A systematic literature search was conducted to identify key published and unpublished literature (in English) discussing evidence of the effectiveness of the European Language

¹ Ralph Paufler, “Letter of Introduction,” *Amendment to the Benchmarking the Language Demands of the Engineering Profession in Alberta*, EMCN Proposal.

² Amendment Proposal.

Portfolio published from 1995-2007. Relevant literature was obtained through database searches conducted between October 23, 2007 and November 16, 2007, and by searching references of relevant articles. Electronic databases typically contain bibliographic details and (frequently) abstracts of published material as well as thesaurus-derived indexing terms, were used to search for relevant articles. These databases included: EBSCO, Google/Google Scholar, Academic Search Premier, American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies, ATLA Religion Database, Communication & Mass Media Complete, ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre), Humanities International Complete, Humanities Full Text, Illumina, FindArticles.com, Ovid, MLA Directory of Periodicals, MLA International Bibliography, Primary Search, Periodicals Index Online, Project MUSE Scholarly Journals Online, Social Sciences and Humanities Journals from Russia (East View), SocINDEX with Full Text, Sociological Collection, Academic Search Complete, Genamics JournalSeek, Blackwell Synergy, Cambridge Journals Online, Science Direct, and Copernic Meta Search. Further, the University of Alberta library catalogue and relevant research institutes, and conference proceedings were searched as well as scanning the reference lists of publications (primary studies and reviews). For the purpose of the project the scope of research was limited to ELPs and language portfolios. Thus, the search terms used in the literature review were: European Language Portfolio, and Language Portfolio.

SEARCH RESULTS

In total, 114 potential documents were identified through the search process.³ Some of the documents searched which were not relevant and consequently were excluded from the review. The articles perused can be defined into various groups thus, 10 primary studies, 9 reports, 4 guides, and 13 expert opinion papers resulting in a total of 36 documents being included in this review.

HIERARCHY OF RESEARCH RESULTS

In researching the ELPs, a hierarchy of evidence is created in order to properly weigh results and create logical conclusions. In the studies collected for the review, two types of articles were found: 1. Qualitative Results (i.e., results that have a solid research base with an adequate description, data analysis, and linked to theory⁴) describing the results from the ELP, and 2. Expert opinion based upon research. The literature review will give greater weight to the qualitative results over the expert opinion because it has sounder designs and more rigour. Further, the scope of the review is to understand best and promising practices in the literature as it pertains to the quality, effectiveness, and continuation of a language portfolio, which is the focus of the qualitative research.

³ The number of potential articles does not include the results from Google Scholar. When Google Scholar is included the calculated number reaches approximately 50,114. The reason why the database was excluded from the above calculation is because it inflates the amount of material perused in the review.

⁴ Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2001, p.5. (<http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/>)

CONTEXT FOR EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIOS

A brief overview of the guiding principles and structure of the ELP will be summarized to provide context to the literature review. Crosbie outlines the principles which underlie the ELP as “...deepening of mutual understanding and respect among citizens in Europe; the protection and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity; the promotion of life-long language and intercultural learning.”⁵ Crosbie argues that the European Union policymakers are attempting to crystallize their mythical constructs of enhanced economic competitiveness, as well as the promotion of social justice and democratic citizenship in the Council of Europe’s ELP.⁶ Thus, the ELP becomes the vehicle to which the principles of the EU can be carried.⁷

The tripartite structure of the ELP is designed both with a pedagogical and reporting function.⁸ The reporting function is designed to present additional information about the learner’s language experiences and provide evidence of proficiency and achievements.⁹ In its pedagogical function the ELP is “to promote plurilingualism, raise cultural awareness, make the language learning process more transparent to the owner, and foster development of learner autonomy.”¹⁰ The three components are:

1. **Language Passport**, which summarizes the owner’s linguistic identity by briefly recording second/foreign languages learnt, formal language qualifications achieved, significant experiences of second/foreign language use, and the owner’s assessment of his/her current proficiency in the second/foreign language he/she knows;¹¹
2. **Language Biography**, which is used to set language learning targets, monitor progress, and record specially important language learning and intercultural experiences;

⁵ Crosbie, Veronica, “From Policy to Pedagogy: Widening the Discourse and Practice of the Learning Society in the European Union,” *Language and Intercultural Communication*, Vol. 6, No. 3&4, 2006, pp. 234-242.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁷ It should be mentioned that David Little in “The European Language Portfolio: Structure, Origins, Implementation and Challenges,” outlines that the ELP is similar to other projects that the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages department had attempted in the past. Further, it was out of Council of Cultural Cooperation that a promotion of a Common European Framework would both “promote and facilitate cooperation among educational institutions in different countries; provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications; [and] assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and coordinate their efforts.” P 182. For further discussion on Lifelong Learning and its impact upon Educational systems in the EU see: Tuschling, Anna et. al., “From Education to Lifelong Learning: The Emerging Regime of Learning in the European Union,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2006.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹¹ Ushioda, “In principle, then, the Language Passport validates the individual’s plurilingual identity and confers rights of participation in particular linguistic communities of practice, in much the same way that a travel passport validates the individual’s nationality and identity and confers right of entry into a particular geographical region.” P. 152.

3. **Dossier**, which contains a selection of work that in the owner's judgment best represents his/her second/foreign language proficiency.¹²

The biography and dossier merge in the process of the learner's language reflection, and the passport acts as a measuring stick to indicate the learner's level.¹³

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Seven themes developed out of the literature: reflection, self-assessment/learner autonomy, teachers, employers, plurilingualism, motivation, and intercultural competence.

Reflection

One of the major themes that develop out of the qualitative literature is the use of reflection. In order for the students to fully understand their language level, they need to reflect upon their language learning.¹⁴ This reflection or realization helps to facilitate important decisions about their learning. Simpson develops content that "engage learners in thinking about, discussing, and working on a range of different issues."¹⁵ Further, she has developed activities that link back to the "relevant parts" of the ELP.¹⁶ To promote reflection, themes were created by the Finnish Secondary School in which questions were created around the themes. The themes listed by Pakkila are as follows:

- Student's role and responsibility as a language learner
- Social responsibility as a group member
- Different personal working techniques for the student as a learner
- Learning peer- and self-assessment
- Being goal orientated in one's learning and life¹⁷

Questions were then incorporated into the themes such as "what type of learner are you?" (developed out of the first theme) to "reflect on your strengths as a language learner" (developed out of the third theme). Pakkila observes that as the course develops so does the student's reflective skills.¹⁸ Hotellier engaged her students through asking

¹² Little, David, "The European Language Portfolio: Structure, Origins, Implementation and Challenges," *Language Teaching*, 35, 2002, p. 182-189. Little also comments, "But it is central to the pedagogical challenge posed by the ELP that it should be used for *all* language learning that goes on within a particular institutional context." P. 187.

¹³ For more information on the principles and structure of the European Language Portfolio see: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/portfolio/Default.asp?L=E&M=/main_pages/welcome.html.

¹⁴ Pakkila, Teijo, "The Finnish ELP Pilot for Upper Secondary Schools," *The European Language Portfolio in Use: Nine Examples*, Ed. David Little. P 7.

¹⁵ Simpson, Barbara, "Using the ELP with adult refugees learning the language of the Host Community," *The European Language Portfolio in Use: Nine Examples*, Ed. David Little. P 41.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

them to reflect upon effective learning, and their attitudes toward learning.¹⁹ Once the reflective process was in place a definite change in the student's motivation and interest occurred.²⁰ Kohonen points out that it may be difficult for a beginner language learner to reflect upon their language level, especially with a "assessing their communicative ability by means of the criterion-referenced level descriptors."²¹ Further, Kohonen states that for students to become aware of their language assessment, it is advisable to start "with the *students themselves* as learners in general and as language learners in particular. In other words, students could perhaps best learn a *basic reflective orientation* by working on their own experiences, beliefs and assumptions of learning in the first place. ...It is helpful to start with simple questions or semi-structured statements designed by the teacher. ... Once the students realize the purpose of reflection and self-assessment they have crossed the basic *motivational threshold* for reflective activities in class."²² Kohonen also understands that a reciprocal relationship is needed in order to create a safe environment to "explore meaning and make mistakes."²³

Expert opinion holds that the reflection component of the ELP is integral to the student's language learning. Little describes the importance as follows:

...for if learners do not gradually develop the capacity to engage in reflection and evaluation in their second/foreign language, we cannot expect them to progress to the more advanced levels of proficiency, which presupposes such a capacity.²⁴

The ELP is specifically designed to assist the language learner "to reflect on, and account for, learning processes and outcomes."²⁵ As well, there "seems to be a symbiotic relation between learner reflection and teacher reflection."²⁶ This is in order to allow the language learner to gain control of his/her learning, as well as to present examples of their work to interested bodies.²⁷ Ushioda claims that empirical evidence is suggesting that the ELP is an "effective tool for promoting reflective learning, motivation and autonomy."²⁸ This is best evident in the way in which the ELPs are being constructed. For instance, the *LinguaFolio* is constructed with "can-do" statements.²⁹ Further, Little

¹⁹ Hotellier, Therese and Elizabeth Troisgros, "The 'Portfolio Attitude': using the ELP in a French Technical Secondary School," *The European Language Portfolio in Use: Nine Examples*, Ed. David Little. P. 13.

²⁰ Ibid., 13.

²¹ Kohonen, p. 86.

²² Ibid., p. 88.

²³ Ibid., p. 88.

²⁴ Little, David, "The European Language Portfolio: Structure, Origins, Implementation, and Challenges," *Language Teaching*, Vol. 35, 182-189.

²⁵ Crosbie, Veronica, "From Policy to Pedagogy: Widening the Discourse and Practice of the Learning Society in the European Union," *SALIS*, Dublin University, Dublin, Ireland, p. 239.

²⁶ Little, 187.

²⁷ Ibid., 239.

²⁸ Ushioda, Ema, "Language Motivation in a Reconfigured Europe: Access, Identity, Autonomy," *Centre for English Teacher Education*, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK, p. 152.

²⁹ Cummins, Patricia, "LinguaFolio: American Model for the European Language Portfolio," *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 91, 2007, 118. Further, Kohonen states "In an interesting way the communicative

states that the ELP causes learners to reflect upon “the reasons for learning languages, the language learning process, and the criteria by which learning might be evaluated.”³⁰ In summary, the ELP is firmly established in reflective teaching and learning which is what makes it effective for language learning.³¹

Self Directed Learning/Learner Autonomy

The theme of learner autonomy comes out of the qualitative studies and is considered a fundamental process to learning. Simpson outlines that one of the main objectives of a language course is to develop learner autonomy.³² Activities are outlined by Simpson to engage students in learner autonomy are diary pages, goal-setting objectives, and self-assessment grids.³³ Expert opinions on the theme of self-directed learning or learner autonomy claim that it is fundamental to effective ELP use.³⁴ In fact, found embedded within the Council of Europe’s educational projects is learner autonomy.³⁵ Little states that learner autonomy is facilitated by co-production of classroom lessons.³⁶ He explains that teachers may take learner autonomy too literally, and tell “their learners that it is up to them to be responsible for their learning and withdrawing to a corner of the classroom in order to manage the resources that will magically facilitate 30 or more individual learning processes.”³⁷ The point of learner autonomy is for teachers to teach the self directed learning skills to the student, so by the end of the sessions the students are able to pick up and continue their language learning on their own. Kohonen understands that there is “invisible learning outcomes” that are essential for the development of language competence:

- Commitment to and ownership of one’s language learning
- Tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty in communicative situations and learning in general
- Willingness to take risks in order to cope with communicative tasks
- Understanding of oneself as a language learner and a language use in terms of the beliefs about language use and one’s role as a learner
- Understanding of one’s cultural identity and what it means to become an intercultural speaker

‘can do’ statements have been expanded recently to a number of domains that are relevant for language learning, interpersonal communication, career planning and public language use.” (“The European Portfolio,” p. 87).

³⁰ Little, “Learning as Dialogue; The Dependence of Learner Autonomy on Teacher Autonomy,” *System*, Vol., 23, No. 2, 1995, pp. 184.

³¹ David Little states: “Self-assessment is fundamental to effective ELP use...Of course, whether its function is summative or formative, self-assessment draws on the same complex of knowledge, self-knowledge and skills, which means that the more the ELP owner engages in formative self-assessment, the better he/she should become at summative self-assessment. The implication of this argument is that effective use of the ELP must be rooted in reflective teaching and learning.” “European Language Portfolio,” p. 186

³² Simpson, “Using the ELP with Adult Refugees,” p. 41.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁴ Little, “Learning as Dialogue,” p. 186.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 178.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 178.

- Skills and attitudes for socially responsible learning and language use
- Plurilingualism, involving a reflective awareness and appreciation of languages and language learning, as well as assuming respect for and appreciation of cultural diversity and otherness
- Learning skills and strategies necessary for continuous, independent language learning
- A reflective basic orientation to language learning, with abilities for self-assessment³⁸

Little explains that using checklists helps the learner to identify themes, new tasks, and goals within only a few minutes.³⁹

Teachers

According to the report, “Piloting the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in the Higher Education Sector of Europe,” by Brigitte Vosicki, the response from teachers about the ELP was favourable, specifically with its pedagogical role in the classroom.⁴⁰ Vosicki does qualify this result with the fact that the teachers involved in the study were already acquainted with the ELP from the pilot phase.⁴¹ The following summary highlights ELP difficulties that the teachers expressed:

- The amount of time to introduce the ELP into courses caused a “work overload” and caused de-motivation in student and teacher alike.
- More time was needed to “integrate new ideas” contained in the ELP.
- Inadequate training for teachers led to difficulties with the ELP being introduced.
- The absence of teacher’s guides, supplementary teaching material etc... was “perceived as a serious drawback.”
- Some confusion with the Common European Framework (i.e., the language scale).
- Some versions of the portfolio were too complex and difficult to understand, thus it de-motivated teachers and students.
- The portfolio was introduced to newly arrived exchange students to a Dutch university (Gent University) and it was not in the student’s mother tongue, combined with an unfamiliar teaching style, it caused additional difficulties in language learning.
- Lack of portfolios in mother languages.⁴²

Little identifies that the ELP caused learners and teachers to reflect upon “the reasons for learning languages, the language learning process, and the criteria by which learning might be evaluated.”⁴³ Additionally, learners and teachers wanted to understand how the self-assessment could be used in the final evaluation of the language and how the ELP related to exams.⁴⁴ Further, they were concerned about its validity to employers.⁴⁵ An

³⁸ Kohonen, p. 89.

³⁹ Little, David, “The Common European Framework and the European Language Portfolio: Involving Learners and their Judgements (sic) in the Assessment Process,” *Language Testing*, 22 (3) 2005, pp. 321-336.

⁴⁰ Vosicki, p. 7.

⁴¹ Vosicki, p. 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

important note to mention is that teacher feedback indicated that electronic portfolios would be useful for writing samples, PowerPoint presentations, oral presentations, dialogue etc...⁴⁶ It should be mentioned that Strasbourg University understood the biography section of the ELP as a “teacher’s tool.”⁴⁷ The biography was understood to motivate students and organize their learning.⁴⁸ Teachers also found at Strasbourg that if their language classes were not geared toward a portfolio view, then the ELP was difficult to implement.⁴⁹ In Finland, Kohonen explains that the *Dossier* can be used both as a reporting tool and as a pedagogical tool. Thus it authenticates the language learning, but it also “functions as a pedagogic device for the teachers to guide learning and provide on-line feedback about it, and as a practical tool for the students to take increasing charge of their learning under the teacher’s guidance and tutoring. For us, then, the dual function of the dossier provides an *interface between language learning, teaching and assessment.*”⁵⁰

Expert opinion on the topic of teachers and their relationship with the ELP is that “the teacher’s key role is to create and maintain a learning community; if teachers stop teaching, most learners will stop learning.”⁵¹ The ELP allows for a focus upon both the student and the teacher responsibility is passed from the teacher to the student in regards to learning.⁵² Kohonen writes that not only does the ELP need to be taught, but also the language framework (i.e., Common European Framework).⁵³ Kohonen states, “Teachers need to teach their students the central concepts of the CEF, appropriately tuned to the given context, and enable them to become increasingly aware of their language learning aims, contents, processes and outcomes.”⁵⁴ Further, Kohonen understands that it is important for teachers to explore the pedagogical function of the ELP in order to understand how it can be integrated in the classroom.⁵⁵ A series of questions can promote teacher reflection:

⁴⁶ Cummins, “LinguaFolio,” p. 120.

⁴⁷ Frath, Pierre, “Introducing the *CercleS* European Language Portfolio at a Self-Study Multilingual Resource Centre,” *Universite’ Marc Bloch, Strasbourg*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p 4.

⁵⁰ Kohonen, pp. 85-86. Italics in quote from the author.

⁵¹ Little, “Learning as Dialogue; The Dependence of Learner Autonomy on Teacher Autonomy,” *System*, Vol., 23, No. 2, 1995, pp. 175-181. “It is often argued that the pursuit of learner autonomy requires a shift in the role of the teacher from purveyor of information to facilitator of learning and manager of learning resources. Stories abound of teachers who, inspired by the ideal of learner autonomy, have interpreted this argument all too literally, telling their learners that it is now up to them to be responsible for their learning and withdrawing to a corner of the classroom in order to manage the resources that will magically facilitate 30 or more individual learning processes. When nothing happens the teacher usually concludes that learner autonomy does not work.” P. 178.

⁵² Little, “Developing Learner Autonomy,” p.2.

⁵³ Kohonen, Viljo, “The European Language Portfolio: From Portfolio Assessment to Portfolio-Oriented Language Learning,” *Developments in Reflective Language Learning and Self-Assessment*, University of Tampere, p. 85.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

- How can students be helped to develop a more differentiated awareness and understanding of the phenomena of language, communication, learning and learning processes?
- How can they be guided to direct their language learning efforts and monitor and assess their language skills?
- How should they be taught to establish and maintain mutually beneficial and responsible social relationships in their learning groups and communities?
- How can students be guided to acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills increasingly on their own?
- How can they be provided with sufficient support, tutoring and encouragement?
- How can they be helped to build up and modify their physical and social learning environments?⁵⁶

The teacher's role is to assist the student, through planning, in order to help their students track and document the development of new knowledge.⁵⁷ Additional reflective questions which Kohonen points out are: how to legitimize the goals of student autonomy as something attainable to them, at least to some extent, if they make a serious effort? How to help them explore their learning, both alone and together? How to help them to discover more ways of proceeding in their learning? How to increase their awareness of their role as responsible learners?⁵⁸ To be more sympathetic to the language learner, it may be helpful "for the teacher to do the same exercise in the language that she knows least well (and very little of)."⁵⁹

Employers

Expert opinion indicates that the ELP will be helpful for employment. Some factors involved are that employers may want summary information with the ability to look at more elaborate information if they needed it. Little argues that greater flexibility is needed for the design of the biography and dossier in order to accommodate employers.⁶⁰ The flexibility of ELP along with the focus on learner autonomy allows for the learner to include material which is relevant to their job search.⁶¹ Further, the dossier can be used in job interview in order to show case the learners language abilities.⁶² Cummins mentions that it is important for learners to include information that focuses "on job descriptions for potential employers."⁶³ As this applies to the dossier section, the learner would include information for the shared dossier that best represents their qualifications for employment. Little identifies that teachers and learners alike were concerned with the ELPs validity to employers. ⁶⁴ Specifically, with regards to the

⁵⁶ Kohonen, p. 85.

⁵⁷ Kohonen, p. 85.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 86.

⁶⁰ Little, "The European Language Portfolio," p. 187.

⁶¹ Crosbie, "From Policy to Pedagogy," p. 240.

⁶² Ibid., 240. It should be mentioned that Crosbie does see more than employment as an end to the ELP, "This, however, in my view, is a narrow view of the full range of capabilities inherent in such a document." P. 240.

⁶³ Cummins, "LinguaFolio," 120.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 184.

transparency of qualifications, Deane explains that the ELP, “can also help to remove some of the major obstacles to mobility, between levels of education and training, between different learning contexts, between jobs and sectors, and between countries.”⁶⁵

Factors that arise out of Expert Opinion Alone

Factors that are dealt with in the expert opinion literature are plurilingualism, motivation, and intercultural competence. With regard to plurilingualism, developing out of the Council of Europe’s principles of lifelong learning and intercultural understanding is the belief that language learning should have a “communicative purpose.”⁶⁶ The ELP, as it promotes language learning, has the purpose of not only reporting additional language proficiencies that transcends nationally based grading systems, but also “it emphasizes the importance of plurilingualism and cultural exchange,” through documenting the learner’s experiences.⁶⁷

Student motivation is directly relevant to the success of the language portfolio. Ushioda points out that learner’s are more apt to participate and contribute to their ELP if the learner is not threatened to lose their “linguistic identity and sense of self.”⁶⁸ Further, student motivation is directly impacted by the social setting.⁶⁹ Thus, whether or not a learner engages and uses the ELP is contingent on personal motivation and environmental motivational influences.⁷⁰ Submitting a dossier gives the students a sense of purpose when language learning.⁷¹ Further, it provides clear objectives, as well as providing excellent examples passively implies that language is being learned.⁷²

⁶⁵ Deane, Cynthia, “Transparency of Qualifications: Are We There Yet?” *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 1005. 292

⁶⁶ Little, David, “The European Language Portfolio: Structure, Origins, Implementation and Challenges,” *Language Teaching*, 35, 2002, pp. 182-189.

⁶⁷ Rantz, “Regarding the perspective held on the target culture, Chambers (2004:15), however, distinguishes between three distinct views: firstly, the monocultural perspective – which refers to the target culture as homogenous, static and possibly monolingual. It tends to downplay all forms of diversity (ethnic, social, regional, generational). It also easily ignores the fact that the target language may be spoken in several countries. Secondly, the multicultural perspective redresses the oversimplification and one-dimensional bias of the monocultural perspective. It is more inclusive of the cultural diversity present in countries where the language is spoken. It does not however recognize fully how cultures change constantly as they come in contact with each other. Finally, there is the intercultural perspective that, in contrast, takes this dynamic process of change into account, both at social and individual levels.” P. 210. Further, Ushioda writes, “Plurilingualism is an attribute of the individual rather than community, and is deemed to have a significant influence on the development of the European sense of identity (p.8), since it enables participation in democratic, social and political processes within the multilingual context of Europe.” P.151.

⁶⁸ Ushioda, 151.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁷⁰ Environmental factors can include, but are not restricted to, a proper social setting (learning environment) constructed by teachers, or employers desiring to see the language passport.

⁷¹ Frath, Pierre, “Introducing the *CercleS* European Language Portfolio at a Self-Study Multilingual Resource Centre,” *Universite’ Marc Bloch, Strasbourg*. P. 2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 2

Intercultural competence is a factor that is important in the ELP.⁷³ In the higher levels of language competence the self assessment grid found in the passport implies a learner's awareness of "the socio-pragmatic dimension of linguistic communication."⁷⁴ Of the ELPs produced, the intercultural component most often existed in the form of learner reflection on intercultural experiences.⁷⁵ The intercultural competence, as show cased in the dossier, relies solely upon the owner. Thus, at what level the intercultural ability is portrayed is contingent upon the extent that the owner is able to illustrate.⁷⁶ Little et. al. state that, "It is worth pointing out that cultural knowledge and intercultural competence are not the same thing. No doubt intercultural competence depends to some extent on relevant cultural knowledge, but it also depends on other factors, including the individual's affective and attitudinal orientation and interpersonal skills."⁷⁷

ELP pages that are designed to incorporate the intercultural competence of the learner should include:

- Where, with whom and in what context did the experience take place?
- What kind of experience was it in terms of the intensity factors [frequency, duration, degree of involvement and significance for one's life history and identity] ...?
- What was my response? Did I merely reflect on the experience, or did it prompt me to some kind of action?
- Why did I respond in the way I did?⁷⁸

In terms of what needs to be presented with the ELP, it should capture "the cumulative effect of intercultural experiences."⁷⁹ The ELP needs to have the capacity to continually apply information in order for the learner to track and reflect upon material "a week or month or a year later."⁸⁰ Learners should understand that intercultural experiences can be both cognitive and emotional. Further, that some intercultural experiences may be negative.⁸¹ The sections of the ELP that deal with intercultural experiences could be sectioned off in order to portray that these experiences may be understood by the learner as mutually exclusive to language.⁸²

FUTURE DIRECTION

There are several future directions that the European Language Portfolio is moving. A Language Portfolio Workshop was held in order to address the European Language Portfolio and Its Potential for Canada. The Manitoba Government, specifically the

⁷³ Little, David and Barbara Simpson, "European Language Portfolio: The Intercultural Component and Learning How to Learn," *Report for the Council of Europe*, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.3.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁷ Little and Simpson, "Intercultural Competence," p. 4.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁸² Ibid., p. 5.

Manitoba Labour and Immigration Adult Education Training Branch, have created a language assessment based upon the templates of the ELP. The United States have developed *LinguaFolio* a language learning tool based upon the European Language Portfolio. There are web-based versions of the ELP an example is the *Europass* portfolio and Language On Line Portfolio Project (LOLIPOP), as well as an ELP software package.

The European Language Portfolio and Its Potential for Canada

In October 2005, a National Workshop was held in Edmonton Alberta by the Edmonton Public School Board. The purpose of the workshop was to examine language portfolios in order to identify, learn, examine, and implement the ELP to determine its potential for Canada. The groups that presented were Second Language Centre of University of New Brunswick, Sofia University (Bulgaria), Department of Canadian Heritage, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, Manitoba Department of Training and Immigration, Saskatchewan Learning, Edmonton Public School as well as several consultants from various agencies. Forty participants attended the workshop from 9 Territories and Provinces, Federal Ministries: Indian Affairs, Canadian Heritage, Canada School of Public Service, Public Service Commission, and Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, further, 3 academic institutions: University of New Brunswick, University of Ottawa, and University of Western Ontario. The conclusions reached at the workshop was that the ELP has potential, the Common European Framework (CEF) is a “useful scaffold” for describing language competence, Canada already has language assessments and learner development in place, there is a strong interest, and there is value “in continuing to stay abreast of developments in Europe and elsewhere.”⁸³ The next steps taken are to reconvene at TESL Canada 2006.

TESL Canada 2006: The European Language Portfolio and Its Potential in Canada

Joanne Pettis (ALT Branch, MB Labour and Immigration; Sally Rehorick (University of New Brunswick); Pauline McNaughton (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks); Alina MacFarlane (Consultant); Stuart Wachowicz (Edmonton Public School Board) presented at the TESL 2006 conference in Manitoba. The symposium provided an opportunity for people to become familiar with fundamental features of the ELP, learn about some related projects in Canada and explore ways in which the ELP might become a model for Canada.

The Manitoba Labour and Immigration Adult Language Training Branch

In 2003, the Province of Manitoba initiated a “collaborative portfolio approach” to government-funded Adult ESL programs.⁸⁴ A teacher’s guide was created based upon the shared ideas from the Applied Linguistics Centre, Red River College Language Training Centre, Winnipeg School Division, Second Language and Settlement Services,

⁸³ Rehorick, Sally, “The European Language Portfolio and Its Potential for Canada,” *Report on Proceedings*, December 2005, p. 3.

⁸⁴ *Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment: Manitoba Best Practices Guide: A Resource for Integrating Collaborative Language Portfolio Assessment (CLPA) in the Teaching-Learning Cycle of Adult ESL Instruction*, Manitoba Labour and Immigration Adult Language Training Branch, Winnipeg, MB, 2004.

English at Work, UFCW Training Centre, University of Manitoba, and Community-Based Language Training and English at Work. The guide introduces the language portfolio concept, the Canadian Language Benchmarks, as well as outlines the instruction procedures needed to implement the portfolio into a classroom. The templates for the portfolio are based upon the ELP.

LinguaFolio

The south eastern United States, specifically Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Georgia have developed a language portfolio based upon the European Language Portfolio, called *LinguaFolio*. It is designed to document language learning and cultural experiences. As with the ELP, it accompanies language learning throughout life and is suitable for documenting language abilities for various uses. It is designed for students and educators in secondary schools and in universities as well as for adult learners. Further, it is designed for use with employers. They have created their portfolio in downloadable files for open access to their information. It is the intent that the portfolio will be used by higher education for college credit to language learning.

Europass Language Passport

The *Europass Language Passport*⁸⁵ is a web based and downloadable portfolio, which describes and details the learner's language skills and competences. It is a self-assessment document where the learner records his/her language proficiency regardless of whether that proficiency was attained formally or informally. The *Europass* uses the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) to record the level of language proficiency. The *Europass* can be used in 26 different European Languages.

Language On Line Portfolio Project (LOLIPOP)

LOLIPOP is a moodle⁸⁶ based language portfolio course, which was developed by the Dublin City University; Waterford Institute of Technology; Technische Universität; Dresden Universidad de Granada; Universidade de Santiago de Compostela; Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications; de Bretagne Paris-Lodron-Universität; Salzburg Høgskolen i Telemark; Valodu macibu centrs; Wyzsza Szkola Ekonomii i Administracji im. prof. Edwarda Lipinskiego; Polish Association for Standards in English; and Politechnika Poznanska. The project is an on-line interactive version of the European Language Portfolio with an enhanced intercultural dimension. This innovative language-learning tool supports the development of learner autonomy, as well as the processes of self-assessment and reflection on language and intercultural learning in a Higher Education context.

⁸⁵ Deane, "...the European Parliament and Council in December 2004 adopted a decision on a single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences. The decision establishes a new transparency tool, Europass, which integrates qualifications and competences across all of lifelong learning, including vocational education and training, higher education and non-formal and informal learning. The introduction of Europass increases the transparency of qualifications, which will, in turn, support greater mobility, quality assurance, and credit transfer within VET and higher education throughout Europe." P.286.

⁸⁶ Moodle is a learning management software application for the internet.

Software Package of the European Language Portfolio

A downloadable digital ELP was created by the Project of study of the electronic European Language Portfolio (ELP), an EU co-funded project Socrates/Minerva Action in 2003-2005. This digital ELP has been designed for adults, with special attention to university students across Europe. It covers all levels of language proficiency based upon the Common European Framework (CEF). It is available in Italian, Swedish, German, English, Greek, and Spanish. It should also be mentioned that translation into other languages can be added. The partners of the project are Europa Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder); Gap multimedia S.r.l - Milan; Göteborgs Universitet; Högskolan i Skövde; IMCS Intercollege-Cyprus; Universidad de Salamanca; and Università degli Studi di Milano (co-ordinator).

FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING A ELP PROGRAM

There are four areas that were identified from the reports from piloting the ELP program. They were:

- **Planning and Developing** sets the stage for the work to be done, and for the development of the ELP.
- **Piloting and Implementing** presenting the information to various universities and programs in order to inform them on the ELP.
- **Participation** refers to the teachers and learners, as well as a proper motivational environment which facilitates learner autonomy.
- **Evaluation** examines the implementation of the ELP in its pilot phase, and evaluation of the project by surveying the participants.

The four areas were consistent within the reports that followed from the pilot stage of the ELP. The planning stage started in 1997 to 2000, at which time it was piloted from 2001 to 2004. As of July 2004, there were 64 validated ELPs with another 18 being piloted and 11 being planned. In total, 1, 250,000 learners had participated with an ELP. There were implementation projects which included 10,000 more learners. In total 36 out of 45 Council of Europe's member states had developed, piloted, and implemented the ELP.⁸⁷ Evaluation was conducted throughout the piloting phase and at the end.

⁸⁷ It should be mentioned that there are currently 47 member states. In 2004 there were 45 members.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LITERATURE

The literature review revealed several points to implement best and promising practices. The research reveals the best and promising practices to two areas, planning and programming, and makes recommendations for implementation of the ELP model. It is expected that these recommendations will guide the creation process for the facilitator's manual, as well as the templates for the dossier, biography, and passport.

Planning Recommendations

The planning recommendations can be split into two groups, design and implementing teaching strategies. The first set of recommendations for design is as follows:

Design

- Integrate the three elements of the ELP, but create flexibility. Allow teachers the ability to start from any point of the ELP and have consistency with the final product.
- Create a very transparent ELP. The dossier should include best examples of work that clearly showcase the learner's level.
- Incorporate the portfolio view into language classes. The beginning class should be geared to collection and maintenance for the dossier. Reflective exercises incorporated into curriculum.
- Create an easy to scan passport for employers. Employer feedback indicates that they will not have time to peruse an entire portfolio. Make a passport which is no longer than 2 pages, and easily scan-able.
- When constructing the dossier section. Make a concerted effort to plan out the "artefacts" and construct assignments around them. Have a clear plan of the information that will be included in the final product, and construct exercises to derive to that product.
- Create reflective "can do" statements for learners. Create reflective statements through the biography, and with the language alignment. The reflective content will initiate learner autonomy.
- Develop themes for which language learning will "fit" and have specific questions within each theme. Some themes may include learner's role in learning, social responsibility as group member, different learner working techniques, learner self assessments, and being goal orientated.
- Integrate intercultural competence questions into the portfolio. When gauging higher language levels intercultural competence plays a role, as such develop questions that cause the learner to reflect upon their L2 culture.
- Create summary checklist based pages in order for students to track their progress. At the end of each section, summarize the learning objectives in a checklist form that corresponds to the passport.
- Promote learner autonomy by encouraging goal-setting objectives, self-assessment grids, and journal pages.
- Maintain a simple layout. Some of the earlier portfolios had a complicated design which caused confusion by both teachers and learners.
- Create the portfolio in the language to be learned (i.e., English for an Albertan based portfolio).

- Electronic versions are useful for writing samples, presentations, dialogue etc...
- Validation of learners language level by having feedback from teachers and if relevant employers.
- Specific to employment create pages that highlight/show information that focuses upon job descriptions. Construct the dossier by showcasing items that are directly relevant to the job description.

Teaching Strategies

- Create clear guidelines and implementation strategies for teachers. Develop a facilitator's guide that clearly outlines the steps involved in creating a portfolio, the alignment grid, and learner autonomy. Further, provide supports for teachers either through groups or having a someone who can field questions.
- Plans should specify time frames, contents of the reporting, expected outcomes, minimum requirements of acceptable work (topics, quality of language, length of work)
- Allow for enough time to implement the portfolio.
- Create student tasks that incorporate self-assessment, peer assessment (group work), and teacher assessment.

Program Recommendations:

The program recommendations can be divided into two areas: student and teachers.

Student

- Implementation strategies differ between beginner, intermediate and advanced classes. Basic learners will be concentrated upon the basic elements of language and will have little reflective ability, so begin with introducing the dossier. The intermediate and advanced language learner can be introduced to passport first and then the biography and dossier.
- Teach students basic learner reflection through introductory exercises. Develop the concept of reflection and learner autonomy slowly with introductory exercises.
- Explanation to learners the underlying principles involved in the language portfolio "invisible learning outcomes."
- For language learning generally and specifically for intercultural competence, have lessons take place outside of the classroom.

Teachers

- Create presentations and workshops for teachers to learn and actually go through and create their own ELP on a language that they know little about. (Possibly, even a language that they are unfamiliar with entirely.)
- Teachers need to reflect upon the pedagogical function of the ELP. This can be promoted through a series of reflective questions.
- Teachers need to teach the language alignment concepts to provide learners with learning aims, contents, processes and outcomes.
- Use the dossier as both a reporting tool and a pedagogical tool. As a pedagogical tool construct assignments that are directly relevant to the dossier.

- Teachers develop the learner's personal awareness and self-direction through language instruction. Create an environment that fosters learning and openness and minimizes threats to their language learning. Create a learner-centred learning environment.
- Teachers should negotiate learning aims, content and processes with students at the beginning of the class.
- Support for teachers on going through supports and in-service education.

CONCLUSION OF REVIEW

This literature review has explored the European Language Portfolio; however, its account is far from exhaustive in respect to language portfolios, but its intent is to provide a sample of the findings surrounding ELPs in order to show the best and most promising practices. The review searched 28 electronic databases and located a total of 114 documents relating to language portfolios. 36 documents (i.e., reports, guides, studies, and articles) were included in the review. The documents were evaluated based upon rigour, and two basic types, quantitative documents and expert opinion, emerged.

Seven themes were identified which included reflection, self-assessment/learner autonomy, teachers, employers, plurilingualism, motivation, and intercultural competence. The review comments and draws conclusions based upon the research in order to inform the planning and programming recommendations. Further, the review highlights the future directions that the ELP is heading in order to inform for possible developments of the current project.

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