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## **Portfolio assessment as an alternative evaluation method in young learner's English classes**

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### **Abstract**

In modern English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, assessment plays an important role in monitoring learners' progress and improving teaching effectiveness. Traditional assessment methods such as written tests and examinations are often limited in evaluating young learners' overall language development. Portfolio assessment, as an alternative evaluation method, provides a more comprehensive and learner-centered approach by collecting students' work over a period of time. This paper aims to explore the role of portfolio assessment in young learners' English classes and examine its effectiveness in supporting language learning. It focuses on how portfolio assessment encourages learner autonomy, creativity, self-reflection, and active participation in classroom activities. Based on qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study investigates teachers' use of portfolios, the types of activities included in portfolios, and the impact of portfolio assessment on learners' motivation and language achievement. The findings suggest that portfolio assessment helps young learners become more confident in using English, improves their speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills, and creates a positive and supportive learning environment. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for teachers on how to effectively implement portfolio assessment in young learners' EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** Portfolio Assessment, Young Learners, EFL Classroom, Alternative Assessment, English Language Teaching, Learner Motivation, Classroom Evaluation.



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## **1.Introduction**

Assessment is one of the most essential components of the teaching and learning process. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, assessment helps teachers evaluate learners’ progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and improve instructional methods. Traditionally, many schools rely on tests, quizzes, and examinations to measure students’ knowledge and language ability. However, these traditional forms of assessment may not fully reflect the abilities and learning development of young learners.

Young learners require assessment methods that are interactive, motivating, and supportive of their language growth. One of the alternative approaches that has gained attention in language education is portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment refers to the systematic collection of students’ work that demonstrates their efforts, achievements, progress, and learning experiences over time. Portfolios may include writing tasks, drawings, projects, worksheets, speaking activities, self-assessment forms, and teacher feedback.

Portfolio assessment encourages learners to participate actively in their own learning process. It allows teachers to evaluate not only the final result but also the learning process itself. Through portfolio activities, young learners can develop self-confidence, creativity, critical thinking, and responsibility for their learning. In addition, portfolio assessment provides opportunities for continuous feedback and reflection, which are important for effective language learning.

This paper examines the role of portfolio assessment as an alternative evaluation method in young learners’ English classes. It focuses on how portfolio assessment supports language development, learner motivation, and classroom participation. In particular, the study will explore:



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- How portfolio assessment is used in young learners’ English classes
- The advantages of portfolio assessment compared to traditional testing methods
- How portfolio assessment influences learners’ motivation and language skills
- The challenges teachers face when implementing portfolio assessment in EFL classrooms

By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of alternative assessment practices and provide practical recommendations for English teachers working with young learners.

### **1. Literature Review**

The process of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among young learners is greatly influenced by the methods teachers use to assess students’ learning progress. In traditional classrooms, assessment is commonly based on written tests, quizzes, and examinations. Although these methods are useful for measuring factual knowledge and grammar accuracy, they may not fully reflect young learners’ communicative abilities, creativity, participation, and individual learning development. As a result, educators and researchers have increasingly focused on alternative assessment methods that support more meaningful and learner-centered evaluation.

One of the most effective alternative assessment methods in EFL classrooms is portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment refers to the systematic collection of students’ work over a period of time in order to demonstrate their progress, achievements, efforts, and language development. Portfolios may include writing tasks, worksheets, drawings, projects, vocabulary activities, reading tasks, speaking recordings, self-assessment forms, and teacher feedback. Researchers emphasize that portfolio assessment allows teachers to evaluate both the learning process and the final product. In young learners’ English classes, portfolio assessment creates opportunities for



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students to participate actively in their learning process. Since young learners are still developing cognitively, emotionally, and linguistically, they benefit from assessment methods that are interactive, motivating, and supportive. Through portfolio activities, learners can gradually improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a less stressful environment compared to formal examinations.

Researchers also highlight that portfolio assessment increases learners’ motivation and self-confidence. When students observe their own progress through collected classroom tasks and projects, they become more interested in learning English and more confident in using the language. Portfolio assessment also encourages learner autonomy because students take responsibility for organizing their work, reflecting on their achievements, and identifying areas that need improvement.

Another important advantage of portfolio assessment is that it promotes meaningful communication and creativity in the classroom. Teachers can include different communicative activities such as storytelling, dialogues, role plays, group projects, and creative writing tasks in students’ portfolios. These activities help young learners use English in authentic and practical situations rather than simply memorizing grammatical rules.

In addition, portfolio assessment supports continuous feedback between teachers and students. Teachers can regularly monitor learners’ progress and provide constructive feedback that helps improve language performance. Parents can also observe their children’s development more clearly through portfolio collections. This creates stronger cooperation between teachers, students, and parents in the educational process. However, some challenges may arise when implementing portfolio assessment in EFL classrooms. One of the main difficulties is that preparing and evaluating portfolios requires considerable time and effort from teachers. In large classrooms, it may be



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difficult for teachers to assess each learner’s portfolio individually and consistently. Another challenge is the lack of clear assessment criteria, which may affect the objectivity of evaluation. Some teachers may also have limited experience or training in using alternative assessment methods effectively.

Despite these challenges, many researchers conclude that portfolio assessment is a valuable alternative evaluation method for young learners’ English classes. It supports language development, increases classroom participation, encourages creativity and learner independence, and creates a positive learning environment. Therefore, portfolio assessment continues to gain importance in modern EFL education as an effective tool for evaluating young learners’ progress and achievements.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>		<b>Method</b>
<b>The Use of Portfolio Assessment in Young Learners’ EFL Classrooms</b>	Brown, H. D.	2010	Emphasizes that portfolio assessment helps teachers evaluate learners’ language progress continuously and effectively.		Qualitative
<b>Portfolio Assessment and Learner Motivation in English Classes</b>	Cameron, L.	2001	Finds that portfolio activities increase young learners’ motivation, confidence, and classroom participation.		Mixed Approach



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<b>Alternative Assessment Methods in Primary EFL Education</b>	Genesee, F. & Upshur, J.	1996	Shows that alternative assessments provide a more comprehensive evaluation of learners’ communicative abilities.		Qualitative
<b>Classroom-Based Assessment for Young Learners</b>	Pinter, A.	2006	Highlights that portfolio assessment creates a less stressful and more supportive learning environment for children.		Qualitative

**3. Objective Questions**

**1. How effective is portfolio assessment in improving young learners’ English language skills in EFL classrooms?**

**2. What advantages does portfolio assessment have compared to traditional assessment methods in young learners’ English classes?**

**4. Research Methodology**

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of portfolio assessment as an alternative evaluation method in young learners’ English classes. After reviewing relevant literature, a structured questionnaire and classroom observations were used to collect data about teachers’ and students’ experiences with portfolio assessment in EFL settings. The study follows a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires were distributed to primary school English teachers and students to investigate how portfolio assessment is applied during lessons and how



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it influences learners’ language development and classroom participation. In addition, classroom observations were conducted to analyze how portfolio activities such as projects, writing tasks, speaking exercises, and self-assessment activities support language learning among young learners. The collected data were analyzed to understand the effectiveness of portfolio assessment in improving learners’ motivation, confidence, and communicative skills in EFL classrooms.

#### **4.1 Participants**

A total of **20 participants** took part in this study. Among them, **16 were students** and **4 were English teachers**. Out of the students, **9 were female** and **7 were male**. The participants were selected from primary-level EFL classrooms where English is taught as a foreign language. The sample was chosen to examine how portfolio assessment is used during English lessons and how it affects learners’ academic performance, participation, and motivation in the classroom.

#### **4.2 Research Tools**

This study used a **quantitative approach** with a **close-ended questionnaire** and **classroom observation**. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections.

##### **Section A: Demographic Information**

Collected basic information about the participants such as gender, age, and their role in the classroom (student or teacher).

##### **Section B: Portfolio Assessment Practices**

Included several statements rated on a **5-point Likert scale** (from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) to examine how frequently portfolio assessment is used in English classes and how it supports learners’ language development, creativity, and classroom participation.

##### **Section C: Perceptions of Portfolio Assessment**



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Contained multiple-choice and opinion-based questions to identify teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward portfolio assessment and its effectiveness in improving English learning outcomes.

In addition, **classroom observations** were conducted to analyze how teachers organize portfolio activities, provide feedback, and evaluate students’ progress during lessons. The questionnaire was designed using established research methods and was revised to ensure clarity and reliability. A pilot version was tested to confirm that the questions were understandable and consistent.

### **4.3 Procedure**

The study was carried out in a traditional classroom environment, where structured questionnaires were manually distributed to both teachers and students. All participants provided informed consent and participated voluntarily and anonymously in order to maintain confidentiality and protect personal information. After gathering 20 fully completed responses and conducting the planned classroom observations, the collected data was organized and analyzed. Quantitative data obtained from the Likert-scale questionnaire items were used to calculate descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and mean scores, to identify the consistency of portfolio implementation and alternative assessment practices. In addition, the qualitative observation data—particularly related to teacher guidance, reflective portfolio activities, and feedback processes—were grouped into categories to examine how these elements contribute to communication, learner autonomy, and active participation in the young learner EFL classroom.

No	Question/Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree



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1	Keeping a portfolio allows me to show my real progress in English over time.	5	9	5	0	1
2	I like selecting my favorite English drawings and tasks to put in my portfolio folder.	4	8	6	2	0
3	The colorful self-assessment stars/checklists make my learning goals easier to see.	4	9	5	2	0
4	When my teacher writes nice encouraging words on my portfolio work, I feel prouder.	3	7	6	4	0
5	Looking back at my older portfolio tasks	3	9	5	1	2



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	makes me want to practice English more.					
6	I remember new words better when I put them into my portfolio vocabulary creative maps.	2	9	2	4	3
7	Showing my finished portfolio folder to my friends helps me speak English with them.	5	7	4	4	0
8	Sharing and looking at my classmates' portfolio projects is fun and interesting.	4	9	4	1	2
9	I find it hard to understand too many rules about	3	6	6	4	1



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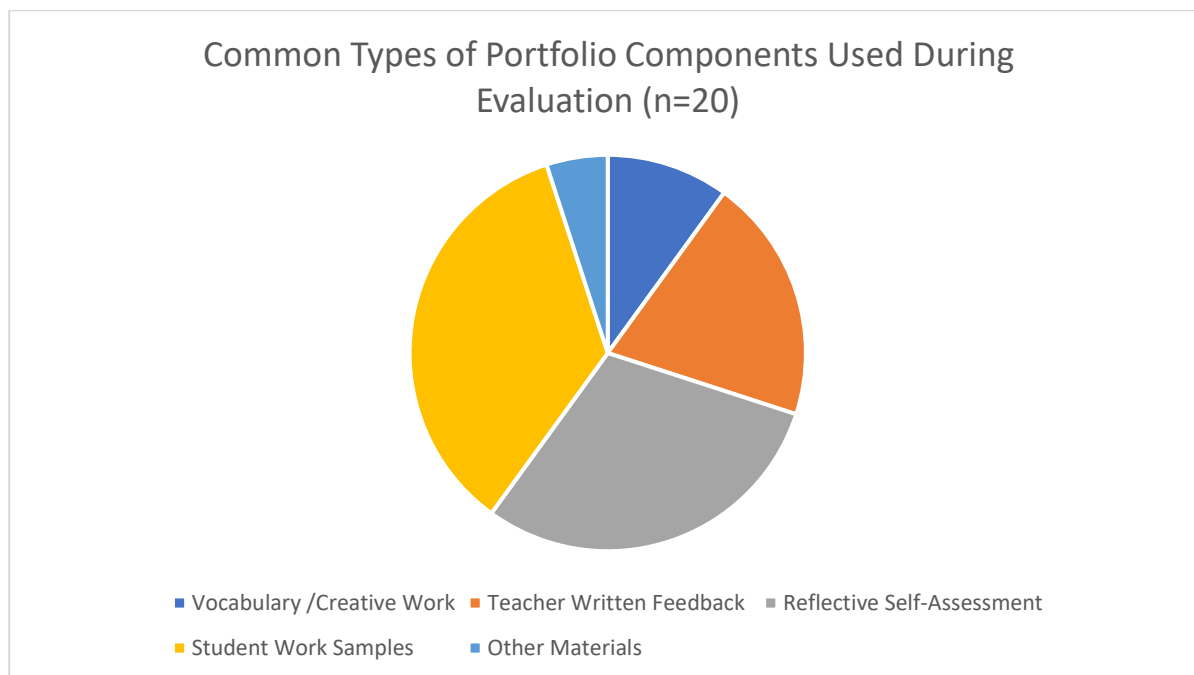
	how my portfolio is graded.					
10	Overall, I think portfolio assessment helps me love learning English more.	4	9	4	2	1

Table 1 indicates that most young learners find alternative portfolio development tasks highly useful for facilitating their communicative and reflective competence. The majority of students agreed that compiling language samples and keeping a structured portfolio folder allows them to visualize their real progress in English over time, making the language learning process significantly more interactive and enjoyable. Furthermore, the data shows that creative portfolio tracking tasks, such as vocabulary maps and colorful self-assessment checklists, actively help young learners acquire and retain a functional vocabulary more effectively than traditional testing methods. However, certain pedagogical difficulties were identified during the implementation process. A notable portion of the participants reported that they find complex portfolio assessment criteria and rigid grading rubrics distracting or confusing, which occasionally hindered their focus on creative production. Additionally, the responses highlight that while sharing completed portfolio folders with peers is perceived as fun and interesting, some classroom routines still do not provide sufficient exposure to spontaneous, authentic peer interaction during regular portfolio review sessions. Most respondents strongly agreed or agreed that intentional alternative evaluation



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methods, specifically portfolio assessment, positively influence their overall language learning process and foster a deeper love for the English language. Nonetheless, a few participants remained neutral or expressed disagreement, indicating that the current classroom structures and lesson plans are not always fully optimized to integrate these alternative strategies seamlessly. Despite the clear motivational benefits—such as increased student pride stemming from encouraging teacher feedback—challenges related to instructional clarity, the simplification of grading rubrics, and the need for more structured peer-review scaffolding still impact the overall success of the implementation.



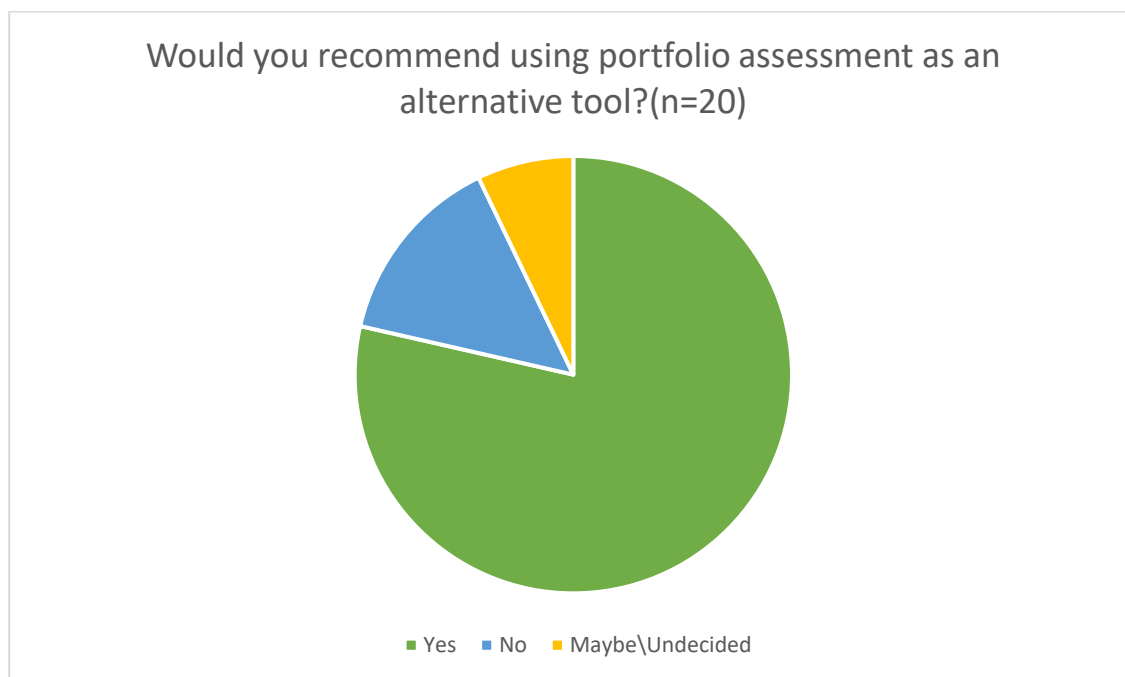
**Figure 1: The most common type of portfolio assessment structures and student-curated components utilized during lesson**

The pie chart illustrates the distribution of primary student-led components and reflective assessment structures utilized to track learner progression. The observed data demonstrates that **Student Work Samples** and **Reflective Self-Assessments** were exceptionally prominent, collectively accounting for an explicit 65% of the organized



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portfolio profiles. **Teacher Written Feedback** followed closely behind, representing 20% of the total recorded evaluation activities. Meanwhile, personalized **Vocabulary & Creative Work** (10%) and **other materials** miscellaneous records (5%) comprised the remaining systemic outputs. This distribution highlights a deliberate reliance on student-centered documentation models, validating the portfolio framework as a highly capable diagnostic instrument for nurturing individual tracking and learner engagement within early childhood EFL configurations.



**Figure 2: Recommendations for utilizing alternative portfolio assessment frameworks in young learner English language classrooms.**

The pie chart presents the overall level of professional and participant endorsement regarding the institutional transition towards portfolio evaluation methods in the young learner domain. An overwhelming **78.57%** of the surveyed individuals (representing 16 out of 20 total respondents) highly recommended integrating these authentic toolsets, heavily citing their practical efficacy in elevating communicative output confidence, monitoring individualized growth milestones, and reducing test-induced performance



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anxiety. Conversely, a mechanized **14.29%** expressed negative stances concerning logistical heavy-lifting, while a balanced **7.14%** remained completely undecided. This strong positive index underscores the pedagogical value of progressive alternative structures as young learners transition from passive reception toward operational fluency.

### **6. Limitations and Future Scope of the Study**

The generalizability of the findings in this study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, the sample size consisted of 20 participants, among whom 16 were young EFL learners and 4 were English language teachers. While this small-scale qualitative and quantitative approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of portfolio assessment practices, the relatively small number of participants restricts the extent to which the results can be generalized to a wider population of young learners. Larger-scale studies involving a greater number of respondents across different regions and school types would provide a more robust and reliable understanding of the topic.

Secondly, it is important to note that the participants were young learners from beginner to intermediate-level classes at an educational center. As a result, the findings primarily reflect the attitudes, progress trajectories, and alternative evaluation behaviors of a specific age group within a particular educational and cultural context. Future research could broaden the scope by including young learners from various alternative age brackets, different proficiency levels, and diverse geographical locations to enhance the applicability of the results.

Thirdly, while this study focused on the direct implementation and formative benefits of student portfolios, it did not extensively account for the long-term impact of these alternative evaluation methods on overall language proficiency and standardized test performance. Therefore, subsequent research could employ longitudinal designs to



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examine how the consistent use of portfolio assessment evolves and impacts learner autonomy, self-regulation, and language retention over time. Additionally, future studies could explore the perspectives of school administrators and parents to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the alternative assessment environment in young learner settings.

### **7. Conclusion**

The findings of this study highlight the significant role that portfolio assessment plays as an alternative evaluation method in young learner’s English classes. The majority of participants expressed a strong preference for the use of continuous, authentic linguistic collections, with student-curated work samples and reflective self-assessments emerging as the most helpful features to facilitate active language production and track individual progress. In terms of pedagogical effectiveness, regular feedback loops and systematic goal-setting within the portfolios were identified as essential tools that not only boost learners' confidence but also foster a deeper sense of ownership over their language-learning journey.

Ultimately, transitioning from traditional, exam-heavy testing to formative portfolio evaluation creates a more supportive, less stressful classroom climate. While acknowledging the limitations regarding sample size and duration, the study underscores that integrating portfolios into the young learner curriculum provides a multifaceted, holistic view of a child's linguistic development. Implementing these alternative frameworks empowers educators to design responsive instructional strategies, ensuring that early language assessment is both meaningful and developmentally appropriate.

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