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Teachers’ attitudes toward the use of e-portfolios in speaking classes in English language teaching and learning

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Abstract

E-portfolios have been used in English language teaching (ELT) to assess and improve writing skills. They can also be used to assess and improve speaking skills. Though the attitudes of students toward the use of e-portfolios in speaking classes are known to be positive, teachers’ attitudes toward this method is unknown. Therefore, this study aims to find out the attitudes and perceptions of teachers toward implementing the use of e-portfolios in speaking classes. As it is a small-scale qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were carried out with four listening and speaking teachers who use e-portfolios in their listening and speaking classes. The interviews were content analysed. The results indicated that teachers, like students have positive attitudes toward the implementation of e-portfolios in speaking classes, though there are some challenges to overcome.

Keywords: E-portfolio; Speaking; English Language Teaching; Speaking Teachers; Teachers’ Attitudes

1. Introduction

E-portfolios have been used in English Language Teaching (ELT) as an assessment and teaching tool to improve students’ writing skills, yet e-portfolios have not been commonly implemented in speaking classes (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013). Therefore, Cepik and Yastibas integrated the use of e-portfolios into speaking class in order to improve and assess students’ speaking skills and study the effects of e-portfolios on students’ attitudes toward speaking at an English preparation department of a Turkish private university. The results of the study indicated that students formed positive attitudes toward the e-portfolio implementation in speaking courses. Meanwhile, the

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department adopted an e-portfolio assessment policy in speaking courses in addition to midterm and final speaking tests, which had already been the standard for speaking courses at the department. The researchers wanted to find out what speaking teachers’ perceptions and attitudes toward the use of e-portfolios in speaking classes are in a second study. This interest formed the aim of the present study.

Writing skills are generally assessed and taught with the use of e-portfolios (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013), and students can improve their writing skills through this process (Erice, 2008). Studies on teaching and assessing writing through the e-portfolio process focus on students’ attitudes and perceptions about process. They indicate that students’ attitudes and perceptions are positive (see Erice, 2008; Abbaszad Tehrani, 2010). Similarly, speaking like writing can be assessed and taught effectively by using e-portfolios, and students have positive attitudes toward the process in speaking courses (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013). However, there seems to only be a few studies that directly focus on what teachers think about the e-portfolio process. The lack of information on teachers’ attitudes toward the process may create a contradictory issue because perceptions and attitudes about e-portfolios are generally constructed based on students, so assumptions about it are derived from this focus. The assumptions about e-portfolios may be more comprehensive if teachers’ attitudes together with students’ attitudes are taken into account during the derivation process. Although this study deals with the attitudes of teachers who use e-portfolios in speaking courses, it will reveal to what extent teachers’ attitudes match with students’ attitudes. Also, it will help to find out how comprehensive the assumptions built on students’ attitudes toward the use of e-portfolios in speaking course are. This study, therefore, can serve as a basis for other studies to test the assumptions regarding e-portfolios from both teachers’ and students’ perspectives.

There are many studies that focus on the use of e-portfolios in writing courses, but its use in speaking courses has not been dealt with much in Turkey (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013). Cepik and Yastibas (2013) used e-portfolios to improve speaking skills of Turkish EFL students. They have mentioned its effects on the students’ speaking skills and attitudes toward the use of them in speaking courses. In accordance with the previous study, the present study deals with teachers’ attitudes toward the use of e-portfolios in speaking. The present study will complete the previous study that involves only students’ attitudes. As a result, the previous and present studies may help teachers gain more insight about the integration of technology into speaking courses, its effects on students’ speaking skills, and assessment of speaking skills through e-portfolios.

2. Literature Review

The literature review is based on the definition of e-portfolios, their benefits and challenges, and students’ attitudes toward the use of them for different purposes in various courses. They are mentioned successively. However, the literature review does not include a section on the teachers’ attitudes toward e-portfolios due to the lack of studies on the topic.

2.1. E-portfolios

According to Lorenzo and Ittelson (2005), e-portfolios are the personal and digital collection of artefacts of an individual including ‘demonstrations, resources, and accomplishments’ (p.2) for a variety of contexts and time periods. They have also mentioned that e-portfolios digitize students’ works and can use the Internet to store them. In addition, Gray (2008) has stressed that an e-portfolio is “the product, created by the learner, a collection of digital artefacts articulating experiences, achievements and learning” (p.6). Gray has also stated that it is “a purposeful aggregation of digital items – ideas, evidence, reflections, feedback, etc., which presents a selected audience with evidence of a person’s learning and/or ability” (p.7). Different definitions of e-portfolios indicate that they are student-centred. They also store students’ individual works digitally and help follow students’ learning process in different contexts and time periods.

2.2. Benefits of e-Portfolios

E-portfolios are commonly used tools in different areas of education. This commonness has resulted in many studies on its use and its effects. These studies have revealed some benefits of e-portfolios. One of the benefits is having an online virtual environment. Students share their “goals, achievements, and insights with advisors and counsellors” (Goldsmith, 2007, p.31) in this environment. Meanwhile, this gives them a chance to check whether they have met their educational and career goals. It can also indicate their achievements and skills through their e-portfolios to get a job. In other words, e-portfolios are effective tools to improve students’ marketability, career planning and development since they include learners’ achievements, learning experiences, and skills (Lin, 2008; Reese & Levy, 2009).

E-portfolios create a collaborative and communicative learning environment. Bolliger and Shepherd (2010) have
integrated e-portfolios in an online course and researched how students’ learning would be influenced by e-portfolios by looking as several factors, such as students’ perceptions, communication, motivation, and connectedness (the relationship between two people). They have found that communication between peers and between students and instructors have become more effective. The study also shows that students can understand program-level expectations in online courses. The integration of online courses could motivate students to learn (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010). In another study, Lin (2008) has worked with pre-service teachers and studied the effect of e-portfolios on them in terms of communication. The study indicates that e-portfolios can initiate communication, interaction, and collaboration between peers. Students were able to complete and improve their e-portfolios based on their peers’ feedback (Lin, 2008). As a result, this promoted working collaboratively (Kocoglu, 2008).

E-portfolios lead to an improvement in the learning process and authentic assessment of students. E-portfolios make students responsible for organizing and producing material for a specific purpose, evaluating their work, and reflecting on the findings regarding their own learning process, experiences, and skills (Goldsmith, 2007). Consequently, e-portfolios contribute to students’ taking control of their own education and this motivates them to study (Akcıl & Arap, 2009). They also facilitate and document their experiences authentically (Reese & Levy, 2009). Additionally, students are in charge of their own e-portfolios, so e-portfolios make students’ learning individualized and personalized (Schmitz, Whitson, Heest & Maddaus, 2010). This entire process makes students autonomous because e-portfolios help them be the directors of their education and makes them aware of important factors, procedures, and attitudes in learning (Gonzalez, 2009).

E-portfolios allow for reflection. They require reflection because reflection makes students think critically, reason analytically, and integrate their critical thinking and analytic reasoning within their learning (Rhodes, 2011). While reflecting, students revisit their learning experiences and start to look at the way they view their learning in a more different way (Lin, 2008). Students develop a sense of purpose and focus while they are reflecting because they compare their work to a standard (Lin, 2008). In this way, they can learn whether their work meet the standard or not and if it is the latter to figure out a way to meet the standard (Lin, 2008). Therefore, they are supposed to participate actively in the presentation and representation of their learning, so they can be motivated and try to do their best as Rhodes mentions. E-portfolios provide individual feedback to them about their learning, experiences, achievements, strengths, and weaknesses (Goldsmith, 2007). Consequently, students can improve their learning through self-reflection and feedback.

E-portfolios also promote academic advising or supervision (Reese & Levy, 2009). They track students’ progress through reflection and feedback (Reese & Levy, 2009). According to them, it creates a continuous flow of information about students’ own learning process between students and their teachers. According to Bashook, Gelula, Joshi, and Sandlow (2008), e-portfolios help teachers have more meaningful and interactive communication with their students. They have mentioned that teachers understand their students better by discovering insights about their attitudes, beliefs, and problems.

E-portfolios enhance students’ technology skills (Lin, 2008). Students are required to collect their work digitally, so they need to be familiar with the use of technology. This process blends students’ “information literacy, technology fluency, and domain knowledge” (Reese & Levy, 2009, p.3). E-portfolios require technology skills, such as uploading pictures and using Word so that students can learn, review, and improve their works. This process may require that students revisit their technology skills and could result in improving them (Lin, 2008).

2.3. Challenges of E-portfolios

Despite their benefits, e-portfolios may challenge both teachers and students. For example, students’ understanding of technology may affect the e-portfolio process negatively. According to Dalton (2007), how students perceive technology has an effect on the implementation of e-portfolios because some students’ familiarity with technology may lead to decisions about what is useful or not for them. Such decisions may affect and lower the efficiency and effectiveness of e-portfolios (Dawn, Smith, Peterson, Cone, Slazar, Bond & Godwin, 2011). Also, the way students evaluate and understand technology affects the way they use the e-portfolio system. To illustrate, an e-portfolio system should be flexible. If not, it may impact the learning process negatively as Dalton points out. It is the flexibility that makes e-portfolios more engaging, gives learners more control, and helps students become more active in their own learning. Other challenges include the lack of self-assessment, reflection, technology, and metacognitive skills in student’s educational background. They may decrease the effectiveness of e-portfolios and bring about being “overwhelmed by the course management system, the portal, and the e-portfolio” (Goldsmith, 2007, p.39). Another challenge may come from inexperienced teachers who implement e-portfolios in their courses. According to Goldsmith (2007), the lack of experience of institutions and educators with the e-portfolio process can
cause problems for the implementation of an e-portfolio system, so implementations of e-portfolios require learning how to use the software for the e-portfolio platform and understanding “the assumptions on which an e-portfolio was built” (Goldsmith, 2007, p.38; Gray, 2008).

2.4. Students’ attitudes toward e-portfolios

When e-portfolios are implemented in a course for a variety of purposes, it leads to a number of positive and negative changes. The positive and negative changes influence the way students form their attitudes toward the e-portfolio implementation. Akçıl and Arap (2009) have found that pre-service teachers have positive attitudes toward e-portfolios. It is because they think that e-portfolios promote lifelong learning, enable them to take the control of their learning, and motivate them to study (Akçıl & Arap, 2009). In another study, Genc and Tinmaz (2010) have worked with pre-service Computer Education and Instructional Technology teachers and found that e-portfolios enhance skill and knowledge development of pre-service teachers. Hung (2012) has emphasized that student ELT teachers can work in a community to practice, integrate their content knowledge with their learning, and improve their critical thinking through e-portfolios. Also, e-portfolios facilitate peer feedback and promote professional development. On the other hand, Hung has stressed that they can cause learning anxiety and resistance to technology. According to Lin (2008), pre-service teachers can engage more in reflective activities, develop effective learning strategies, gain and review technology skills through e-portfolios. However, they lead to some problems such as frustrations, time consuming, and uncertainty about the knowledge and organizational strategies (Lin, 2008).

Kubilan and Khan (2012) have also worked with pre-service English language teachers. They have found that e-portfolios can help pre-service teachers develop an understanding of the teacher’s role, their teaching skills and activities. According to them, they can also improve their linguistic and technology skills, and comprehend content knowledge. As a result, they formed positive attitudes toward e-portfolios (Kubilan & Khan, 2012). However, Kubilan and Khan have stated that there are some problems related to the e-portfolio implementation that include interrupted Internet connection, time constraints, and issues related to validity and reliability.

While the main concern of above studies is the perceptions of pre-service teachers from different departments, the studies mentioned here focus on the perceptions and attitudes of EFL/ESL students. According to Baturay and Daloğlu (2010), the students in an online course think that e-portfolios are beneficial and enjoyable. Baturay and Daloğlu have mentioned that e-portfolios are indicators of learning gain because students can keep the track of their learning and get feedback about their work. E-portfolios enable them to identify their strengths and weaknesses by assessing their own learning. As Baturay and Daloğlu have stated, e-portfolios promote self-regulated learning skills of students and improve their critical thinking skills by making them focus on real-life applications of language, problem-solving, and developing creativity. Similarly, self- and peer-based formative assessments are promoted by e-portfolios (Welsh, 2012). According to Welsh, this can foster the self-regulation learning skills of students. Erice (2008) has employed e-portfolios in writing classes. Erice has found out that students can improve their writing skills through e-portfolios. They have also developed positive attitudes toward the use of e-portfolio in writing classes (Erice, 2008). In another study, Abbaszad Tehrani (2010) has used net-folio (another name used for e-portfolio) to improve students’ writing skills. The study indicates that students have formed positive attitudes toward the use of net-folio in writing (Abbaszad Tehrani, 2010). Additionally, Cepik and Yastibas (2013) used e-portfolios in speaking classes to improve and assess speaking skills. They found that e-portfolios can help students become responsible, active, and autonomous while studying. In addition, students can assess their own learning themselves, feel less anxious and more self-confident and motivated to speak (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013). In addition, Rizthaupt, Ndoye and Parker (n.d.) have stated that students can identify their strengths and weaknesses and can improve their own learning. In addition, e-portfolios can help students display their knowledge, skills, and accomplishments. E-portfolios are an alternative and authentic assessment tool in evaluating students’ learning.

As understood, whatever the reasons for the use of e-portfolios in courses, e-portfolios engage students in learning and learning activities. They make them active and autonomous. They make them responsible for their own learning. In addition, they motivate students to study, enhance their self-assessment, technology, and critical thinking skills, and build their self-confidence. Owing to the positive contributions of e-portfolios for students’ learning, students seem to form positive attitudes toward them.
3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Twelve EFL teachers who taught listening and speaking courses at the English preparation department of a private university in Turkey participated in the study voluntarily. Five of them were male teachers while seven of them were female. Six of them were native-speakers of English while the rest were non-native speakers. All of the participants experienced the process of e-portfolio implementation in speaking courses since it was required to assess students’ speaking skills through e-portfolios.

3.2. Data collection procedure

The study was carried out at an English preparation department of a Turkish private university. First, the researchers took permission from the university to conduct the study. Then the participants were chosen. Twelve ELF teachers accepted to participate voluntarily after being informed about the content and aim of the study. Finally the interview preparation process started. It was prepared in three steps:

- **First step:** Four of the participants were chosen randomly and asked to write their personal ideas and experiences about e-portfolio implementation in speaking courses. The first four teachers’ writings about e-portfolios were analysed with content analysis by the researchers. The researchers identified four major issues: the effects of e-portfolios on students, the effects of them on teachers, and students and teachers’ requirements in using e-portfolios in speaking courses.

- **Second step:** Four interview questions were prepared based on the content analysis gathered in the first step, and were given to four different teachers who were chosen randomly, but did not join the first step. These new teachers were interviewed and the researchers analysed those teachers’ responses to the questions through content analysis. Then the researchers compared the findings of the first step to the findings of the second step.

- **Third step:** Before finalizing the interview questions, the researchers also took the following conditions into considerations. One of the researchers was teaching listening and speaking courses and used e-portfolios in his classes to assess and teach students’ speaking skills. He continuously talked with other listening and speaking teachers about their experience in their own listening and speaking courses, which helped to share personal ideas, different problems encountered in class, different solutions developed to overcome problems, and suggestions to improve the implementation. Two other instructors contributed to the content analysis. All of these factors were taken into consideration. The questions in the first interview were modified and finalized. Then the final version of the semi-structured interview was given to the last four teachers who did not participate in the first and second step of this study. The researchers analysed the responses of the last four teachers that participated in the present study by using content analysis.

3.3. Data collection instrument

The present paper is a small-scale qualitative study, so a semi-structured interview was used to collect data. It is preferred because according to Talmi and Richards (2011), it can help ‘generate insights’ (1), and these insights can be related to matters such as language learning, motivation, and language attitudes. The interview has four pre-determined questions that focus on the effects of e-portfolios on students’ speaking skills, the effects of them on teachers’ teaching and assessing speaking skills in their courses, requiring students to prepare their e-portfolios, and requiring teachers to implement e-portfolios in their own courses.

In order to make the interview reliable, the participants were grouped randomly and could join only one of the three steps mentioned in data collection procedure at different times. Each of these steps required written responses of each participant. As a result, the following was avoided: (a) that participants might affect each other and (b) that a participant might take part in different steps of the study and repeat his/her ideas. When the three content analyses of the research were compared to each other, the findings were consistent with each other.

The interview was also valid. It had three orientations. First, twelve different teachers joined only one part of the study. They shared what they experienced and examined the implementation of e-portfolios in speaking classes. Second, the researchers evaluated the e-portfolio implementation in speaking courses and looked at the attitudes of students toward the use of e-portfolios in speaking classes. The research also included one of the researchers’ own experiences. Third, one of the researchers discussed the e-portfolio system with other instructors. These orientations enriched the scope of the interview. With the knowledge gained, the researchers were able to prepare questions that could measure what the study aimed to find out, which made the interview valid because Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008) defined validity as “the extent to which an instrument measures what is purports to measure” (2278).
3.4. Data analysis

The data collection instrument was totally qualitative, so the content analysis method was applied to analyse it. The qualitative data analysis procedure mentioned by Cabaroğlu (as cited in Köse, 2006) was applied to do content analysis. The model is composed of the following categories: familiarization, coding/labelling, clustering, defining codes operationally, retrieving and organizing data, and looking for interrelationships between categories (Köse, 2006). Yet, familiarization, coding/labelling, clustering, retrieving and organizing data, and looking for interrelationships between categories were used.

4. Findings

Content analysis was employed to analyse and evaluate the semi-structured interviews of the four teachers. Five categorizations were developed depending on the content of the interview questions: benefits of e-portfolios for students, drawbacks of e-portfolios for students, students’ requirements, teachers’ requirements, and the impact of e-portfolios on teachers. Accordingly, the findings were mentioned in this order.

4.1. Benefits of e-portfolios for students

Three of the four teachers think that e-portfolios can promote the use of language. An e-portfolio is an individual study of a student, so he/she has to use the target language in order to complete the assignment given to him/her, which results in the independent and communicative use of the language. The following comments illustrate this:

Teacher 1: The speaking portfolio also forces students to learn how to utilize the target language independently.
Teacher 3: In e-portfolios, students find an area to express themselves and use L2 communicatively.

As seen, Teacher 3 also mentions that students have an area to express themselves. This motivates them to participate in e-portfolio activities actively. E-portfolios engage them in their learning. In the e-portfolio process, they are given time to improve their learning through their own efforts such as researching, organizing their findings, and creating their e-portfolios. As a result, these may help them to be active participants and to be responsible for their own learning. Two comments taken from Teacher 3 below illustrate what is mentioned clearly.

Teacher 3: They [students] take it [e-portfolio] really seriously and even the most silent/passive students put effort into their e-portfolios.
Teacher 1: Collecting, cataloging, and creating the portfolios were difficult at times. Furthermore, the idea of producing drafts of a speaking portfolio was a new concept for some students...
Teacher 3: E-portfolios help them [students] spend time alone to work/research a topic.

E-portfolios create a collaborative and interactive atmosphere in the classroom. Students may work in groups, so they can share what they have found out and collaborate with each other to prepare their videos. It makes the classroom interactive. The following excerpts indicate this clearly:

Teacher 1: The speaking portfolio is a great way to promote classroom interaction and collaboration between students.
Teacher 3: They might prepare something in a group.... group works increase their sharing skills and give them chances to learn from each other.

E-portfolios also enable students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, so students can have a chance to overcome their weaknesses. In their e-portfolios, students can reflect what they have achieved and how they have found and overcome their weaknesses. Namely, e-portfolios improve students’ self-assessment and self-reflection skills so that they can improve their learning. To illustrate:

Teacher 1: Additionally, when structured correctly, [e-portfolios] can promote self-assessment and reflection.
Teacher 3: ... Individual studies make them aware of their good/strong and bad/weak sides about the language.

In addition to these contributions of e-portfolios to students’ learning, Teacher 4 also believes that students can improve their discussion skills such as questioning.

E-portfolios allow students to make connections between what is learned in the classroom and how what is learned can be used in real life. To understand this better, the e-portfolio system used in listening and speaking courses at the department should be explained. Students are given two assignments in each quarter (there are four quarters in a regular school year). The assignments are given according to the assignments outlined in the listening and speaking course book. The teachers select two e-portfolio topics based on two units. While preparing their portfolios, students need to choose a topic related to the assignment, research the topic, and compose a text by using
the target vocabulary of the unit. The excerpt taken from Teacher 4 exemplifies this issue:

Teacher 4: … However, it [e-portfolio] is a good opportunity for them [students] to create a speaking sample using the vocabulary from the chapters.

4.2. Drawbacks of e-portfolios for students

Before e-portfolios are implemented, variables such as cultural context, teachers’ ability to promote creativity, and technological elements should be determined and taken into consideration. Otherwise, this may limit the effectiveness and efficiency of e-portfolios, which may make the process difficult for students and teachers. Teacher 1 clearly indicates this:

Teacher 1: I think the speaking portfolio is BOTH good and bad. Because the speaking portfolio depends on many variables (cultural context, teachers’ ability to promote an environment conductive to creativity, technological elements), it can be a hard feat to manage.

In order to prepare an e-portfolio for a speaking course, many factors are dealt with at the same time. Students are responsible for selecting a suitable topic for the assignments, researching, collecting and classifying what they have found, and finally creating their assignments. In this process, students are also supposed to produce four videos for two assignments. The first and third videos are first drafts of the two assignments and the teacher provides feedback. The second and forth videos are the final edited and reproduced versions of the first and third videos. This is a heavy burden on students and makes their learning more difficult. The excerpt below supports this issue:

Teacher 1: Collecting, cataloging, and creating the portfolios was difficult at times. Furthermore, the idea of producing “drafts” of a speaking portfolio was a new concept for some students, which made the process more difficult.

Students researched and composed their scripts to study before recording their videos. They memorized or read their scripts while preparing videos. Therefore, it is not an actual speech, but just a record of memorization or reading, which avoids fluency and spontaneity of speaking. Teacher 2 and Teacher 4 mention this issue as follow:

Teacher 2: Since it [e-portfolio] is a recorded material, students memorize their speech. There is almost no production in e-portfolios.

Teacher 4: … Most of the students write down what they are going to say and then memorize it or read it. In these cases, it is not a true sample of their ability to speak.

Apart from other participants, Teacher 2 considers e-portfolios in classes as ‘a waste of time’ because according to her, e-portfolio lacks assessment and process standards. Also, she mentions that e-portfolio is not motivating and beneficial for students because teachers are not well informed about e-portfolios, which also impacts classes negatively.

4.3. Students’ requirements

Students’ requirements refer to what students need to have or do in order to prepare their e-portfolios. Two of four teachers listed the steps taken to prepare students for the e-portfolio process. The steps include brainstorming about the topic, outlining speech, getting feedback from their peers and teachers, preparing videos and editing them according to the feedback given to them. For example, Teacher 2 lists them as follows;

- Brainstorm about the topic
- Brainstorm about the supporting ideas
- Outline their speech
- Get feedback from their peers
- Make their 1st video
- Get feedback from their teachers
- Make their 2nd video

This proves that students should use their critical thinking skills when they brainstorm and outline their speech. They should collaborate with other students to work. They should be aware of their learning because when they get feedback from their peers and teachers, they should check their projects and improve them according to peer and teacher feedback.

Teacher 1: First and foremost, a devotion to and motivation for the project is necessary. Without sincere excitement or motivation to produce a speaking video this project cannot be completed successfully. Especially when taking into consideration the processes of draft education, revision, self-assessment and self-reflection, motivation is a must.

Teacher 3: Students need … more importantly motivation.

The excerpts show that preparing an e-portfolio is really a difficult task to carry out for students because of the
requirements. Therefore, it may cause demotivation and frustration among students. But if students are motivated, they can prepare their e-portfolios and be successful.

Another requirement is having technology skills. In order to create an e-portfolio, students are supposed to prepare videos. Therefore, they should know how to use computer programs like iPhoto and iMovie, which are free software used in Apple’s IOS operation system. The following excerpts are indicators of this.

Teacher 1: *Additionally, some technological knowledge is necessary (operation of a camera, computer, or a voice recorder.)*

Teacher 3: *Students need a camera, a voice recorder, internet for researches, iMovie programme for well-developed projects...*

Teacher 3 emphasizes the need for teacher guidance to produce successful e-portfolios. Teacher guidance helps students comprehend assignments, find out strengths and weaknesses in their e-portfolios, and improve their learning by overcoming their weaknesses. In addition, Teacher 3 points out that student autonomy is another need for students. Students can become autonomous if they are free to choose what to study in their assignments.

4.4. Teachers’ requirements

Teachers’ requirements refer to what teachers need to have or do in order to implement the use of e-portfolios in their classes. The first requirement is that they have technological skills like their students. During the e-portfolio process, students need technical support in such situations, such as recording their video, uploading pictures to their videos, or the use of a camera or voice recorder. This requirement of students necessitates teachers having technology competence. To illustrate:

Teacher 1: *Technological knowledge is necessary on the teachers’ part. Either in operation of a learning management system site for collection of the videos or in assisting the students’ with operations of their computer for recording purposes.*

Teacher 2: *[Teachers] help them with computers/programs.*

Teachers should be able to plan effectively and be well organized. They should provide students with the framework that needs to used to produce their e-portfolios. To do this, teachers should have reasonable expectations of what can be achieved by students and have a clear understanding of their students. They should get familiar with their students. They should have a clear standard and a rubric to evaluate students’ e-portfolios. In addition, they should provide students with individual, clear, and detailed feedback so that students can be encouraged to discover their weaknesses and strengths and to find solutions to improve their weaknesses. The following excerpts help to understand these matters.

Teacher 2: *[Teachers] provide students with a pack including brainstorming charts, outline pages, feedback pages as well as a rubric.... [Teachers] give clear and detailed feedback.*

Teacher 4: *First the teacher must present the ideas and topics for the portfolio.*

Teacher 3: *The teacher should plan the activities and be organized. S/he should know his/her students and also know who is working on what topic. S/he should watch/listen to e-portfolios and give individual feedback one by one.*

Though it may seem that the e-portfolio process is teacher-centred, teachers’ and students’ roles are defined, and priority is on the students. Teachers should be facilitators, observers, and guides when they work with their students in class. To illustrate:

Teacher 2: *[Teachers] monitor students in groups and help them when needed.*

Teacher 3: *S/he [the teachers] should give students suggestions when s/he thinks it is necessary.*

Teacher 1: *When students are given controlled freedom to express themselves, the products are surprising.*

Students are in charge of preparing their own videos. Selecting, organizing, and creating portfolios are their responsibilities. During this procedure, they are the decision makers of their own e-portfolios, though teachers guide them. Therefore, their e-portfolios are individual and different from each other. They reflect their owners’ creativity. This makes teachers be flexible and open to creativity. The following excerpt from Teacher 1 shows this:

Teacher 1: *The teacher should be open to creativity. When students are given a controlled freedom to express themselves, the products are surprising.*

Teacher 3: *... Good works should be praised and insufficient works should be encouraged.*

In addition to these requirements, Teacher 3 also emphasizes the need for praise and encouragement. As seen, one of the requirements of students is to be motivated. One way to motivate students is to praise and encourage them as they work. When a student is praised and encouraged by teachers, he/she can have the excitement and motivation that are required to carry out the requirements of the e-portfolio process.

4.5. Influences of e-portfolios on teachers
The impact of e-portfolios on teachers refers to how e-portfolios in listening and speaking courses affect the way teachers teach and assess speaking. Teacher 2 does not think that e-portfolios affect the way she assesses and teaches speaking skills in her classes. On the other hand, the responses of the other three teachers show that they are affected by e-portfolios to some extent. Three of them agree that e-portfolios are good outside classroom activities for students. They force students to learn how to utilize target language by using target vocabulary from their course book in a real-life situation. Also, they encourage students to use the target language not only inside the class but also outside the class. Therefore, students’ e-portfolios are indicators of the fact that students improve themselves and master the target language. The following excerpts support this:

Teacher 1: *Seeing how a student uses the language outside the classroom is undoubtedly an indication of mastery.*

Teacher 4: *... the portfolio is a reflection of the sincere hard work of a student to learn and use English effectively.*

Teacher 3: *... E-portfolio gives them [the students] freedom to put their ideas into action. They jump from pages to stages. E-portfolios bring them closer to real life, which means English or a language is not only grammar or not just something that they use in class.*

Teacher 3 also thinks that e-portfolios changes students’ understanding of a language. It considers a language only as a classroom subject or a set of grammatical rules. Instead, it shows that the language they learn can be also spoken and used outside the classroom. E-portfolios help students be aware of the real function of the language: communication, because they generally view a language as an in-class activity and a set of linguistic items.

During the e-portfolio process, students are required to prepare four videos for two assignments and store them on an online language management system. The first and third videos are the first versions of students’ works. Students get feedback from their friends and teachers, and then they prepare the second and third videos by improving them according to the feedback given. Therefore, e-portfolios keep track of students’ learning, so they enable teachers to follow their students’ progress. They also help teachers recognize and identify their students’ problems in speaking, so teachers can contribute to students’ improvement of their weaknesses. Teacher 3 and 4 point to this issue as follows:

Teacher 3: *It [E-portfolio] can influence how I assess speaking skills in some ways. For example, it can reveal pronunciation problems as well as patterns of mistakes in grammar.*

Teacher 4: *Speaking e-portfolio influences the way I assess speaking in my listening & speaking class.... E-portfolios are helpful to assess speaking; they give you tips about the improvement of the students.*

Apart from them, Teacher 1 states that students prepare and rehearse their scripts before they record their videos. The preparation and rehearsal influence fluency and spontaneity of students’ speech. Therefore, alternative classroom activities that promote spontaneity should be used to assess speaking, too. According to Teacher 4, e-portfolios are fun for students to prepare. Also, students have a chance to display their works to others through e-portfolios and are praised and encouraged whatever quality their works are, so students are satisfied with and proud of their work.

5. Discussions

The use of e-portfolios in speaking courses promotes the use of the target language because students are engaged in learning (Schmitz, Whitson, Heest & Maddaus, 2010). According to Goldsmith (2007), e-portfolios require students to be responsible for organizing and producing the material for a specific purpose, evaluating their work, and reflecting on their findings about their own learning process, experiences, and skills. Consequently, e-portfolios contribute to students’ taking control of their own education and motivating themselves to study (Akçıl & Arap, 2009; Cepik & Yastibas, 2013). Students who prepare e-portfolios in their listening and speaking classes take the responsibility of organizing and preparing their own portfolios, which enables them to participate in learning activities actively. They become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in their e-portfolios because e-portfolios require self-assessment and self-reflection as Rhodes (2011), Gonzalez (2009), Schmitz et al. (2010), and Cepik and Yastibas (2013) have stated. They try to overcome their weaknesses and reflect on what they have done in their e-portfolios. According to Lin (2008), e-portfolios can promote interaction and collaboration in class, which motivates and encourages students to complete and improve their e-portfolios benefiting from their peers. The use of e-portfolios in speaking courses enables students to collaborate and interact with their peers and teachers during the e-portfolio process. E-portfolios promote working collaboratively (Kocoglu, 2008). As e-portfolio assignments are given from the units studied in listening and speaking courses, the connection between what is learned in the classroom and how it is used in real life is established. Consequently, students can improve their speaking skills (Cepik & Yastibas, 2013).
Though e-portfolios contribute to students’ learning in some ways, they also create some challenges for them. There are many factors such as cultural context and teachers’ ability to be creative may decrease the efficiency and effectiveness of e-portfolios in speaking classes. According to Dalton (2007), an e-portfolio system should be flexible, so it should enable students to engage in their learning, give them more control over their learning, and enable them to be more active in their learning. However, speaking e-portfolios are very intensive because it requires selecting a topic, researching this topic, organizing the ideas, composing a text, recording a video, and re-recording the video according to the feedback given. As a result, the e-portfolio process makes students spend a lot of time to meet these requirements, so it may demotivate them. Goldsmith (2007) has mentioned that when teachers have no or little experience with the e-portfolio process, some problems during the implementation of an e-portfolio system may occur. Therefore, when e-portfolios are implemented, teachers should learn how to use the software for an e-portfolio platform and to understand “the assumptions on which an e-portfolio was built” (Goldsmith, 2007, p.38; Gray, 2008). Accordingly, teachers participating in the present study mention that the use of e-portfolios in speaking courses may be demotivating for students because teachers may lack technical skills to carry out the process and may not have clearly stated standards for students’ assessment. In addition, students memorize or read their scripts when they record their videos. Though it eases students’ job, it affects the fluency and spontaneity of their speech.

In order to produce e-portfolios, students should use their critical thinking skills (Rhodes, 2011) because they need to brainstorm about the assignments, research, combine what they have found out, compose and outline their speech. While they are preparing their e-portfolios, they need to work, interact, and share ideas with their peers and teachers. It makes communication among students and between students and their teachers more effective as Bolliger and Shepherd (2010) have claimed. Teachers only help students when students need help. Motivation is key to encourage students to work and complete their e-portfolios (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010). Students who prepare speaking e-portfolios should be motivated because the content of e-portfolios is very intensive and requires students to spend a lot of time. This process may be tiring and boring for students, but if they are motivated and excited, then they can complete their e-portfolios. Students should be free to choose what to study and how to prepare their e-portfolios, which encourages them to be responsible for their learning, to join the process actively, and to become autonomous. E-portfolios blend students’ “information literacy, technology fluency, and domain knowledge” (Reese & Levy, 2009, p.3). They need to have some technology skills to produce their e-portfolios, which means revisiting the existent technology skills and improving them (Lin, 2008). Likewise, students who prepare e-portfolios for the speaking course should have some technology skills because they are required to record their videos by using a computer and to arrange their videos by using some programs like iMovie when they prepare their e-portfolios.

According to Goldsmith, the implementation of e-portfolios may create some problems because teachers may not have enough or any experience with the e-portfolio system. They also may not have a clear understanding of the assumptions of an e-portfolio system. Therefore, teachers should plan and organize everything related to e-portfolio implementation in speaking courses. First, they should set reasonable objectives that students can achieve. Then they should clearly state standards to implement, assess, and evaluate the e-portfolio process. They should know how to use the learning management systems and how to use programs such as iPhoto and iMovie in order to help students record and arrange their videos. As Lorenzo and Ittelson (2005) and Gray (2008) have stated, e-portfolios are the digital collections of a person’s works. As a result, individuals are the focus of e-portfolios and personalize their learning through e-portfolios (Schmitz et al., 2010). Teachers who implement e-portfolios in speaking courses, therefore, should facilitate, observe, and guide students during the e-portfolio process because the main focus of e-portfolios is on students’ improvement. They should give clear, understandable, and formative feedback to students about their e-portfolios individually. This can create a continuous flow of information between students and teachers about students’ learning progress that can be followed easily because e-portfolios keep track of their learning (Reese & Levy, 2009). In addition, teachers who use e-portfolios in speaking classes should be flexible and open to creativity because each e-portfolio is unique in terms of organization and design. In order to motivate students to produce their e-portfolios, teachers should praise students’ works and encourage students to work.

E-portfolios are good activities because they encourage students to use the target language outside the classroom. Students need to utilize the target language in a communicative and independent way because they communicate their ideas about the assignments in a way they design and organize on their own. This indicates that students can improve their use of language and master it as Baturay and Dağlı (2010) have mentioned. The use of language in this way may change students’ point of view about the language. They replace the view that the language is a set of linguistic rules and a classroom subject with the view that the language is used to communicate ideas, as Gonzalez (2009) has emphasized. Teachers keep track of their students’ learning process because e-portfolios store their works (Baturay & Dağlı, 2010; Reese & Levy, 2009). Therefore, they can follow whether their students improve...
themselves or not. When students complete their e-portfolios, they can also follow their own progress. They have a chance to show their products to their peers and teachers, so this can make them satisfied and motivated. But the preparation of speaking e-portfolios may result in memorization of the speech. Memorization influences the fluency and spontaneity of the speech. Therefore, e-portfolios in speaking course should be supported with activities that enhance spontaneous speech.

6. Conclusion
There are some problems related to the lack of standardization in the e-portfolio process, in terms of grading rubrics and the lack of understanding the basic principles of the use of e-portfolios in speaking classes and memorization tactics students use in their videos. The teachers generally think that e-portfolios are a good way to encourage the use of the target language outside the classroom. They claim that students improve their self-assessment, self-reflection and language skills. In addition, students can improve their social skills by collaborating and interacting with their friends, and take risks in their learning by participating actively and taking responsibility for their learning. According to teachers, students have a chance to use the target language in real-life situations by making connections with what they learn in the classroom and how they can use their learning in real world. Students can display their works to others, which helps them to be motivated and build self-confidence as well. The teachers’ responses indicate that e-portfolios help them to follow their students’ progress, to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and to give feedback about their weaknesses to students individually. Therefore, it can be said that teachers’ attitudes toward the use of e-portfolios in speaking classes are positive.

References


