

The English Pronunciation Practice Portfolio Project: Developing Autonomous Learning and Phonemic Transcription Skills at University Level

El Proyecto Portafolio de Práctica de la Pronunciación en Inglés: desarrollo del aprendizaje autónomo y las habilidades de transcripción fonémica a nivel universitario

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Abstract

This descriptive pilot study explores the effectiveness of incorporating portfolios within a university-level English pronunciation course to encourage autonomous learning and enhance phonemic transcription skills. Two core theoretical components guide this study: the use of portfolios as an educational tool and the role of phonemic transcription in English pronunciation acquisition. Portfolios serve as comprehensive collections of students' work, actively involving them in their assessment process and fostering self-reflection, which is key to self-directed learning. According to Galimberti et al. (2020), portfolios act as self-assessment instruments, empowering students to

monitor their progress independently. In the realm of pronunciation learning, phonetic transcription is emphasized as a crucial tool in pronunciation learning, where it supports students in representing spoken language through, for example, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). This specialized skill enables learners to understand phonetic and phonological distinctions essential for mastering English, as it compensates for the irregularities of English spelling (Wells, 1996) and aids comprehension of phonological contrasts between native and target languages (Mompean & Lintunen, 2015). Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines, on the one hand, qualitative data from questionnaires on students' expectations and experiences, and on the other, quantitative analysis of participation rates in the portfolio project and exam performance. The findings aim to clarify the impact of portfolio integration on engagement and academic achievement in an English pronunciation course. Additionally, the study assesses learner efficacy in developing transcription skills, offering recommendations for future implementation and improvement of portfolio-based learning approaches.

Keywords: portfolio, English pronunciation, autonomous learning, phonemic transcription, university level

Resumen

Este estudio piloto descriptivo explora la efectividad de incorporar portafolios en un curso de pronunciación de inglés a nivel universitario para fomentar el aprendizaje autónomo y mejorar las habilidades de transcripción fonémica. Dos componentes teóricos fundamentales guían este estudio: el uso de portafolios como herramienta educativa y el papel de la transcripción fonémica en la adquisición de la pronunciación en lengua inglesa. Los portafolios funcionan como recopilaciones integrales del trabajo de los estudiantes, involucrándolos activamente en su proceso de evaluación y fomentando la autorreflexión, clave para el aprendizaje autodirigido. Según Galimberti et al. (2020), los portafolios actúan como instrumentos de autoevaluación, permitiendo que los estudiantes supervisen su progreso de manera independiente. En el ámbito del aprendizaje de la pronunciación, la transcripción fonética se destaca como una herramienta crucial, ya que apoya a los estudiantes en la representación del lenguaje hablado mediante, por ejemplo, el Alfabeto Fonético Internacional (AFI). Esta habilidad especializada permite a los estudiantes comprender las distinciones fonéticas y fonológicas esenciales para dominar el inglés, ya que compensa las irregularidades de la ortografía inglesa (Wells, 1996) y facilita la comprensión de los contrastes fonológicos entre el idioma materno y el idioma meta (Mompean & Lintunen, 2015). Empleando un enfoque de métodos mixtos, el estudio combina, por un lado, datos cualitativos obtenidos a través de cuestionarios sobre las expectativas y experiencias de los estudiantes, y por otro, un análisis cuantitativo de los índices de participación en el proyecto y el rendimiento en los exámenes. Los hallazgos buscan

clarificar el impacto de la integración de portafolios en el compromiso y rendimiento académico en un curso de pronunciación de inglés. Además, el estudio evalúa la eficacia de los estudiantes en el desarrollo de habilidades de transcripción, ofreciendo recomendaciones para la implementación y mejora futura de enfoques de aprendizaje basados en el uso de portafolios.

Palabras clave: portafolio, pronunciación del inglés, aprendizaje autónomo, transcripción fonémica, nivel universitario

Introduction

The development of effective pedagogical tools is paramount in language education, particularly in specialized areas such as pronunciation. This pilot and descriptive study explores the use of portfolios as a means to foster autonomous, self-directed learning while enhancing phonemic transcription skills in a university-level English pronunciation course. The integration of portfolios, which offer a comprehensive record of students' tasks, assignments, and reflections, has been increasingly recognized as an approach to facilitate active student involvement in the learning process. Phonemic transcription, on the other hand, has been considered as fundamental for developing an accurate understanding of pronunciation as it enhances learners' awareness of phonological differences between their native language and the target language, making it an invaluable tool in pronunciation learning. This study investigates the effectiveness of portfolio integration in an English pronunciation course. By examining students' participation rates, end-of-term exam results, and their reflections on the portfolio process, this research aims to assess the impact of portfolios on student engagement and the development of phonemic transcription skills. The findings will provide insights into the pedagogical benefits of portfolios and offer recommendations for future implementation.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The Use of Portfolios in Learning and Assessment

Portfolios represent a collection of students' works, tasks, assignments, progress, achievements, capabilities and reflections (Delett et al., 2001;

Moya & O'Malley, 1994; Paulson et al., 1991) that help learners become involved in their own assessment, identify their best performance and demonstrate what they have learned during their instruction. According to Galimberti et al. (2020), portfolios can be used as self-assessment tools where students can evaluate their skills and check their progress. Portfolios support the evaluation process and help construct and promote understanding as they “provide accurate information about the depth and breadth of a student’s capabilities in many domains of learning” (Moya & O'Malley, 1994, p. 17). This particular teaching methodology promotes learner autonomy and critical thinking as portfolios help students become independent learners (Allen, 2004; Delett et al., 2001). Autonomy is defined as the ability of taking responsibility for one’s learning (Benson, 2001). The recent shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning reinforces the importance of autonomous learning. Wang and He (2020) emphasize portfolios as tools for both instruction and assessment, enhancing learner involvement and self-reflection. One of the functions of the portfolio is to empower students to focus on the process of learning, and to increase students’ participation and involvement in their learning process by teaching them to set goals and plan, monitor and reflect on their performance. Some researchers have also viewed the function of portfolios from the perspective of improving autonomous or self-regulated learning (González, 2009; Lo, 2010; Moeller et al., 2012; Wang & He, 2020; Yang, 2003; Ziegler, 2014), which also involve the use of metacognitive learning strategies, which are essential for effective learning.

Phonemic Transcription and the Learning of Pronunciation

Phonetic or phonemic transcription is a graphic representation of spoken language that employs graphemes or symbols which represent a phoneme allowing the analysis of speech (Heselwood, 2013). The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is one of the most widely used notation systems consisting of symbols and diacritics that allow the description and representation of speech phenomena (Esling, 2010; Heselwood, 2013).

There are several reasons for the use of phonetic transcription in the process of learning a foreign language at university level, particularly English. Learners of EFL at university level need to gain specialised knowledge of the phonetic and phonological features of the language they are studying and that involves being familiar with and handling the conventions used for the symbolic representation of those features (Capell, 2016). By the use of phonetic transcriptions of utterances, we can give specific reference to its pronunciation, and this is particularly useful since English spelling is not a reliably informative source of actual pronunciation and there are phonetic characteristics that are not reflected in the orthography of the language (Wells, 1996). Explicit phonetic transcription teaching plays a very important role as regards awareness-raising, especially if students either do not possess a trained ear or cannot distinguish a particular sound. Here phonetic transcription provides unequivocal reference to the sound or sounds in focus which can be easily represented by a phonetic symbol. This is also useful when studying and analysing the differences between L1 and L2 sounds (Hancock, 1994; Mompean & Lintunen, 2015). What is more, as we have seen, the development of autonomous learning is highly desirable at university level. Knowledge of phonetic transcription gives students the opportunity to work independently in the process of learning a foreign language by being able to obtain information on its phonological properties, such as stress patterns and phonemic identities from independent dictionary work (Capell, 2016).

Literature Review

Some studies that have been carried out in our teaching context suggest improved learning outcomes involving regular practice and explicit instruction of phonemic transcription. Studies showed that those students who received systematic and frequent monitoring through self-correction exercises with grading achieved better results in formal written assessments (Giménez & Aguirre Sotelo, 2015). Besides, Giménez & Aguirre Sotelo (2016) found a reduction in the number of mistakes committed as learners developed awareness of errors in phonemic

transcriptions. Results have also shown that learners improved their self-correction skills at the end of the experience. Moreover, Capell (2016) found that explicit phonics instruction contributed positively to the oral production and phonemic transcription of unfamiliar words of L1 Spanish learners of L2 English at university level in comparison with students who did not receive such instruction.

Moreover, past research in foreign language learning has shown portfolios to be an effective means to integrate the teaching and learning process as well as evaluation as a means to promote critical thinking and learner autonomy (Allen, 2004; Delett et al., 2001). As regards studies involving the use of portfolios in the field of pronunciation, we can refer to some interesting cases. Özemir-Çagatay (2012) carried out some research considering students and teachers' attitudes in relation to speaking skills at university level in Turkey. In this study, the speaking portfolio involved students preparing their speeches in groups, and the instructors recording students' repertoires through videos. Students used different checklists to guide their performance and after completing them, they were asked to write some reflections about their work. Negrelli and Capell (2016) used portfolios in higher education as an alternative assessment tool in the fields of grammar and phonetics. In relation to pronunciation, this tool was used to assess mainly oral skills by collecting work samples from students that included dictations and recordings. In their research, portfolios encouraged students to reflect upon their learning experiences, considering their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the articulation of sounds, the ability to speak accurately and fluently, among other related aspects. Cantarutti (2012, 2015) has also worked with the development of self-regulatory skills in the practice of speaking skills in pronunciation with the use of e-portfolios, with positive results, as students profited from individual feedback and self-awareness of different pronunciation aspects. Cabrera-Solano (2020) has also researched the use of digital portfolios for enhancing English speaking skills in higher education. In this study, students used their smartphones to create digital portfolios which included videos and audios of different speaking tasks on which they received

personalized feedback. The findings showed that digital portfolios were effective to enhance students' pronunciation and fluency and to increase students' motivation to practice oral skills.

These studies highlight the value of using portfolios to improve speaking skills and foster learners' autonomy. However, they primarily include portfolios for the teaching and learning of pronunciation, with a focus on the oral component while overlooking phonemic practice through transcriptions. This skill also poses challenges for students learning English phonetics as a foreign language. Therefore, we believe our research is novel, particularly in our teaching context, and may offer significant contributions to experts in this area.

The Pilot Study

The project was implemented in the course English Pronunciation Practice (EPP) offered in the English Programmes in the National University of Córdoba (UNC) during the first term of 2024. There is an important number of students attending this course; thus, one concern was related to the need for developing autonomous learning among our students. Besides, during the academic year, students are evaluated on their ability to transcribe phonemically and, as in final exams most students are external, they need to sit a final written exam, where phonemic transcription skills are evaluated. Having taken this into consideration, a pilot study was conducted within the framework of what was called "The Portfolio Project". This project represents a strategic approach to improving the phonemic transcription skills of students enrolled in the EPP course at the School of Languages (UNC). As phonemic transcription proficiency is paramount for individuals aspiring to excel in developing their pronunciation skills and improve their learning process experience, this project aims to cultivate study habits that facilitate enhanced class participation and improved performance in written examinations by the use of portfolios. The primary objectives of the Portfolio Project include improving phonemic transcription skills through active class participation in transcription assignments and subsequent feedback sessions while

promoting reflective learning through the use of portfolios as a reflective tool, enabling students to monitor their progress, identify areas for improvement, and take ownership of their learning experience in the EPP course. Moreover, by offering bonus points for students who meet predetermined task completion criteria, consistent participation and commitment to the project are encouraged.

The Methodology

Before the Portfolio Project was implemented, an expert reviewed pre-experience survey was carried out so as to collect information about learners' perceptions about developing transcription skills, their previous learning experience with the use of portfolios and their opinions about the relevance of this tool for the acquisition of phonemic transcription skills. Following, the Portfolio Project was introduced to students at the beginning of the course where the whole procedure was explained in detail. First, students would periodically receive phonemic transcription tasks which should be completed on separate sheets of paper, clearly indicating their names, to facilitate record-keeping by teachers. The collected assignments would be returned to students, who were expected to compile them into their portfolios over the first term of the academic year. This process was expected to allow students to document their progress and reflect on their learning experience. After returning the assignments, teachers would randomly select students to transcribe the assigned task on the board. After that, teachers would provide constructive feedback on accuracy by making detailed comments on achievements and improvement areas related to phonemic transcription. At this point, students were expected to ask questions, discuss different transcription options and revise their own assignments based on this feedback. They were also expected to highlight recurrent mistakes and add comments at the end of their transcriptions in relation to effective performance and areas of improvement, particularly as regards vowel and consonant phonemes, Endings and the use of Weak Forms. In order to motivate participation, students were expected to engage actively and periodically by submitting at least 80% of the assigned tasks to qualify for a bonus point

in their written exam grades. This criterion aimed at motivating students to actively engage with the project and foster their own academic improvement.

Once all the assignments have been completed, a midterm written exam was carried out so as to evaluate students' performance in relation to phonemic transcription skills. The evaluation consisted in different activities which involved knowledge of phonemic transcription such as a multiple-choice exercise where the correct transcription had to be identified and also a short paragraph to be phonemically transcribed, which contained words taken from the assignments that were part of the Portfolio Project.

Finally, a post-experience survey was conducted with the objective of gathering information about learners' perceptions about the project itself, their commitment and participation in the project and also about this particular aspect in relation to their exam results.

Results

This study includes a mixed-methods approach, where a qualitative analysis of questionnaires concerning students' expectations and perceptions of their experience in the Portfolio Project were analysed together with a quantitative analysis of participation rates of students involved in the project, alongside with their marks in their midterm exams.

The Pre-Experience Survey

The pre-experience questionnaire (see Appendix 1) contained eight closed and one opened-ended question to collect data on students' perceptions as regards the role of phonemic transcription for the development of accurate pronunciation skills, the difficulties in the development of transcription skills, their previous experience at using portfolios and their interest in participating in the Portfolio Project.

121 students answered the pre-experience questionnaire. All participants (100%) agreed that acquiring phonemic transcription skills supports

accurate pronunciation. Besides, 65.3% anticipated that learning phonemic transcription may be difficult; 32.2% acknowledged that was difficult; and 2.5% answered that this skill did not pose any difficulty. Additionally, the majority (87.6%) had never used portfolios before, while 12.4% (15 students) had experience in areas such as Literature, Art, Biology, English Language, History Teaching, Methodology and Graphic Design. When asked to indicate how they used portfolios, some students had used them mainly for practice exercises (53.3%), others for assessment (33.3%), and the rest for personal reflection (13.3%). Furthermore, regarding benefits for transcription skills, 82.6% believed portfolios would be helpful; 15.7% claimed possible benefits, and 1.7% stated that using those tools was not useful to enhance transcription abilities. When asked why working with portfolios could be useful for practicing transcription skills, the majority (70%) reported that portfolios can help them enhance phonemic transcription and understand its rules and conventions and acquire accuracy as well as greater awareness of pronunciation. 23.3% believed that portfolios may be helpful for improving phonemic transcription skills and 6.7% stated that they may be helpful for acquiring pronunciation accuracy. As regards students that considered working with portfolios was not useful, 50% believed that they would not help them pronounce in a more accurate way or raise awareness about the pronunciation of words, whereas 25% claimed that its use could be time-consuming and boring, and 25% thought they may not be helpful to enhance phonemic transcription abilities and learn transcription rules and conventions. Regarding students' expectations about the project, 33.1% considered it very useful; another 33.1% found it challenging; 30.6%, motivating, while only 2.5% found it potentially time-consuming and 0.8%, useless.

Project Participants

In the project, teachers would periodically assign once a week transcription tasks which consisted in transcribing phonemically short texts from the course material. Students were expected to hand in their transcriptions with their names to record their participation and task completion in relation to the project. Considering the results, 149 students registered

participation in the Portfolio Project. This means that these students handed in their assignments at least once and teachers were able to record the date when these students presented their transcriptions. As a way of motivating project participation, students could be assigned a bonus point if they completed no less than 80% of the transcription assignments, and that would be considered if they could demonstrate minimum correct performance in their written exams. The project was implemented during 7 weeks, which means that there were a total of 7 transcription assignments, and each one could involve the transcription of one or two texts. From the 149 students who participated in the project, 96 students were candidates for the bonus point; in other words, around 65% of the project participants had completed at least 80% of the phonemic transcription tasks assigned.

Exam Results

As regards the analysis of the written exam which was carried out at the end of the first term, it was found that 164 students completed this examination, and from this amount, 57.3% obtained a passing mark, whereas the remaining 42.7% did not pass this exam. Of all passing exams, 91.5% corresponded to project participants. Apart from that, in order to pass the exam, students are required to obtain a minimum of 60 points to consider a passing mark. When analysing the passing exams from project participants, 68% obtained a bonus point, which increased their final score (e.g. from 7 to 8), as they had completed the majority of the project transcription assignments. The remaining 32% of passing exams did not receive a bonus point, as they could not comply with the minimum completion criteria. It is important to point out that those students who completed at least 80% of the transcription tasks but scored slightly below the passing mark (55 points) were granted passing grades if eligible for the bonus point. Only 8 out of the 65 project participants obtained this benefit.

When considering non-passing exams, 90% corresponded to project participants, while 10% of the students who failed the exam had not participated in the project. Finally, nearly half (49.2%) of those who failed

had completed at least 80% of the assignments, making them candidates for the bonus point.

Post-Experience Survey

After the Portfolio Project experience was completed, and once the examination had taken place, a post-experience survey (see Appendix 2) was conducted, with closed and open questions to gather information as regards students' perceptions and attitudes towards their own learning experience. 86 students answered the survey, which represents around 50% of those who had taken the exam. 84.9% of the respondents completed 80% of the transcription tasks assigned; 11.6 % completed about half of those assignments, and the remaining 3.5% completed a few. When asked about their attitudes and actions after completing the assignments, 74.4% stated that they always reviewed and corrected them using class feedback. 19.8% sometimes corrected their assignments in class or consulted a classmate's notes, and 5.8% corrected them and other times they left them unchecked without revising them with any feedback.

In relation to students' perception as regards the relationship between their participation in the project and exam results, and considering those respondents who obtained a passing mark in the written exam, 53% answered that they thought that doing the assignments every class had helped them obtain a good exam mark. 41% stated that they were committed to doing the transcriptions and checking them afterwards. Only 6% of participants stated that the exam was easier than expected. On the other hand, considering those respondents who had not obtained a passing mark in their written exams, 46% answered that they had not understood some theoretical concepts; 43% said that they thought they did not pass the exam due to lack of practice and study, and the remaining 11% stated that they had not corrected their transcriptions after completing them.

As regards the contents of the course they considered that they had been able to learn as a result of their experience in the Portfolio Project, 25% answered that they were able to learn vowel phonemes; another 25% answered consonant phonemes; 20%, Weak Forms; 16%, Endings, while

14% answered that Strong Forms was the aspect that they could learn the most during the project.

In relation to students' perceptions regarding the whole process in the Portfolio Project, the majority (82.6%) stated that it was useful and they had learned a lot. 16.3% stated that the experience was sometimes useful and only 1.1% answered that the experience was not useful and that they had not learned much. Finally, when asked to briefly justify these answers, many students pointed out that the project provided consistent practice, which helped them improve their phonemic transcription skills, understand Weak and Strong Forms, learn vowel sounds, and correct common mistakes. They also stated that it enhanced their overall pronunciation and speaking and listening skills (*"It help me to practice and develop my transcription and pronunciation skills and the use of some features such as the weak forms or endings"; "It help me with other skills such as speaking and listening"* [sic]¹). Other responses were related to their experience with feedback and corrections. In this case, students answered that they appreciated receiving feedback on their work, both individually and through class discussions. They stated that this feedback was valuable for learning from mistakes and refining their transcription abilities (*"I believe it was useful as I received valuable feedback"; "I think it is important to learn from mistakes and the portfolio project helped a lot, it was a useful practice"* [sic]). Other answers were related to other aspects such as motivation and engagement. It was found that the project motivated students to engage more actively in class and complete assignments. Some participants mentioned that the opportunity to earn extra points encouraged them to participate and study more consistently (*"The Portfolio Project helped me get hooked on the subject, and to practice what I think is the most difficult part (transcription)"; "The project helped me because I'm not used to doing homework but getting the opportunity to gain an extra point motivate me to do it and I ended up learning a lot"; "The project was useful to me because it gave me more motivation to do the*

¹ The answers that contain grammatical errors are original and have not been edited.

assignments before class and to practice more” [sic]). As regards answers related to the preparation for exams, several students noted that the project helped them prepare for exams by reinforcing the material covered in class and enabling them to remember common words and transcription patterns (“Correcting and comparing with classmates in class was also super helpful when i had to study on my own”; “The repetition of some words made me learn them more easily and helped in the exam”; “The Portfolio Project helped me to prepare for certain words that were in the exam and I already knew how to transcribe them” [sic]). Finally, some answers pointed out how participating in the project improved students’ confidence in their ability to transcribe phonemically, especially those who had struggled in the past or had repeated the course (“I’m doing this subject again because the last year I couldn’t pass the exams and I think this portfolio helped me a lot to practice frequently. And also I liked that teachers appreciate our effort”; “I’m doing this course again. Last year I haven’t passed the first exam but now I did it because of the portfolio project” [sic]).

Finally, participants were asked to include some final remarks and comments in relation to their experience with the project by sharing ideas related to other aspects such as difficulties in the experience, the frequency of assignments, etc. Several students expressed satisfaction with the project, considering it an effective method for learning phonemic transcription and appreciating the teachers’ support throughout the process. They found the project useful for enhancing their skills and improving their grades (“I think it was an excellent way to learn a bit more”; “The teachers are kind at the moment to help you and the project is also useful to practise by your own” [sic]; “Many students recommended continuing the project in future courses, noting that it helps maintain interest in the subject and provides a structured way to practice regularly”; “I think the portfolio should be done every year. I think it help students be more interested in the subject”; “I really would like to follow the project as it helped me learn more easily” [sic]). Some mentioned they would like to continue using it because it made learning easier. Students who were

repeating the course highlighted significant improvements in their transcription skills, attributing this progress to the project. They felt more confident and comfortable with the material compared to their first attempt in doing the course (*"this is the second time i'm doing Pronunciation Practice, and I've improved a lot since the first time, partly because of the Portfolio Project. Not only it helped me improve my grade on the first term test, but also to really understand transcription which used to be really hard for me. I'm very grateful! it was a nice experience"; "I am doing this course for the second time and I really noticed a difference with my transcription... it was the most difficult part for me but now I can do it in a very well way. Thank you teachers !!!" [sic]*). As regards areas for improvement, some students stated the need to have access to answer keys to the transcriptions assigned in the virtual classroom so that they would review and self-correct their work even if they miss a class. Besides, one student proposed that when correcting transcriptions on the board, some students could read the text aloud to practice sound production and receive feedback on their pronunciation.

Discussion of Results

By analysing the data collected in the pre-experience questionnaire, there is valuable information as regards students' perceptions about the importance of developing phonemic transcription skills, their previous experience with portfolios and their expectations in relation to the Portfolio Project itself. First of all, all the participants coincided in the importance of mastering transcription skills for acquiring more accurate pronunciation, even though the vast majority considered this skill to be difficult or potentially difficult. This may provide hints as regards the high level of commitment and engagement in the project, as almost 91% of the students who did the EPP course participated actively in this proposal.

As regards students' previous experience with portfolios, it was interesting that almost 90% of participants answered that this would be their first experience working with this tool, and, even though a small percentage had some previous experience, nobody had used portfolios in a

pronunciation course, making this methodology something novel to these students, particularly in our field.

In relation to the use of portfolios for the development of pronunciation skills, the vast majority of students (98%) believed that using this tool may help them improve their transcription skills and enhance their understanding of transcription rules and conventions, while acquiring accurate pronunciation and greater awareness of the pronunciation of English words. Only 8 out of 121 students considered that working with portfolios was not useful as they believed that they would not help them pronounce in a more accurate way. Again, the high participation rate shows that the project was engaging and represented a meaningful and motivating learning experience for students. These results suggest that, before the project was actually implemented, the students already had a high degree of motivation and commitment which coincided with the fact that, later on, the majority of the project participants (65%) completed at least 80% of the phonemic transcription tasks assigned. We may also interpret that, even though the proposal included the allocation of a bonus point in the written exams, the students who took part of the project seemed more interested in developing their transcription skills rather than just gaining an extra point to help them pass an exam.

Finally, as regards the expectations in relation to the project, the answers were more varied as one third of the participants considered that this proposal would be useful whereas another third of respondents stated that it would be challenging and almost another third considered it a motivating experience. These results suggest that students were motivated and had positive expectations as regards the experience itself, which correlated with their level of engagement and participation. Actually, the project showed a high level of commitment, as most of the students who took the midterm exam were already engaged in the initiative. This could suggest that students were motivated to prepare, attend, and perform better in their exams by participating in the project.

Considering exam results, we could also gather very valuable insights in relation to the students' exam performance and marks, which can give us hints regarding the success of the project. First of all, around 60% of the students who took the subject passed the exam, and within passing exams, the majority (91.5%) corresponded to project participants. Besides, of those who passed, nearly 70% earned the bonus point. This data may suggest that the project effectively encouraged practice and regular study habits, showing students' high commitment by completing at least 80% of the tasks assigned. Moreover, very few students (8) passed due to the bonus point, which implies that most succeeded through their own efforts and preparation, rather than relying on this extra point.

We also found that, even though around 42% did not pass the first written exam, the majority of these non-passing tests belonged to project participants. What is more, around half of these exams belonged to students who were candidates for a bonus point. Here, the post-experience survey provided some hints in relation to students' attitudes after completing the tasks and why taking part of the project did not correspond necessarily to a passing mark in the exam.

A small percentage of respondents in the post-experience survey (around 6%) stated that they sometimes corrected assignments and some other times they did them but left them unchecked. When asked about what they did once they completed the transcriptions or why they thought they could not pass the exams in spite of participating in the project, the majority presented different reasons that were not related to the project itself: 46% stated that they had not understood theoretical issues; 43% considered they needed more practice and regular study and 11% revealed that they had not checked their transcriptions after receiving feedback.

The post-experience survey also provided valuable insights related to the success cases. From the responses collected, the majority of students stated they checked their own transcriptions considering the feedback provided during the lessons, whereas around 20% of students answered that they sometimes corrected their assignments in class or consulted a

classmate's notes. Besides, in the case of those participants that had passed the exam, half of them stated that they thought that doing the tasks in every class had helped them obtain good marks. And another 41% answered that they were committed to the process of completing the transcriptions and checking them afterwards. This data seems to confirm our hypothesis which stated that the project motivated students to get involved in their own learning process through systematic and regular practice.

Another interesting aspect shown by the post-experience survey was related to the contents students were able to acquire through this project. Half of students who answered this survey claimed that they were able to learn vowel and consonant sounds which is the main focus during the first semester of the EPP course; 20% answered that Weak Forms was the aspect they had been able to learn the most; a smaller percentage (14% and 16%, respectively) expressed that Strong Forms and Endings were the contents they were able to achieve with their participation in the project. In this sense, it can be interpreted that students' participation encouraged them to consolidate those theoretical topics that were presented, discussed and practised in class, and that the project seemed successful in helping students acquire the main contents developed in the course.

Finally, students' viewpoints in reference to the whole experience provided relevant information for assessing the project itself. The majority of the answers collected in the post-experience survey (almost 83%) showed a positive attitude by stating they had learned a lot and improved their acquisition of phonemic transcription skills. The answers showed that the project provided students the opportunity to have consistent practice, helping them improve phonemic transcription, pronunciation, and even listening skills. Students also valued positively the feedback received periodically, which helped them refine their transcription abilities and, at the same time, stay engaged in the pronunciation class. The respondents also showed that the project motivated them to participate, complete assignments, and be better prepared for exams. Many reported increased confidence, especially those who had struggled to cope with the contents

or repeated the course. Overall, students found the project effective for learning transcription skills, and they recommended continuing it in future courses, as it helped sustain their interest and improve their pronunciation skills.

Conclusions

To conclude, we can state that the Portfolio Project experience had a positive impact on both teachers and students and had shed light on learners' attitudes related to the use of portfolios as a tool to learn pronunciation. For learners, it could contribute to gaining autonomy and commitment in their own learning process. Moreover, it showed that systematic and regular practice by checking and receiving feedback seemed quite helpful for mastering transcription skills. Results suggest that the implementation of this tool was successful and helped students improve their transcription skills, reinforce theoretical concepts and raise awareness in relation to the pronunciation of English words. This project is intended to be used in the future as an instrument for self-monitoring and self-assessing learners' written assignments. For this reason, we consider the possibility of including model transcriptions of the written assignments that can be shared through the course's virtual classroom. In this way, those students who could do the assignments but could not attend classes would still benefit from the feedback and continue with their progress in the project.

As instructors, we believe that this experience fulfilled its main objective by having positive results and by receiving very positive feedback from participants. As regards future experiences, one advantageous activity that could be implemented in future academic years is that of peer-assessment. After doing the transcriptions assigned, students may exchange their works among their classmates and correct them with the feedback provided in class. In doing so, learners may learn from their peers' performances and gain confidence through those exchanges. Another possible suggestion for future experiences could be the integration of the use of portfolios with other learning techniques, particularly the ones that focus on the

development of oral skills, such as student-recorded audio productions, guided oral performance self-assessment tasks, or the use of other digital resources for oral practice in our virtual classroom.

All in all, portfolios in higher education serve as a comprehensive tool that includes assessment, self-reflection and autonomous learning fostering deeper engagement with the learning process. In our subject, the use of portfolios showed to be an effective learning tool, as they helped students become engaged in their academic achievement in our course and, at the same time, it helped them develop and acquire phonemic transcription skills, eventually, and improve their speaking abilities as well.

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Appendix 1

Pre-experience Survey

1- Do you think acquiring phonemic transcription skills are useful for pronouncing more accurately?

a) Yes

b) No

2-Do you think acquiring the abilities for phonemic transcription may be difficult?

a) Yes

b) No

c) May be

3- A portfolio is a collection of student work, which includes assignments, reflections, assessments, tasks, etc., that represents students' achievements, skills, progress, and learning experiences over time. Considering this, have you ever worked with portfolios before?

a) Yes

b) No

3- (only if the answer to question 3 was “yes”) If you have worked with portfolios, in what course of study have you used them?

4- (only if the answer to question 3 was “yes”) Indicate if your experience with the use of portfolios was related to:

a) Practice activities (exercises, tasks, etc)

b) Assessment activities (tests or part of an examination process)

c) Personal reflections

5-Do you think that working with portfolios to help you improve your transcription skills in a pronunciation course can be useful?

a) Yes

b) No

c) May be

6-If you think that working with portfolios to practice your transcription skills IS OR MAY BE USEFUL, why do you think so?

a) It may help me improve my phonemic transcription skills and learn transcription rules and conventions.

b) It may help me pronounce more accurately and become aware of the pronunciation of words.

c) Options a and b.

7-If you think that working with portfolios to practice your transcription skills IS NOT USEFUL, why do you think so? (Choose ONLY ONE option)

a) I think it may not help me improve my phonemic transcription skills and learn transcription rules and conventions.

b) It may not help me pronounce more accurately and become aware of the pronunciation of words.

c) Because I think it is time consuming and boring.

8- How do you feel about participating in this project? I think it is... (Choose ONLY ONE option)

a) motivating

b) challenging

c) very useful

d) time- consuming

e) useless

We appreciate your participation!

Appendix 2

Post-experience Survey

Only those students who have participated in the Portfolio Project should answer this survey.

Now that we have finished our end of term exams, we would like to know how you found the learning experience in the Portfolio Project. Please, answer the following questions:

1- How was your participation in the Portfolio Project?

a) I did most of the transcription assignments (at least 80 %)

b) I did some of the transcription assignments (around half)

c) I did few transcription assignments.

2- After you completed the transcriptions, what did you do?

- a) I always checked and corrected them with the feedback in class.
- b) I sometimes corrected them in class or I consulted a classmate's notes.
- c) I sometimes corrected them and sometimes I did them without correcting them.
- d) I only did the transcription assignments, but I did not correct them with any feedback.

3- How did you do in the first written exam?

- a) I passed the exam.
- b) I did not pass the exam.

4- If you participated in the Portfolio Project and did not pass the first term exam, why do you think that was so?

- a) Lack of practice and study.
- b) Lack of understanding of some theoretical issues.
- c) Lack of correction after the transcriptions were done.
- d) Non applicable. I passed the exam.

5- If you participated in the Portfolio Project and passed the first term exam, why do you think that was so?

- a) Doing the assignment every class helped me obtain a good mark.
- b) The exam was easier than expected.
- c) I was committed to the process of doing the transcriptions and checking them afterwards.
- d) Non applicable. I did not pass the exam.

6- How would you describe your experience with the Portfolio Project?

- a) Useful, I learned a lot.

b) It was sometimes useful.

c) Not useful, I did not learn much.

7- Can you briefly justify your answer to the previous question?

8- If you think you benefited by participating in the Portfolio Project, what aspect(s) of English pronunciation do you think you learned the most?

a) Vowel phonemes

b) Consonant phonemes

c) Weak forms

d) Strong forms

e) Endings

f) Others

9- Would you like to share more ideas or comments in relation to this experience? (e.g. difficulties in the experience, the frequency of assignments, etc.)

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