

Student Perceptions of E-portfolio Tasks in an Online Korean Language Class

So Young Yi

George Mason University

Abstract

This study examines student perceptions of electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) tasks in an online Korean class. E-portfolios, as digital-platform-based collections of student work over time, are frequently used as an effective approach to teaching language and assessing students' language skills. In this study, 26 students in the Advanced Korean Language and Culture course completed three different types of online tasks, for both their individual e-portfolios and a class e-portfolio, throughout one semester. An online survey was administered to the students at the end of the semester to collect feedback. The survey results show that the students had overall positive perceptions of the e-portfolio tasks, agreeing that the tasks were motivational, engaging, and reflective. They found the translation and writing e-portfolio

tasks the most helpful, especially for helping them incorporate what they learned in class into their work.

Keywords: e-portfolio, online language class, student perception, translation e-portfolio, writing e-portfolio, speaking e-portfolio

1. Introduction

Ever since the pandemic hit in 2020, language instructors have been striving to find new ways to effectively teach languages in various modalities. Scholars have agreed on the importance of discovering innovative teaching and learning materials that motivate and engage students in diverse course settings (Arias, Swinton, & Anderson, 2018; Doghonadze, Dolidze, & Vasadze, 2021). With the growing number of online language courses, interest in the development of online materials and methods by which students and instructors can work remotely has also grown. Electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) are one of the methods for online course teaching that have drawn the attention of language instructors due to their effectiveness and efficiency, a topic that will be explored in the following chapter. The present study builds upon this interest by investigating whether e-portfolios are effective learning tools, as previous research suggests. This investigation is carried out in the particular context of an online Korean language class focusing on the students'

perceptions of e- portfolio tasks. More specifically, the following research questions are answered: (i) How do students perceive the use of e-portfolio tasks in an online Korean language classroom in general? (ii) What types of e-portfolio task do they find the most helpful? and (iii) How could the e-portfolio tasks be improved?

The organization of this study is as follows. First, the following chapter delves into the definition of portfolios and e-portfolios and explores their benefits and advantages through an extensive literature review. Subsequently, the study addresses the research methods, including participant demographics and procedures, followed by the findings derived from the student survey and discussions. Finally, it concludes the study and offers suggestions for future research.

2. Background

Traditionally, a portfolio comprises a purposeful compilation of a student's work, typically organized within a file folder, box, or any durable and expandable container

(Javanmard & Farahani, 2012). This compilation serves as a tangible record of the student's development, progress, and achievements. Within the field of language education, several researchers have highlighted numerous advantages of utilizing portfolios in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts (Davis, 2005; Huang, 2012). For instance, in their study, Singh and Samad (2013) explored the use of portfolios as assessment tools by ESL instructors in Malaysian classrooms. Their study pointed out that students' self-reflection and self-assessment processes not only facilitated instructional enhancement for teachers but also promoted students' educational progress. Furthermore, Shin (2020) conducted a case study involving Korean for Specific Purpose (KSP) students who used portfolio assessments. The results of the study indicated that portfolios offer valuable merits, benefiting both KSP and general Korean language courses. These advantages encompass the cultivation of independent and self-directed learning, improved communication between students and

teachers, and the provision of deeper insights into students' learning progress.

An e-portfolio, serving as an extended digital version of a traditional portfolio, consists of a personalized collection of student artifacts that articulate and display the student's experiences, achievements, and learning, which is created on a digital platform (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005; Gray, 2008). The nature of e-portfolios as digital, organized, searchable, and transportable makes them an important innovation in campus technology (Rhodes, 2011). Among the claimed benefits of e- portfolios is their engaging nature: they engage students in the process of learning by making them take responsibility for the creation and organization of their own e-portfolio, and by individualizing and personalizing their learning as the traditional portfolios (Gray, 2008; Schmits, Whitson, Heeset, & Maddaus, 2010). In addition, e-portfolios are considered to be effective and efficient as they “can save students’ and teachers’ time and energy” and “promote feedback, reflection, and

self-reflection” (Yastibas & Yastibas, 2015, p. 5). Moreover, scholars have described them as useful tools due to being authentic (Goldsmith, 2007; Reese & Levy, 2009), controllable (Goldsmith, 2007), communicative and interactive (Lin, 2008; Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010), motivational (Akçıl & Arap, 2009; Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010; Rhodes, 2011), and reflective (Goldsmith, 2007; Lin, 2008; Reese & Levy, 2009).

3. Method

3.1 The Class

A total of 26 students in the Advanced Korean Language and Culture course in the Fall 2022 semester at George Mason University participated in e-portfolio tasks throughout one semester. Among the participants, there were 22 female students and 4 male students, including 3 heritage speakers of the Korean language who grew up speaking the language in Korean-American families in the United States. To qualify for enrollment in this course, students were required to have completed two courses in

Intermediate Korean Language. This advanced-level course focused on enhancing students' proficiency in the Korean language, encompassing vocabulary and grammar, while also exposing them to various facets of Korean culture and society. As stipulated in the course syllabus, the primary objective was to equip students with well-rounded language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing at an advanced level in Korean. Moreover, students were expected to engage with a diversity of language and cultural contexts relevant to contemporary Korean. The course curriculum relied on a designated textbook as the primary resource, complemented by a corresponding workbook. This textbook consists of nine chapters, each addressing a range of topics such as work life, dreams, regrets, holidays, and more.

The course was conducted in an online synchronous format, with Zoom meetings held twice a week, each session lasting 75 minutes. The instructor had previously participated in the Faculty Online Course Design and Development Project at George Mason University during

the summer of 2020, which led to the creation of several online courses. This extensive experience included the successful delivery of courses in various modalities, including the online synchronous setting.

Each class session encompassed the introduction of new vocabulary, grammar concepts, and cultural insights, followed by interactive drills, pair or group activities to facilitate vocabulary and grammar practice, as well as listening exercises. While the textbook included reading texts and writing prompts at the end of each chapter, due to time constraints during class, students were expected to work on them outside of class, using their own Google Docs page, followed by additional speaking practice on an online platform called Padlet. These activities comprised the e-portfolio tasks. Before starting the e-portfolio tasks, at the beginning of the semester, each student wrote a self-introduction in Korean on a Google Docs page and uploaded a video of herself or himself recording it to the class Padlet page. During this process, some students contacted the

instructor with a minor technical issue involving difficulty with uploading a large video file to Padlet, and figured out how to resolve the problem with the instructor. In this way, they were able to get used to the online tool and platform to use throughout the semester, which prepared them for the e-portfolio tasks.

3.2 E-portfolio Tasks

Each chapter of the textbook ends with reading passages related to the topic of the chapter, and the genres of the reading passages vary, including narratives, journals, book chapter overviews, informative texts, safety instructions, and interviews. Following the completion of each chapter's lesson, students were responsible for executing two distinct tasks on their individual Google Docs page, in addition to one task on the class Padlet page. This approach allowed each student to accumulate their translation work, written assignments, as well as feedback and virtual interaction with the instructor on their personal Google Docs page, encompassing the nine topics covered across the nine chapters during the course of

the semester. Moreover, the class Padlet page served as a platform for students to view one another's videos, which were related to all nine topics. This not only facilitated peer interactions but also provided opportunities for engagement with the instructor. Table 1 provides a sample depiction of the topic and task directions from Chapter 5, and Figure 1 illustrates the procedural steps involved in the e-portfolio tasks.

Table 1. Topic and Task Direction of Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Topic: Work Life		
Tasks	Translation Task	Below is an overview of three book chapters discussing three ways to increase happiness while at work. Please read the reading text carefully and type an English translation underneath each Korean sentence.
	Writing Task	<p>[Writing Prompt and Direction] You are an author of a book titled ‘Three Ways to Increase Happiness While at College.’ Write up overviews of three chapters of your book in detail as in the translation task.</p> <p>[Checklist]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do I use the plain speech style for sentence endings? 2) Do I use the key expressions covered in Chapter 5 of the textbook? 3) Does my writing consist of at least 20 complete sentences?
	Speaking Task	Video-record yourself reading the final draft of your writing and upload it to the class Padlet page.

First, they were expected to translate a Korean reading passage from the textbook into English. The instructor provided a vocabulary list for the reading text, allowing students to supplement it with additional words if necessary. They typed in line-by-line English translations under the Korean sentences, and left comments for the instructor whenever they had any questions. For example, in the Chapter 5 translation task, using the comment feature of Google Docs, a student sought guidance on a sentence related to the usage of multiple Korean particles attached to a noun. Furthermore, the student left a comment expressing agreement with the author's perspective on the importance of teamwork in the workplace. In response, the instructor addressed the grammar inquiry and acknowledged the student's input, fostering a virtual interactive learning environment.

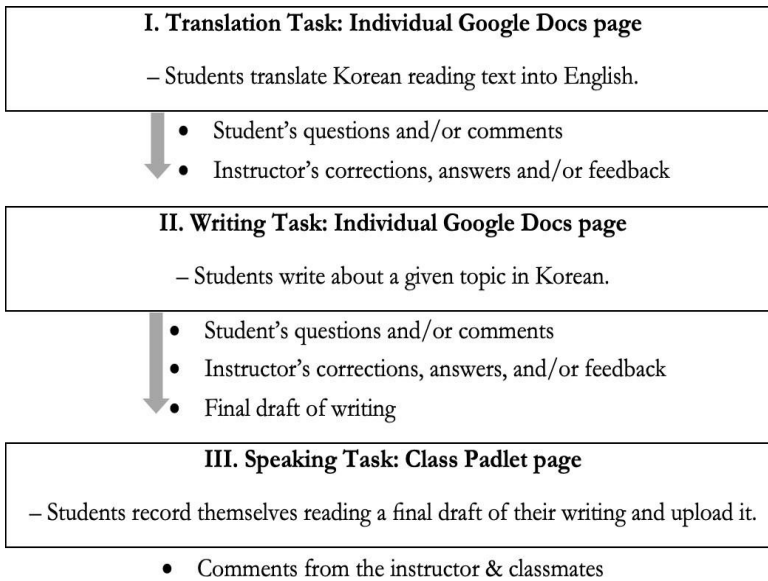
Second, the students were given a writing prompt linked to the topic of the reading passage and composed written responses in Korean. Each writing task entailed specific instructions concerning the minimum sentence count, required sentence-ending speech style, and prescribed

grammar, as outlined in Table 1. For instance, in the Chapter 5 writing task, after reading a text on strategies for enhancing happiness in the workplace, students were required to write out overviews of three book chapters related to increasing happiness in a college setting. This task mandated the creation of at least 20 sentences, employing the plain speech style commonly used in Korean writing, and incorporating four key expressions introduced during Zoom sessions. Given that these four key expressions and the plain speech style were already familiar to students from the reading text, they confidently integrated them into their writing. Throughout the writing process, students used the Google Docs comment box to pose questions or provide comments, mirroring the practice from the translation task. Any errors in grammar and spelling were corrected and any questions in a comment box were answered by the instructor so that the student could come back, check the instructor's feedback, and revise their writing as a final draft.

Finally, upon the completion of their translation and writing tasks, students recorded a video of themselves reading JNCOLCTL

the final draft of their writing and uploaded the video to the class Padlet page along with the written text. Within this shared platform, the entire class had the opportunity to view each other's videos and leave comments. Unlike traditional speaking tasks where students rely on memorization, the present Speaking Task prioritized the enhancement of students' presentational skills and the attainment of accurate pronunciation, rather than the generation of authentic utterances. For future research, it is recommended that students engage in recording their authentic and spontaneous speech, without relying on scripted material.

Figure 1. Process of the E-portfolio Tasks



All the students’ e-portfolios were graded based on the on-time completion rather than the quality of their work. The instructor encouraged the students to get actively and consistently involved in the e-portfolios tasks throughout the semester and interact with the instructor to ask any questions or share their opinions virtually.

3.3 Survey

Students were asked to complete a seven-item online survey at the end of the semester. The survey appears in Appendix A. The first item of the survey consisted of 5 multiple-choice questions employing a 5-point Likert Scale to evaluate the quality of the e-portfolios. For example, students were asked to rate the overall usefulness of the e-portfolio tasks and their efficacy as tools for showing their efforts in learning Korean outside of the classroom, increasing their willingness to learn actively, developing their Korean language skills consistently and regularly, and contributing to their learning experience of the Korean language. Moreover, for item 2, students were requested to choose the most helpful task(s) among the three tasks including translation, writing, and speaking tasks. In addition, items 3 through 7 are open-ended questions, allowing students to freely comment on how they perceive the tasks. For instance, items 3, 4, and 5 asked what aspects of the translation, writing, and speaking tasks helped them to learn, and items 6 and 7 asked what aspects of the overall e-portfolio task helped them to learn and what modifications they suggest

respectively. The survey was optional and anonymous, and 17 out of the 26 students completed it before the semester ended.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Students' Overall Perception of the E-portfolio Tasks

Students evaluated the overall quality of the e-portfolio tasks by rating item 1's five sub-items (a-e) on a five-point scale, with the results displayed in Table 2.

The results show that most of the students had positive attitudes toward e-portfolios in general, as more than three-quarters of them rated their agreement with each statement at 4 or 5, as indicated in Table 2. More specifically, over 70% of the students strongly agreed that the e-portfolio tasks were good tools to help them learn (a), and 64.7% of the students also strongly agreed that the tasks contributed to their experience of learning the Korean language (e). In addition, 58.8% of the students responded that they strongly agreed that the e-portfolio tasks helped them develop their Korean language skills consistently and regularly (d). Furthermore, in response to the open-ended question for item 6 (What aspects of the overall e-portfolio task helped you to learn?), students

made comments including: “it got me more engaged in learning,” and “it helped me to be more consistent with what I learned in class and helped me to retain the information.” These positive perceptions are aligned with the claims of scholars who have characterized e-portfolios as beneficial due to being engaging (Gray, 2008; Schmitz, Whitson, Heest, & Maddaus, 2010) and reflective (Goldsmith, 2007; Lin, 2008; Reese & Levy, 2009).

Table 2. Students’ Overall Perception of the E-portfolio Tasks

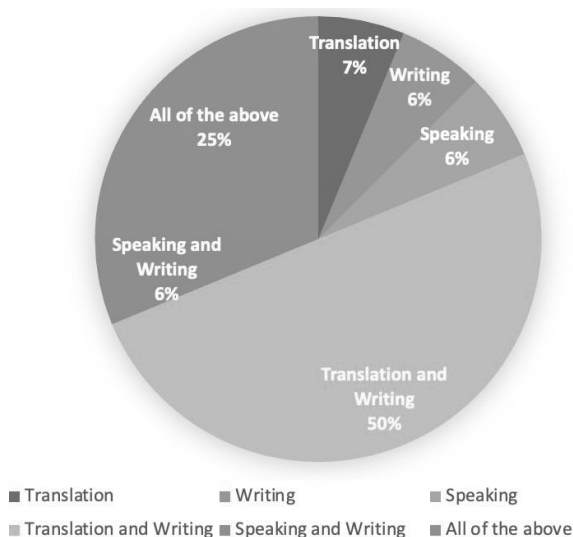
Statements	Student Responses (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. The e-portfolio tasks are good tools to help students learn.	0%	0%	5.9%	23.5%	70.6%
b. The e-portfolio tasks can show my efforts in learning Korean outside of the classroom.	0%	5.9%	11.8%	41.2%	41.2%
c. The e-portfolio tasks increased my willingness to learn actively.	0%	5.9%	17.6%	23.5%	52.9%
d. The e-portfolio tasks helped me develop my Korean language skills consistently and regularly.	0%	5.9%	5.9%	29.4%	58.8%
e. The e-portfolio tasks contributed to my learning experience of the Korean language.	0%	5.9%	0%	29.4%	64.7%

Moreover, 52.9% of the students strongly agreed that the e-portfolio tasks increased their willingness to learn actively (c). The willingness to learn actively is related to student motivation; several scholars have pointed out that e-portfolios can be motivational because they encourage students' ownership of their own learning and of their own efforts to improve their skills (Akçıl & Arap, 2009; Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010; Rhodes, 2011). The statement that had the lowest number of "strongly agree" ratings was (b), that is, that the tasks could show the efforts they made in learning Korean outside of the classroom (41.2%). However, more than 80% of the students agreed with the statement (i.e., they rated it at 4 or 5). One of them mentioned that the e-portfolio tasks led them to study outside of class time, recalling Yastibas and Yastibas's (2015) argument that e-portfolios support learning outside of the classroom.

4.2 Students' Perceptions of Each Type of E-portfolio Task

The e-portfolio tasks were designed to enhance students' reading, writing, and speaking skills, and items 2-7 on the end-of-the-semester survey sought students' feedback in order to understand whether the students felt the tasks functioned as intended. Students were asked to choose the most helpful type(s) of e-portfolio tasks and to state what aspects of each task type helped them to learn. They were also asked to describe any modifications they would suggest for the tasks.

Figure 2. Students' Perceptions of the Most Helpful E-Portfolio Task Types



First, 50% of the students perceived the translation and writing tasks as the most helpful, while 25% responded that all three task types were helpful, as presented in Figure 2.

Regarding the translation tasks, several students appreciated how this task type helped them to learn new vocabulary words in sentences, develop their ability to understand written Korean text, and switch between Korean and English faster. Their comments included the following: “thinking about the grammar and structure of the sentences in Korean vs. English was really helpful,” “it helped me learn new vocab and see more examples of how to use certain grammar points that weren’t in the book,” “my ability to understand written Korean increased a lot over the semester,” and “being forced and considering more complex sentences was very helpful.”

In addition, students were able to apply what they learned in class to aspects of their own life through the writing tasks. Regarding the writing tasks, their remarks included: “the writing tasks helped us to incorporate the grammar we learned in class into the writing assignments ... and contextualize

those grammar points and think more critically about how to use them in a sentence,” “the feedback from the professor made sure I was actually using them correctly,” and “it helps me retain the key expressions in my mind.” As these student responses suggest, although time constraints limited in-class practice of reading and writing skills, the e-portfolio tasks not only led them to take the time to read and write Korean text outside of class time, but also offered them a space to store a record of their work, the instructor’s feedback on their work, and their interactions with the instructor. Further, these activities, while engaging and interactive, also saved the instructor’s and students’ time and energy (Yastibas & Yastibas, 2015), as they were not required to be physically present in a classroom at a set time for these activities, but were able to work virtually and remotely.

Second, even though only a small number of students answered that the speaking tasks were the most helpful, they still provided positive feedback on this task type. The feedback emphasized the importance of speaking practice on a regular basis and the usefulness of watching peers’ videos. For

example, students mentioned: “I really like that we would record our writings because it helped with practicing speaking,” “It helped me to become more comfortable with speaking Korean,” “it forced me to regularly speak, which I have trouble doing otherwise because I tend to be embarrassed by my abilities,” and “seeing everyone else’s sentences was helpful.”

Finally, students suggested the addition of listening practice and one pointed out a technical problem to be addressed for future e-portfolio tasks. To add listening practice activities to the e- portfolio tasks, students could be provided with audio files, which they could listen to and transcribe. The instructor could then provide feedback on their transcriptions, as for the translation and writing tasks. Students could come back to their e-portfolios whenever they wanted to listen to the audio files again and practice more. As for the technical issue, one student explained that “the document starts to slow down my browser due to its size, since over time the e-portfolio gets bigger as we go through the chapters.” The student suggested that a possible modification to address this issue would be

separating the files for each chapter. However, this approach could cause another issue by making the e-portfolios harder to organize and search, thus weakening some of their key benefits. Instead, finding other online tools or platforms that perform more efficiently could be an option for the future; this possibility points to the advantages of using an internet-based portfolio project in a high-technology environment.

5. Conclusion

The current study shows how students perceived e-portfolio tasks in an advanced Korean language class. Throughout the semester, they participated in the tasks, which comprised translation, writing, and speaking activities. Nine translation and writing tasks were completed on their individual e-portfolios using Google Docs, and another nine speaking tasks were uploaded to the class e-portfolio on an online platform called Padlet. For all the tasks, the instructor provided feedback, and for the class e-portfolio tasks, the instructor and students interacted with each other by leaving comments. At the end of the semester, students evaluated the

e-portfolio tasks by completing an online survey.

The results indicate that the students had positive attitudes overall toward the e-portfolio tasks, supporting previous literature's claims for the effectiveness of e-portfolios and their motivational, engaging, and reflective characteristics, in an online Korean language class context. Furthermore, among the three types of tasks, students evaluated the translation and writing tasks as most helpful, highlighting the fact that these tasks enabled the students to reflect on what they learned in class and incorporate what they were being taught into their writing outside of class time, while working on their own and virtually. Finally, based on the student feedback, for future e-portfolio tasks, it would be helpful to add listening practice and find another online platform that could reduce technical issues.

While the present study offers valuable insights into the implementation of e-portfolio tasks with an online language course, it is imperative to acknowledge and address limitations while also providing suggestions for future research. Subsequent investigations could benefit from a larger

sample size over an extended duration, employing a qualitative approach through detailed questionnaires, and incorporating measurable student outcomes to enhance the robustness of findings. Additionally, a comprehensive evaluation of the e-portfolio's effectiveness and efficacy can be achieved by incorporating both student self-assessment and instructor assessment utilizing detailed rubrics.

References

- Akçıl, U., & Arap, I. (2009). The opinions of education faculty students on learning processes involving e-portfolios. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1, 395-400.
- Arias, J. J., Swinton, J., & Anderson, K. (2018). Online vs. face-to-face: A comparison of student outcomes with random assignment. *E-Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching*, 12(2), 1-23.
- Bolliger, D. U., & Shepherd, C. E. (2010). Student perceptions of e-portfolio integration in online courses. *Distance Education*, 31(3), 295-314.
- Caner, M. (2010). Students' views on using portfolio assessment in EFL writing courses. *Anadolu University Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(1), 223-236.
- Davis, M. H. (2005). *Spotlight on portfolio assessment*. UK: University of Dundee.

Doghonadze, N., Dolidze, T., & Vasadze, N. (2021).

Comparing effectiveness of F2F, hybrid and online English as a Foreign Language learning in higher education. 11th International Research Conference on Education, Language, and Literature.

Goldsmith, D. J. (2007). Enhancing learning and assessment through e-portfolios: A collaborative effort in Connecticut. *New Directions for Student Services*, 119, 31-42.

Gray, L. (2008). Effective practice with e-portfolios. *JISC*, 5-40.

Javanmard, Y. & Farahani, H. (2012). Investigating using portfolio assessment and learning English language in Qom Secondary Schools. *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 12(12), 52-60.

Lin, Q. (2008). Preservice teachers' learning experiences of constructing e-portfolios online. *Internet and Higher Education*, 11, 194-200.

Lorenzo, G., & Ittelson, J. (2005). An overview of e-portfolios. *Educause Learning Initiative*, 1-27.

- Reese, M., & Levy, R. (2009). Assessing the future: E-portfolio trends, uses, and options in higher education. *ECAR Research Bulletin*, 2009(4), 1-12.
- Rhodes, T. L. (2011, January/February). Making learning visible and meaningful through electronic portfolios. *Change*, 6-13.
- Schmitz, C. C., Whitson, B. A., Heest, A. V., & Maddaus, M. A. (2010). Establishing a usable electronic portfolio for surgical residents: Trying to keep it simple. *Journal of Surgical Education*, 14-18.
- Sing, C. K. S. & Samad, A. A. (2013). The use of portfolio as an assessment tool in the Malaysian L2 classroom. *International Journal of English Language Education*, 1(1), 94-108.
- Shin, S-C. (2020). A Case Study of Portfolio Assessment in a KSP Course. *Journal of Korean Language Education*, 31, 75-103.

Yastibas, A. E., & Yastibas, G. C. (2015). The use of e-portfolio-based assessment to develop students' self-regulated learning in English language teaching. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 176, 3-13.

Appendix A – Online Survey Questionnaire

(Item 1 is adapted and modified from Caner 2010)

1. Please evaluate the e-portfolio tasks by rating the following statements. (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

a. The e-portfolio tasks are good tools to help students learn.

1 2 3 4 5

b. The e-portfolio tasks can show my efforts in learning Korean outside of the classroom.

1 2 3 4 5

c. The e-portfolio tasks increased my willingness to learn actively.

1 2 3 4 5

d. The e-portfolio tasks helped me develop my Korean language skills consistently and regularly.

1 2 3 4 5

- e. The e-portfolio tasks contributed to my learning experience of the Korean language.
- 1 2 3 4 5
2. Which of the following e-portfolio tasks was the most helpful this semester?
- Translation
- Writing
- Speaking
- Translation and Writing
- Translation and Speaking
- Writing and Speaking
- All of the above
3. What aspects of the translation task helped you to learn?
4. What aspects of the writing task helped you to learn?
5. What aspects of the speaking task helped you to learn?

6. What aspects of the overall e-portfolio task helped you to learn?
7. What modifications do you suggest for the next time the e-portfolio task is assigned?