

# Chapter 6

## Fostering Inclusivity in English Speaking Assessment: Insights Into the Washback Effects of E-Portfolios

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The present study explores the potentially beneficial washback effects of e-portfolio intervention for speaking assessment in an EFL class with a focus on inclusivity. Such data were obtained from the narrative form and semi-structured interviews with ten teachers and four administrators. The study's findings revealed positive washback effects. The teachers claimed a change of perceptions regarding the utilization of the e-portfolio assessments for students and the welcoming university climate that embraces all students' input while the administrators agreed on the possible advantages. This study pulls together stakeholder considerations showing that mutual influence, constant iteration and a high level of administrative support are required to maximize learning outcomes and maintain the deployment of e-portfolios as an*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Teaching and assessment are important activities in educational settings, and they should be employed for students at any level. An effective test not only points out how well students perform and their weaknesses but also indicates the level of efficiency of recent teaching methods (Ha & Duong, 2024; Henning, 1987; Tran, Duong, & Le, 2023; Tran & Nguyen, T. N., 2023) and overall pedagogical approaches. The effect on activities of teaching and learning, which is known as “washback,” is a main factor in determining how students learn and perform at school (Bachman, 1990; Cheng, 2005).

In Vietnam, traditional speaking assessments have been extensively utilized to gauge students' language proficiency. However, these assessments face limitations that hinder accurate and comprehensive evaluation. Vu (2021) notes that in-person speaking exams, while valued for their interactive and authentic nature, are often criticized for subjective grading, inefficient administration, and the lack of opportunities for review. Additionally, Hoang (2010) highlights that English achievement tests in many Vietnamese universities predominantly cater to non-English major students, focusing on grammar and sentence structure while neglecting the assessment of speaking, writing, and listening abilities.

This lack of comprehensive speaking assessment further exacerbates challenges within the exam-centric Vietnamese education system (Nguyen, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2014). The absence of speaking assessments discourages both teachers and students from investing adequate time and effort in developing these skills (Chen & Goh, 2011). Furthermore, the pressure to excel in standardized exams often leads to a reliance on textbooks and rote learning, limiting opportunities for authentic communication and meaningful language use (Duong & Nguyen, 2021; Duong, Tran, & Tran, 2019; Tran, 2013; Tran & Duong, 2024; Tran & Ngo, 2024; Tran & Tran, 2020, 2021). The lack of a standardized benchmark for English assessment also fuels debate among educators and policymakers, with concerns raised about the reliability and validity of the domestic language testing system (Phan, 2014).

As a result, although many Vietnamese college students may have enough academic skills (Nguyen, 2016; Tran, Duong, Nguyen, 2022; Tran & Nguyen, T. N. 2023; Tran & Ha, 2022; Tran & Pham, 2022; Vu, 2007), a major proportion still lack the speaking skills that they need for effective communication in real-life contexts, such as when interacting with foreigners or when being at the workplace (Duong et al., 2021; Ha, 2008; Le, 2016; Tran & Duong, 2020; Tran & Nguyen, D.M.T., 2023). This difference shows how important it is to find new assessments to test

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