

Exploring Teachers' Writing Assessment Literacy in Multilingual First-Year  
Composition: A Qualitative Study on e-Portfolios

by

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## ABSTRACT

This project investigated second language writing teachers' writing assessment literacy by looking at teachers' practices of electronic writing portfolios (e-WPs), as well as the sources that shape L2 writing teachers' knowledge of e-WPs in the context of multilingual First-Year Composition (FYC) classrooms. By drawing on Borg's (2003) theory of teacher cognition and Crusan, Plakans, and Gebril's (2016) definition of assessment literacy, I define L2 teachers' writing assessment literacy as teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices of a particular assessment tool, affected by institutional factors. While teachers are the main practitioners who help students create e-WPs (Hilzensauer & Buchberger, 2009), studies on how teachers actually incorporate e-WPs in classes and what sources may influence teachers' knowledge of e-WPs, are scant. To fill in this gap, I analyzed data from sixteen teachers' semi-structured interviews. Course syllabi were also collected to triangulate the interview data. The interview results indicated that 37.5 % of the teachers use departmental e-WPs with the goal of guiding students throughout their writing process. 43.7 % of the teachers do not actively use e-WPs and have students upload their writing projects only to meet the writing program's requirement at the end of the semester. The remaining 18.7 % use an alternative platform other than the departmental e-WP platform, throughout the semester. Sources influencing teachers' e-WP knowledge included teachers' educational and work experience, technical difficulties in the e-WP platform, writing program policies and student reactions. The analysis of the course syllabi confirmed the interview results. Based on the findings, I argue that situated in the context of classroom assessment, institutional factors plus teachers' insufficient knowledge of e-WPs limit the way teachers communicate with

students, whose reactions cause teachers to resist e-WPs. Conversely, teachers' sufficient knowledge of e-WPs enables them to balance the pressure from the institutional factors, generating positive reactions from the students. Students' positive reactions encourage teachers to accept the departmental e-WPs or use similar alternative e-WP platforms. Pedagogical implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are reported to conclude the dissertation.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, Po-Chun Victor Wu, Chen-Yen Alice Chou, and my lifelong brother and soulmate, Shaoyu Chen.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims at investigating second language writing teachers' writing assessment literacy by looking at teachers' practices of electronic writing portfolios (e-WPs), as well as the sources that influence L2 writing teachers' knowledge of e-WPs in the context of multilingual First-Year Composition (FYC) classrooms. According to The American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association (1990), there are seven standards that assessment literate teachers should meet in order to be assessment literate. These standards include skills in: Choosing and developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions, scoring and interpreting assessment results, using assessment results to plan teaching and develop curriculum, communicating assessment results to students and parents, and reorganizing unethical, illegal, or other inappropriate assessment methods (Brown & Bailey, 2008). Based on definitions of assessment literacy in the field of general education, writing assessment literacy refers to teachers' skills with developing, administering and scoring writing tasks, abilities of creating writing prompts suitable for the needed purposes, and abilities of comprehending uses and abuses of writing assessment (Weigle, 2007; Crusan, 2010). Another added argument in the realm of writing assessment literacy is that teachers should understand the difference between summative and formative assessment, and have the ability to read and evaluate highly contextualized written works (Crusan, 2010). An electronic writing portfolio, being an assessment and a pedagogical tool with its content determined by teachers' educational

context, will be the tool I explore in this project.

An electronic writing portfolio (e-WP), or called an e-portfolio, is a combination of writing portfolios (WPs) and digital platforms on the Internet (Hawisher & Selfe, 1997) that provide students a digital space to document, select, and showcase their written works throughout the semester. Purves (1996) defined an e-portfolio as a “a hypertext” (p. 135), Yancey (1996) defined an e-portfolio as the crossing of electronic *with* portfolios, Barrett (2007) stated that e-portfolios “uses technologies as the container, allowing students or teachers to collect and organize portfolio artifacts in many media types” (p. 438) —including audio, video, graphs, texts and so on. With an e-WP, students upload cover letters introducing their e-WP content, multi-draft for each writing project, receive feedback from peers and teachers, produce a final crafted revision, and eventually upload a reflection at the end of the semester. The goal of an e-WP is to encourage students to focus more on the process of composing rather than only caring about their final products (Callahan, 1995, 1999; Camp & Levine, 1991; Cardoni, Fraser, & Starner, 1994; Clark, 1993; Scott, 2005; Mulnix & Mulnix, 2010; Nicolaidou, 2012). e-WPs also allow teachers to integrate instructions with assessment. Teachers are able to provide timely online feedback, monitor students’ work, and check their learning progress via reading drafts, revisions and reflections on e-WP platforms. The information teachers collect from students’ e-WP documents will then help modify and refine future teaching plans in composition classrooms. As McTighe and O’Connor (2005) argued, formative assessment “provides specific feedback to teachers and students for the purpose of guiding, teaching, and improving learning” (p. 13). WPs, being a platform for documenting both students’ writing progress and teachers’ evaluation decisions, play



such roles in the classroom.

Over the past few decades, e-WPs have been gradually replacing traditional WPs because of their accessibility and convenience. Chen (2005) reported that e-WPs provide students with a digital platform that enables them to conveniently engage with their peers by publishing their work, commenting on each other's writing, and sharing their reflections. In recent years, the increased interest in using e-portfolios in higher education seems to be situated within institutional context. According to Yancey (2016), a recent national survey reported that over 50% of the institutions of higher education in the United States requires or engages students in using e-portfolios. With such growing interest in having students use e-portfolios, however, studies on e-WP uses in second language composition classrooms remain relatively scant. Available e-WP or traditional WP studies mostly examined students' perceptions of using e-WPs, but did not focus too much on teachers' perceptions, knowledge, and practices of e-WPs when they work with L2 students in their multilingual FYC classrooms. Teachers, who run the courses and practice classroom assessment, play a vital role throughout the process in which WPs are created and developed. Just as the MOSEP project (Hilzensauer & Buchberger, 2009) reported, teachers' role is especially important when students create e-WPs. Being the main practitioners who implement e-WPs in composition classrooms, teachers are responsible for guiding and coaching students along the e-WP development process. For L2 writers whose second language acquisition processes take much longer (CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers, 2001, p. 669) than native speakers of English, it is even more necessary to understand what L2 writing teachers know about e-WPs and what they actually do with e-WPs to help L2 writers' English composition.

Therefore, exploring e-WP issues from the teachers' perspective is necessary, and will add new information to the existing e-WP scholarship.

### **Statement of Problem**

Although teachers' roles are important when it comes to guiding students to do e-WPs, little has been known about how L2 teachers actually guide multilingual students to create e-WPs. As past studies showed that teachers' instructional decisions are made based on variables relevant to learners, teachers and specific course content (Breen, 1991; Johnson, 1992), understanding teachers' actual practices of e-WP will possibly reveal the various concerns and challenges teachers have about e-WPs, when teachers take students, pedagogy and curriculum design in particular courses into consideration. These variables relevant to teachers' decisions of e-WP will add more in-depth information to WP and e-WP scholarship, beyond current studies that only examined teacher perceptions of WPs/e-WPs (Lam & Lee, 2010; Moore, 2012).

In addition to investigating teachers' practices of e-WPs, this study also aims to explore the possible sources that may have an impact on teachers' knowledge of e-WPs in multilingual FYC classrooms. While past research demonstrated teachers' different perceptions of e-WPs, reasons that shape such different perceptions were not further discussed. As it is now recognized that teachers' knowledge is situated in the world of practices and affected by different contextual factors (Borg, 2003; Racelis, 2016), teachers' knowledge of e-WPs does not develop in a vacuum either. Rather, teachers' e-WP knowledge evolves, changes or stays static depending on their experience, and the experience usually varies based on the role e-WPs play in the immediate teaching context. Thus far, e-WPs have been either used by teachers voluntarily in writing

classrooms or implemented from the administration's end at different institutions. While it is possible that teachers who voluntarily use e-WPs already have some basic knowledge of e-WPs, not too much is known about how these teachers develop such e-WP knowledge. For teachers who are asked to use e-WPs due to administrative requirements, very few studies explore whether these teachers hold basic e-WP knowledge at all, whether there are sources that enable teachers to learn basic e-WP knowledge in order to fulfill the institutional requirement, or if teachers are actually pushed to accept the administrative policies without being given the chances to learn about e-WP assessment in the first place. Take First-Year Composition courses for example; Haswell and Wysched-Smith (1994) argued that composition teachers are always the last group informed when the administration office announces policy changes regarding writing assessment. "They blink an eye, and suddenly some victor is nailing a manifesto right on their classroom door directly affecting their programs and the lives of their students. The only recourse seems frustrated acceptance or angry protest" (p. 221). With teachers' voices being neglected but over 50% of the institutions in the U.S. are asking students to use e-WPs (Yancey, 2016), understanding how much L2 teachers have known about e-WPs and how teachers learn e-WP knowledge from various possible sources—including contextual factors—becomes important. Understanding the information will point a clearer direction to the development of L2 writing teacher education, particularly in the aspect of providing adequate professional training on e-WP assessment in the context of multilingual FYC classrooms (Hirvela & Belcher, 2007; Dempsey, PtylikZillig, & Bruning, 2009; Hamp-Lyons, 2006; Weigle, 2007).

Contributions of the study are two-fold. First, since past research mostly

investigated students' and teachers' perceptions of WPs/e-WPs, looking at teachers' e-WP practices will fill in the gap between what teachers *think* e-WPs can do and what teachers *actually do* with e-WPs. Finding out teachers' actual practices of e-WPs will reveal both the values and limitations of e-WPs from teachers' perspectives, moving on the conversations from merely praising the advantages of e-WPs to discussing how to make the most of the tool while acknowledging its shortcomings in the e-WP scholarship. Secondly, as previous research in writing assessment literacy mostly discussed teachers' knowledge, skills and practices of using large-scale testing tools in high-stakes testing contexts, exploring L2 teachers' knowledge and practices of e-WPs will add more information about L2 teachers' writing assessment literacy in the context of classroom assessment.

### **Overview of Chapters**

Below, I list the six chapters in this dissertation project. Chapter 1 defines writing assessment literacy, writing portfolios (WPs), electronic writing portfolios (e-WPs) and the difference between WPs and e-WPs. Chapter 1 also addresses the importance of teachers' roles in the e-WP implementation process, pointing out the gap that second language writing teachers' assessment literacy—especially their knowledge and practices of alternative assessment like e-WPs—have not been thoroughly explored yet. Chapter 2 reviews the implementations and studies of WPs from a historical lens. The literature reviews how traditional WPs were first launched and implemented in university writing programs and middle school classrooms, different WP studies, and issues encountered. The literature review then connects WP and e-WP issues to the concept of L2 writing teachers' assessment literacy. The literature review explains that although assessment

literacy was earlier defined as teachers' knowledge and skills in helping students prepare for large-scale exams (Weigle, 2007), the definition was later associated with teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices of a particular classroom assessment tool in classroom settings (Crusan, Plakans, and Gebril, 2016). I therefore conclude chapter 2 by situating L2 writing assessment literacy in the conceptual framework of Elements of Teacher Knowledge (Racelis, 2016), explaining how teachers' knowledge and practices of e-WPs may interact with each other. Chapter 3 presents the rationale of my research questions, the two research questions per se and the method. The research questions inquire about L2 teachers' different kinds of e-WP practices, as well as the possible sources that have been influencing and shaping L2 teachers' knowledge of e-WPs. The method section describes research questions, the context of study, participants, data collection process, and the data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 reports the results from the first research question, that is, teachers' different e-WP practices in L2 FYC classrooms. Chapter 5 reports the results from the second research question, that is, the possible sources influencing teachers' e-WP knowledge. Interpretations of data are given in both chapter 4 and 5. Chapter 6 wraps up the dissertation by summarizing the whole study, discussing the results, acknowledging limitations of the current study, talking about pedagogical implications and giving suggestions on future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thus far, there has been scarce literature that explores e-WP issues from teachers' perspective in multilingual L2 composition classrooms. In this chapter, I first review past WP literature from a historical lens, which describes how WPs have been used and studied in the contexts of L1 and L2 writing. Since WPs were first used as a practical tool and then studied for its viability and reliability as a testing tool, talking about its implementations first and then review theories which may influence its implementations as well as relevant studies, makes the whole historical picture clear. This section is therefore organized in 1) writing portfolio implementations and studies in L1 context and 2) writing portfolio implementations and studies in L2 context. In each section, implementations describe the contexts in which WPs have been used. Studies of WPs reported research findings when WPs were put in high-stakes testing context and classroom assessment situations. Conclusions from the historical review confirmed what Jordan and Purves' (1996) argued, that portfolios are actually theoretically different from large-scale assessment. I then argue that WPs actually function more efficiently when used as a pedagogical tool for formative assessment purpose, rather than being used as a one-shot testing tool in high-stakes testing situations.

Following the historical review of traditional hard copy WPs, I review research relevant to electronic writing portfolios (e-WPs) in the First-Year Composition context. I remind that even if WPs, including both traditional and digitized WPs, function better as a pedagogical tool, students still need guidance from the teachers so that they know

better about how to create an e-WP that matches their own learning progress and goals. Then I move onto reviewing research on teachers and portfolios. Research on teachers and portfolios contains 1) teachers' personal experiences with teaching portfolios 2) teachers' perceptions of portfolios and 3) teacher perceptions plus practices of portfolios, across different disciplines. The review later found that in L2 writing, only three studies (Hamp-Lyons, 2006; Lam & Lee, 2010; Moore, 2012) explored either teacher perceptions or practices of WPs, with Hamp-Lyons (2006) argued that teachers should learn more skills of using WPs in classroom assessment settings. Around the same period of time, Weigle (2007) brought up the concept of writing assessment literacy, defining writing teachers' assessment literacy as the knowledge and skills that help students prepare for written exams in large-scale testing situations. Yet, not until ten years later did Crusan, Plakans, and Gebril (2016) argue that, in addition to teachers' knowledge and skills of large-scale testing tools, writing assessment literacy should also include teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices of classroom assessment tools in writing classrooms. Thus, in the last section of this chapter, I review the working definition of writing assessment literacy and connect the definition to teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices in classroom settings. I then present Racelis' framework of Elements of Teacher Knowledge, which will be the framework I draw on to interpret the data analysis results.

## **The L1 Context**

### **Implementations of WPs**

The portfolio has its own history. It originated from visual art and architecture rather than from the educational field. The word "portfolio" can be dissected into two parts. "Port" means to carry. "Folio" refers to documents or a pile of papers. A portfolio,

therefore, literally meaning a briefcase carrying loose papers, is a popular form of documentation which artists, painters, or graphic designers carry around to show their masterpieces to clients or the public. When used across disciplines in education, a portfolio is defined as “a purposeful collection of student work that exhibit the students’ effort, progress and achievements...” (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, p. 60) or “a purposeful collection that tells the story of the student’s efforts, progress and achievement in given areas” (Arter & Spandel, 1992, p. 36). In terms of using portfolio in writing classrooms, the concept of a “writing folder” began in Great Britain during the 1950s and started to address attention in the United States in the 1970s. The idea of using a portfolio as a writing assessment tool emerged during the mid-1980s, when the process-approach paradigm was proposed to amend the disadvantages of the product-approach paradigm for assessing students’ writing. In 1986, while multiple choice tests and timed-essay tests were still dominant in the writing assessment community, Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff (Elbow & Belanoff, 1986a) proposed the idea of portfolio assessment and applied it to the writing program at State University of New York at Stony-Brook (SUNY-Stony Brook). This was a landmark event for portfolio assessment implementation at the college level in the United States. Since then, research on WPs began to spread.

**First-year composition courses.** At the university level, WPs were used as proficiency tests to fulfill the needs of exams and placement in First-Year Composition (FYC) courses. Directors and professors in charge of writing programs across universities had intended to use WPs to replace traditional impromptu proficiency writing tests, use WPs to place freshman students in mainstream composition classes, and used WPs as a testing tool for mid-term and final exams in FYC classes. The reason for creating the



Portfolio-Based Evaluation Program in the English department at SUNY-Stony-Brook originated from a need for a proficiency exam in 1977, which was used to evaluate freshman students' writing skills after they passed their required FYC courses in the university (Elbow & Belanoff, 1986a). Although the proficiency exam was once said to maintain rigorous testing standards, such as being highly valid in scoring, it was later criticized for not giving student opportunities to do multiple drafts. Since multiple drafts, revisions, discussions, and feedback are considered to be close to real writing situations, the portfolio-based evaluation system was thus developed in the hope of replacing the single-draft proficiency exam.

The portfolio-based evaluation system gave students clear instructions on the scoring procedures and what to submit. Each WP contained one cover letter and three revised writing drafts. The WPs were then graded by students' own writing teachers and teachers from other First-Year Composition classes, called the outside readers or portfolio readers, at the end of the semester. A grade lower than a C failed the portfolio and required students to retake their writing courses (Elbow & Belanoff, 1986a). Throughout this evaluation process, the system encouraged more conversations and interactions between teachers and students. Teachers were also given opportunities to get together with colleagues, discussing their grading process. Yet later, it was reported that teachers felt frustrated when students' WPs were flunked by outside readers. Similar reactions were heard as the evaluation system went on. There was a pass-or-fail portfolio decision dilemma between the in-class teacher and outside portfolio readers even if the teachers collaborated on the grading (Elbow & Belanoff, 1986b; Belanoff & Elbow, 1986).

SUNY-Stony Brook was not the only university that used WPs to place students or determine students' pass-fail destiny in FYC courses. Other universities also replaced traditional written exams and placement tests with WPs, hoping that students' performances could be evaluated more accurately. Yet, problems emerged when WPs, carrying multiple genres and drafts, were put in the position of placement tests and one-time written exams at several institutions. At the University of Southern California (USC), the Freshman Writing Program launched the portfolio grading system, because instructors and students found the previous one-shot writing test in the final exam unsatisfactory and too anxiety-provoking. The portfolio system allowed students to submit revised papers in their mid-term and final portfolios. Students' WPs were then graded by their in-class instructors as well as one outside reader, who did not know the students personally. However, after the portfolio grading system started, the writing center at USC was flocked by students during midterm and final exam periods because everyone wanted to get a good passing grade with their revised final draft in the portfolios (Clark, 1993). At the University of Michigan, the English Composition Board used the writing portfolio system for matriculation, placement and exit assessment. Several disadvantages of such WP uses emerged. For instance, students' authorship was questioned because they may have had help from peers and teachers for revision in their submitted portfolios. When raters who read portfolios were mainly professors from the humanity fields, raters did not feel confident enough to judge the qualities of lab reports or creative writing pieces submitted from students in science and literature areas. Some teachers also reported that it was hard to exempt students from FYC courses via WPs, because multiple writing samples might show different qualities of writing even if all the

drafts came from the same author (Condon & Hamp-Lyons, 1991; Willard-Traub, Decker, Reed, & Johnston, 1999).

In addition to the difficulties that university writing programs encountered due to the characteristics of WPs, the way that WPs were graded also aroused some disagreement among faculty members in other universities. For example, some professors at the University of Minnesota resisted using WPs because they preferred multiple-choice tests on grammar, which would make scoring easier (Anson, Brown, & Bridwell-Bowles, 1988). At the Ohio State University at Marion, the WP system was also implemented in the writing program, yet aroused resistance by some senior faculty members because they did not want outsiders to interfere with their grading procedures (Dickson, 1991). From these uses, it is inferred that although writing programs and universities had intended to replace traditional placement tests and impromptu written exams, WPs were actually used as proficiency tests. Even though the teachers and students followed the process-approach pedagogy, grading issues remained. The pass-or-fail grading policy still pressured students. The decisions made by in-class instructors and outside readers may have conflicted, and thus affected whether students could pass their FYC courses or not. Some teachers also disagreed with the idea of deciding students' grades with others because they did not want their own classes to be interfered with by colleagues. When WPs were used as mid-term and final exams, students became obsessed with revisions but did not necessarily improve their quality of drafts. In summary, when WPs were used as proficiency tests in the context of First-Year Composition classes, they did not seem to lessen teachers' and students' burdens with teaching and learning writing. Instead, WPs' multiple-draft characteristics seemed to bring more troubles because of the increasing

load of grading, revisions, and the difficult decisions to pass, fail, or exempt students from the course.

**Large-scale writing exams.** The issues generated by WPs as proficiency tests at university levels did not seem to stop the trend of using WPs in larger writing exams at high schools. Instead, problems happened in aforementioned universities also happened in high schools, and became more complicated when the WP grades determined students' future academic path. In late 1990s, there was a continuous belief that WPs could resolve many problems, which traditional impromptu writing tests could not resolve—including those high-stakes tests at elementary and high school levels. Therefore, WPs were implemented in cross-district and statewide writing exams, which determined students' future. The two most well-known examples, were the state portfolio test in Kentucky high schools proposed by The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) and the Vermont Writing Assessment Program. In the state of Kentucky, WPs were used as state level tests, which high school students needed to achieve the “Apprentice” level on the rubric to meet graduation requirement. Such usage caused negative results. According to the survey, almost two-thirds of the attending students did not think the portfolio testing system was useful. Students did not know how to rate their own writings even though they were provided with self-assessment scoring guide. Many students were also stressed out by the system because multiple drafts took them too much time when they had to prepare for exams in other subjects for graduation (Stroble, 1993; Spalding & Cummins, 1998; Callahan, 1999). It was also argued that portfolio scoring did not reach the consistent standard large-scale testing required in high-stakes testing context (Callahan, 1995). The Vermont Writing Assessment: THE PORTFOLIO project was implemented

at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in elementary schools in Vermont. At the beginning, WPs were used only in schools to evaluate the qualities of writing programs. Students compiled writing samples from different disciplines, described the processes they went through as reflections, and wrote plans for revisions. Yet later, when the Vermont Writing Assessment: THE PORTFOLIO project used WPs for statewide writing assessment, things did not work out as expected. Students' WPs included drafts they composed in classrooms, homes, and in impromptu testing conditions. Analytical scales were applied to score WPs. However, because there were subjects other than writing that used portfolios at elementary school level, the speed of compiling portfolios across schools was usually not on the same page. As a result, some schools did not successfully have all students complete portfolios (Murphy & Smith, 1991; Freedman, 1993). The state portfolio test in Kentucky high schools and THE PORTFOLIO project indicated the fact that, when WPs were applied to high-stakes large scale testing situations, the process-approach features of WPs seemed to burden both the teachers' and students' workloads. The negative responses and issues generated by WPs in large-scale exams were almost the same as those in FYC courses and proficiency tests in universities. Using WPs as tests and exams, therefore, did not seem to be very appropriate WP implications.

**A pedagogical tool in writing classrooms.** Approximately at the same period when WPs were used to for proficiency test and large-scale exams, another group of scholars maintained that WPs should be a learning tool instead of a testing tool. The argument was that when WPs were mainly used in writing classrooms, they positively influenced curriculum, helped teachers evaluate students' writing from a non-traditional testing perspective, and pushed students to reflect on their own writing processes. For

example, instructors at New Mexico State University delayed to assign grades and provided feedback to help students revise. Letter grades were later given to students' final revised drafts (Burnham, 1986). Bishop (1989) used WPs in technical writing classes. Students in this class revised multiple drafts, gave each other feedback, conferenced with teachers, and self-critiqued their own writings. Winograd and Jones (1992) argued that WPs encouraged students' reflection, enhanced self-regulations, learning strategy uses, and metacognitive awareness. Most importantly, Winograd and Jones made it clear that writing portfolios work best when they are used as pedagogical tools:

...we believe that portfolios are *most* effective when they are used to learn about individual students. We further believe that portfolios are *least* effective when they are used to gain some sense of group performance... it is our belief that portfolio assessment is most powerful and most appropriate when it is used by individual students, teachers and parents" (Winograd & Jones, 1992, p. 42).

The innate difference between WP effects in individual classrooms and in larger writing exam contexts did not only apply to writing classrooms at university levels. The well-known ART PROPEL project in Pittsburgh middle school districts proposed using WPs in classroom context as well. Writing portfolios in this project were defined as "local portfolios," in which students documented drafts in writing classrooms (Freedman, 1993, p. 39). Students revisited, reflected, and revised drafts periodically to assess how well they had been developing their own writings. WPs developed under the ART PROPEL generated positive responses from both students and teachers. It was concluded that the project "would not thrive in a setting that did not include ample opportunities for writing, reflecting and revising" (Murphy & Smith, 1991, p. 21).

Similar beliefs took place in other writing classrooms at elementary schools and high schools across grade levels. Teachers focused on portfolio characteristics including reflections, revisions, and self-assessment. Teachers reported that during the portfolio compiling process, students learned to set learning goals, monitor composing processes, reflect via draft revisions, facilitate metacognition and meanwhile, gain a sense of ownership because students had chances to participate in self-assessment (Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991; Yancey, 1992; Grave & Sunstein, 1992; Glazer & Brown, 1993; Paris & Ayres, 1994; Murphy, 1994b; Porter & Cleland, 1995). The aforementioned examples inferred that under the classroom context, teachers have more time to focus on each important portfolio characteristics that may help with students' writing processes. Grading is no longer the priority in these portfolios. Multi-drafting became less stressful because it did not influence students' destinies in the format of high-stakes exams. Instead, the whole portfolio construction process happening in classrooms enabled students to slow down, revise, discover their own advantages and shortcomings in writing, and thus develop self-assessment and metacognitive skills. In writing classrooms, it was also mentioned that the content of WPs can be part of the curriculum and vary depending on the teachers' purposes. For example, basic learners who mainly practice writing sentence levels can collect worksheets in their portfolios, instead of compiling complete writing samples. If the instructor focuses on polishing students' rhetorical skills, students may be encouraged to put in genres which audience's responses are important, such as poems or expressive essays. If the students are advanced learners who are able to practice cognitive and metacognitive awareness in writing, the instructor can then ask students to include revisions, reflective essays and self-assessment reports. By including

these documents, students can demonstrate how they have improved over the process in a clear manner. Portfolios can also be defined as literacy portfolios, writing portfolios, learning portfolios or self-reflective portfolios. Each kind of portfolio holds different entries that help students work toward different goals in composition (Paris & Ayres, 1994; Johns, 1997; Murphy, 1994a). In summary, the ways in which WPs can be used as pedagogical tools in writing classrooms are diverse. When used for pedagogical purposes, WPs seemed to give teachers and students more time and space to explore the process approach in writing.

### **Studies of WPs**

In addition to the aforementioned WP implementations, there are also WP studies in L1 writing context. WPs have been studied in two main directions. One direction went to how effective WPs are when used as a proficiency test tool. Issues included whether WP content could be measured, and how valid and reliable WPs are. The other direction went to students' and teachers' responses, after using WPs in writing classrooms.

**Measure WPs through traditional testing principles.** Since WPs were first launched in First-Year Composition courses, scholars not only used WPs, but also wanted to know how feasible WPs can be as a tool for proficiency tests. In the L1 context, WP studies took place in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools as well as college writing classes. Studies done in first-year composition courses at colleges generated both positive and negative responses. Some other studies focused on the psychometric features of WPs, such as whether portfolios drafts scores can be compared with one-time writing essays scores, whether rubrics can be used to score WP, and the validity, and reliability and generalizability issues of WPs. In Baker (1993), participants received two kinds of



instructions in freshman English composition classes: The portfolio based approach and the standard process approach. The way WPs were implemented and evaluated resembled the design in Elbow and Belanoff's (1986a, 1986b) portfolio system at SUNY-Stony Brook. Both groups wrote six to eight essays over the sixteen-week long semester and took impromptu essay tests for the final exam. Participants in the portfolio based approach group received additional teachers' and peers' feedback during multi-drafting process. Teachers also delayed grading in the portfolio approach group. Students' WPs were scored by both their classroom instructors and teachers from other classes. Results found both positive responses from students and side effects teachers observed. There was a significant relationship between students' portfolio evaluation grade and their final grade in that composition class. According to survey results, students in the portfolio group positively mentioned that teachers should continually use WPs in future freshman English classes. Yet according to some teachers' observations, delayed revisions seemed to cause students procrastinate submitting due drafts, and the endless revision process also inflated the value of grades. The rest of the study described criticisms WPs have generated, which resembled to the issues reported in other portfolio implementation literature. Issues included teachers' difficulties with reading all portfolio drafts in a short period of time, how fair the final portfolio evaluations were when grades were given by in-house instructors and outside readers, and the multiple factors within a portfolio that failed or passed students. Similar situations happened in Roemer, Schultz, and Durst (1991), where WP were applied to writing program in a large university and different students may score an A, B, or C for their WPs. There were also "borderline portfolios" or "failing portfolios" (p. 465), which students brought in nervously to conference with

their teachers. Although teachers agreed that WPs assess students' writing abilities more accurately than traditional one-shot exams, they also mentioned that there should be limitations on revisions. The issue that there were difficulties in grading seemed to be supported by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (1993). It was reported that more texts and genres within a portfolio made holistic scoring more difficult, because qualities of writing may differ from genre to genre. In this way, deciding whether to pass or fail students via WPs actually became harder, not easier.

While WP studies from FYC courses reported grading and revision issues, WP studies at elementary and secondary school across districts explored how feasible grading was in writing portfolios, and how to make portfolio assessment as valid, reliable and objective as traditional writing tests are. Those studies have applied analytical rubrics to score writing portfolios. The main purpose was to investigate how feasible rubrics are to score portfolios, and whether writing portfolios are reliable, valid and generalizable assessment tools like standardized writing tests are. Three main results were reported. First, large-scale writing portfolios, although applicable across classrooms, their unified formats and contents in convenience of comparison conflict with individual teachers' instructional plans. Second, mixed genres in one writing portfolio made holistic scoring difficult. Thus, it was hard to assign a single score to a portfolio. Third, although different drafts within one writing portfolio could be scored by common rating scales to satisfy reliability, validity and generalizability of portfolios, it was hard to rate the degree of progress students make throughout their writing processes (Gearhart, Herman, Baker, & Whittaker, 1992; Herman, Gearhart, & Baker, 1993; Freedman, 1993; Simmons, 1990).

**WP studies in writing classrooms.** In addition to studies in large-scale portfolio

system, WP studies in writing classrooms were also common. Yet, the results seemed to be mixed. While some WP implementations in writing classrooms were claimed to help students elicit reflective thinking skills, develop self-assessment abilities and gain authority, fewer studies reported the possible problems encountered in L1 writing portfolio classrooms thoroughly. In Richardson (2000), it was reported that even for native-speakers, students were conditioned by following teachers' command to revise drafts in portfolios. Despite grade levels, students from middle schools to universities had been trained to obey teachers during their learning journey. Students also depend heavily on grades to judge whether their drafts had met their teachers' requirement or not. When delayed-grading was practiced under the WP framework, students felt lost. Eventually, revisions for portfolio assessment became merely following teachers' comments instead of helping students become autonomous learners. Reflections and self-assessment were not carried out and students' agency was not developed.

Aforementioned results showed the issues L1 writing portfolio generated in different situations. When used as a screening tool to determine students' passing or failing destinies in first-year composition courses, grading and delayed revisions gave teachers and students a hard time. When WPs were treated as proficiency tests in large-scale writing exam contexts, holistic scoring and traditional testing principles made it difficult for raters to assign scores. When WPs were implemented as a high-stakes assessment tool that determines students' final course grades, it still stressed out the students, even if it was implemented in classroom settings. Those WP features originally expected to establish students' autonomous learning, including reflection and self-assessment, did not seem to function effectively because students were pushed to follow

instructors' orders in order to pass their WPs and complete the writing course.

## **The L2 Context**

### **Implementations and Studies of WPs in L2 Writing**

Compared with the L1 context, numbers of the implementations and studies of WPs in L2 writing are relatively scarce. Many L2 WPs were used in classrooms, and then studies came right after the uses. Therefore in this section, I combine the implementations and studies of L2 writing portfolios in one section, so that the whole discussion can be more cohesive.

In the L2 writing context, the uses and studies of writing portfolios followed the logic that had been applied in L1 writing—with some variations. WPs in L2 writing had been used and studied as an exit exam in composition classes, as classroom assessment tool focusing on reflection and self-assessment, or as learning tool emphasizing teachers' and peer feedback and revisions. The function of each kind overlaps. For example, Song and August (2002) found that students who had once failed regular one-time writing tests passed composition courses when their writing performances were assessed by portfolios. It was also reported that reflective essays in writing portfolios helped elicit metacognitive awareness in writing (Ostheimer & White, 2005; Dysthe, Engelsen, & Lima, 2007). O'Malley and Pierce (1996) proposed that in a writing classroom context, portfolios can be classified into showcase portfolios, collections portfolios and assessment portfolios based on different purpose of usage. Showcase portfolios require students to select their best work piece without presenting earlier drafts, making the writing process less visible in portfolios. Collections portfolios are also called working folders. Students compile all writing materials, including drafts, work in progress, revisions, and final drafts.

Assessment portfolios are the ones that studied most often in the literature, focusing on reflections of learning goals, peer feedback, teachers' comments, and student writers' self-assessment. Rubrics, checklists, or scales are used to evaluate performances for the tasks in WP.

The implementations and studies of L2 WP followed O'Malley and Pierce's (1996) classifications. Some results generated positive response from teachers and students. For example, Lee and Lam (2010) probed students' attitudes toward using WPs as both a summative and a formative assessment tool. Students' writings were found to improve via formative processes, which included student-teacher conferencing, peer feedback, and revisions. Meanwhile, student writers reported to be more used to receiving summative grades at the end of the WP assessment. Based on those findings, Lam and Lee concluded that strengthening portfolios' formative function was necessary. Lam (2013) also compared students' perceptions of using working portfolios and showcase portfolios. Draft qualities after feedback and revisions in the two kinds of portfolio systems were investigated respectively. Results found that students learned process writing better in working portfolios than in the showcase portfolios.

Despite the positive results mentioned above, however, many other WP studies in L2 writing constantly reported that students had difficulties in revisions, reflections and self-assessment. Analyzing two ESL students' reflective essay contents, Hirvela and Sweetland (2005) found that students wrote only shallow, short summative comments in their reflective letters instead of giving an in-depth analysis of their own drafts. Hamp-Lyons (2006) discovered that when L2 writers were required to revise, they might not be strategic enough to decide how much they can accept or deny feedback from teachers or

peers. Eventually, revisions in WPs did not seem to necessarily improve draft qualities, but rather decreased student's confidence and interests in L2 writing. Similar results patterns were found in Liu (2003), Hung (2006) and Fakir (2010). L2 student writers in these studies did not seem to understand the purpose of a reflective essay, so many of them did not know how to write one. Students also reported not being confident in evaluating their own essays, which made self-assessment less effective than expected.

Aforementioned study results seemed to point out that first, WPs are most appropriate to be used as formative assessment. When grades were given but did not play a major role in the portfolio compiling process, students seemed to benefit more from the process approach embedded in WPs. Second, despite the claim that reflection and self-assessment were the two most important features in WPs, there was no guarantee that students would know how to complete these two tasks without further assistance from writing teachers. In other words, even if classroom assessment like WPs seem to help students learn more about writing in a low-stakes environment, students still need guidance from teachers in order to understand how to make the most of WPs and maximize learning efficiency. For multilingual learners who come from different cultures and may not be familiar with the idea of WP assessment before, the way teachers introduce WPs, and the way teachers walk students through the WP creation process are even more crucial. The teachers' role is thus important when it comes to WP implementations—particularly in multilingual writing classrooms where students are from diverse cultural background, and need more detailed explanations of what a WP is, and how to create one. To understand the role that teachers play in WP/e-WP assessment, I review existing literature that associates e-WPs with teachers.

## **Teachers and Portfolios/e-Portfolios**

Thus far in the e-WP/WP literature, there are four lines of inquiries that explore e-portfolio issues from the teachers' perspective. One line of inquiry develops scoring rubrics for e-WPs, with the aim of maintaining e-WPs as a valid and reliable assessment tool (Lallmamode, Daud, & Kassim, 2016). Yet, with my earlier argument that e-WPs should be viewed from a pedagogical tool perspective instead of being viewed from a standardized testing perspective, literature that looked at the validity and reliability issues of e-WPs went beyond the scope of this project and therefore was not included. Another line of inquiry looks at e-WPs created by teachers, called *teaching portfolios* at either preservice or inservice stage in teachers' teaching career. There is also one line of inquiry that looks at teachers' views, thoughts, and opinions about portfolios, defined as teachers' perceptions of portfolios. Finally, one line of inquiry investigates teacher perceptions *accompanied with* teachers' actual practices of portfolios in classroom contexts. In the following sections, I review research from each of the above three subcategories.

### **Teachers' Teaching Portfolios and Personal Portfolios in Different Areas**

Research that looks at teaching portfolios has been done in different educational contexts, with a focus on how preservice teachers perceive the functions of teaching portfolios, or how perservice teachers create their own personal portfolios to experience their own learning before formally starting their teaching career. Teaching portfolio research covers a wide variety of disciplines, including TESOL, child education, general education, and different subjects at the K-12 level. For example, Kabilan and Khan (2012) investigated perservice TESOL teachers' e-portfolio contents in Malaysia, when these teachers were trained to use English to teach English and literature. Teacher

participants reported that e-portfolios enabled them to pay more attention to learning processes instead of merely memorizing information to take exams. But, unstable Internet connections, unequal qualities of peers' reflections, and time constraints were also three main reasons that decreased teachers' interests in using e-portfolios. Yoo (2001, 2009) had preservice early childhood science teachers at undergraduate level keep reflective journals, reflecting on the gaps between theories and practices they noticed over their preservice period. Hartman (2004) studied one prospective math teacher's beliefs and practices at an undergraduate teacher preparation program, by analyzing the content of one teacher's teaching portfolio. Chitpin and Simon's study (2009) had preservice K-12 teachers at an education program build up professional teaching portfolios in a reflective course seminar. Chuang (2010) required a group of elementary preservice teachers to keep reflective journals on an online weblog as e-portfolio platform. Other examples included incorporating particular curriculum designs with either e-portfolios or traditional hard-copy portfolios, and asking student teachers to complete the tasks based on the program requirements. For instance, primary school teachers in Hong Kong in Liu's (2009) study reported that portfolios helped them develop a better understanding of the Task-Based Teaching concept when teaching students Chinese language lessons. Berrill and Addison (2010) from a five-year Bachelor Education program in Canada, required preservice elementary and secondary school teachers to reflect the following seven categories in their hard-copy portfolios: Professional development, planning, classroom management, assessment and evaluation, special needs, curriculum areas of special interest, and extra-curricular contributions. Hall and Townsend (2017) asked preservice English teachers from Japan to record their teaching practices, teaching beliefs, and write



reflections on some critical incidents that may elicit practical and belief changes in their electronic teaching portfolios at a secondary school in Thailand.

### **Teacher Perceptions of Writing Portfolios**

In addition to the teaching e-portfolio research done mostly in K-12 educational contexts, another line of inquiry that explores teachers and portfolios is teachers' perceptions of how portfolio assessment may support student learning and teachers' perceived shortcomings of portfolios. Kampfer, Horvath, Kleinert, and Kearns (2001) surveyed teachers' perceptions of portfolios in Kentucky state, reporting that teacher participants from a special education program in Kentucky commented that creating portfolios time-consuming, and that reliability of portfolio scoring was doubtful in teachers' eyes. Other than Kampfer et al.'s survey study, some other more recent and available studies that described *writing* teachers' thoughts and opinions of writing portfolios (WPs) and electronic *writing* portfolios (e-WPs) at college level, seem to be Lam and Lee (2010) and Moore's (2012). Lam and Lee's study interviewed students and four instructors on their view of using WPs as an assessment tool. Instructors expressed that delayed evaluation embedded in the WP procedure seemed to push students focus more attentively on revision. By conducting an online survey plus qualitative interviews, Moore explored how L2 writing teachers perceived the accuracy e-portfolios measure students' writing objectives, and the degree to which L2 writing teachers perceived that e-portfolios may improve students' learning motivation, experience, and performances. Moore reported that some writing instructors agreed that WPs function more effectively when being used as formative assessment, but "did not add value or provide insights on learning, engagement and motivation for students" (p. 72) when being used as a

summative assessment. Instructor participants in Moore's also emphasized that the uses of e-portfolios should align with writing program administration outcomes in order to shed more lights on student performances in composition courses.

### **Teacher Perceptions Plus Practices of Portfolios**

Compared with studies that particularly focused on how teachers think about and perceive WPs and e-WPs in composition courses, there are also studies that investigated the perceptions teachers hold about portfolios when they have the chance to *actually use* portfolios, or called teachers' practices of portfolios. In a K-12 context where portfolios were mandated by the local school district, Hall and Hewitt-Gervais (2000) looked at teachers' perceptions and uses of portfolios, as well as possible contextual reasons that resulted in different uses of portfolios in reading and language art courses. Results reported that over one-third of the teachers perceive portfolios as an important tool to show students' growth and reflections overtime, but also reported that maintaining portfolios is time consuming. When it comes to portfolio practices, teacher participants in Hall and Hewitt-Gervais used working portfolios with students frequently for parents communication, student-teacher conferences records, shared students' portfolio information with reading specialists and documented students' drafts and research projects done via coursework. Meanwhile, reasons that affected teachers' portfolio practices were the different levels teachers taught in the K-12 context. Hall and Hewitt-Gervais reported that teachers teaching at the primary level and those who teach at the intermediate level asked students to include different contents in their portfolios. Teachers teaching at the primary level tended to require drawings or artwork, whereas teachers teaching intermediate level students required students to document research

projects or written reports as portfolio contents. In L2 writing, Hamp-Lyons (2006) conducted a case study by investigating how an instructor teaching a portfolio-based L2 First-Year Composition course give feedback to help students revise drafts. Hamp-Lyons argued that L2 writing instructors should learn more about classroom-based assessment, particularly learning about how to read student portfolios.

The aforementioned literature indicated that studies looking at portfolios and e-portfolio from teachers' perspectives seems to give more weight to teachers' teaching portfolios in K-12 education, whereas studies looking at teacher perceptions and actual practices of *student* portfolios and student e-portfolios in higher education are relatively scant. Similarly, in L2 writing context, studies on traditional WPs or e-WPs mainly focused on student perceptions, with L2 writing teachers' roles and voices rarely being revealed even if teachers are the heavily involved in students' portfolio creating process (Kampfer, Horvath, Kleinrt, & Kearns, 2001). Although Moore (2012) has looked at teachers' perceptions of e-WPs in higher education, a gap still exists in the literature, in that what teachers think of and believe in e-WPs may not necessarily match what teachers actually do with e-WPs in their classrooms. As the aforementioned literature review already suggested that WPs function more efficiently as a pedagogical tool rather than a high-stakes testing tool, and over 50% of the institutions in higher education are requiring students to use e-portfolios these days (Yancey, 2016), understanding what teachers are currently doing with e-WPs will reveal the kinds of e-WP knowledge teachers hold nowadays, which better ensures students benefit from e-WPs under the correct guidance. Simultaneously, since many e-WPs are implemented out of the institutional requirements, understanding the way L2 teachers develop e-WP knowledge and whether there are any

contextual factors constantly influencing teachers' e-WP knowledge, are essential. The possible sources that influence teachers' e-WP knowledge will illustrate a clearer picture of the elements included in L2 teachers' writing assessment literacy in classroom assessment. In the following section, I review the working definitions of assessment literacy, language assessment literacy and L2 writing assessment literacy. After that, I connect the definition of L2 writing assessment literacy with Racelis' (2016) Element of Teacher Knowledge framework, explaining how I will use the framework to analyze data.

### **Assessment Literacy and Language Assessment Literacy**

The concept of assessment literacy first appeared in general education at the middle and high school levels, referring to teachers' abilities to identify sound and unsound assessment performances in the context in which they teach. Stiggins (1995) defined assessment literacy as teachers, principals and administrators' awareness of "knowing what they are assessing, why they are doing so, how best assess the achievement of interest, how to generate sound samples of performance, what can go wrong, and how to prevent those problems before they occur" (p. 240). Later, Stiggins (2002) and Popham (2009) added that assessment literacy also included teachers' abilities of knowing how to make references about students learning from assessment results. Stiggins' and Popham's definitions indicated that assessment literacy covered not only teachers' knowledge of assessment principles, but also teachers' familiarity of how to apply those principles to appropriately assess students as needed.

Based on Stiggins' (2002) and Popham's (2009) definitions of assessment literacy, scholars in language education continued to discuss what assessment literacy means to language teachers, by using the term *language assessment literacy*. Language

assessment literacy was first connected more closely to the concept of high-stakes testing, which teachers are expected to develop and administer large-scale testing, as well as score and interpret testing results to evaluate student performances. During those processes, language assessment literacy is defined as teachers' skills of writing test items and test analysis, teachers' knowledge of background and measurement of certain tests, and the principles they apply in order to use tests on students fairly, ethically, and professionally (Davies, 2008). Such knowledge and skills about measurement and test analysis are relevant to applied psychometrics, and are viewed as an important element in language assessment literacy.

While the discussion of language assessment literacy focused more on skills, knowledge and principles that teachers need to know when using language *tests*, McNamara and Roever (2006), Davies (2008) and Spolsky (2008) brought up caution reminders. These scholars maintained that since language assessment has influence on student life and is inevitably associated with educational policies and society, merely discussing language assessment literacy by teaching teachers technical terms via the lens of applied psychometrics will isolate the language assessment from its social context. Following this line of argument, Inbar-Lourie (2008) maintained that development of language assessment literacy should be reconceptualized from a broader social-constructivism perspective rather than sticking with the psychometric-based testing culture and community. Inbar-Lourie then argued that training of teachers' language assessment literacy should reflect current needs of the society, take the context into consideration, and stress more on assessment *for* learning. Assessment *for* learning, contrary to assessment *of* learning, focuses on the formative process in which teachers

assess student performance along with the curriculum. Assessment for learning takes place in the context of classroom assessment, where teachers use information about students to advance students learning rather than merely checking on students' achievement at a particular time point. To achieve such goal, teachers follow several steps. They first inform students about the course objectives at the beginning of the semester. Throughout the semester, teachers provide students with feedback that is more descriptive than judgmental, use classroom assessment to build up students' confidence, engage students to self-assess their own performances, and encourage students to communicate with teachers as semesters move along. Both teachers and students continuously reflect on learning progress as the curriculum unfolds, and teachers should have the ability to adjust teaching plans in response to the formative assessment they are implementing (Stiggins, 2002; Leung, 2004). While Stiggins and Leung listed these characteristics of assessment for learning, Stiggins also pointed out that teachers are not ready to implement classroom assessment because they are not given opportunities to learn such type of assessment. Studies have reported that when perservice teachers from four-year training programs in Canadian universities were surveyed, their confidence level at classroom assessment was much lower than their confidence in summative, large-scale assessment. Participants in these two studies also expressed strong needs to learn more about classroom assessment skills, indicating that there hasn't been enough training given to teachers on how to implement formative assessment in classroom settings (Volante & Fazio, 2007; Deluca & Klinger, 2010). The discussion on teachers' language assessment literacy, therefore, stays in the realm of high-stakes, large-scale testing. Discussions and studies in teachers' knowledge, skills and practices of classroom

assessment remain unexplored, including L2 teachers' writing assessment literacy.

### **Second Language Teachers' Writing Assessment Literacy**

The definition of writing assessment literacy overlaps the definition of language assessment literacy. Yet, it also focuses more on teachers' knowledge, practices and skills in assessing students' writing performances in different contexts. Weigle defined L2 writing teachers' assessment literacy in three sub-areas 1) the knowledge and skills to construct, administer, and score any writing tests taking place in the classroom and then communicate the test results with students 2) the knowledge and skills to help students practice and get ready for traditional writing tests—mostly timed essay written exams like TOEFL, GRE, or IELTS—in the classroom and 3) the knowledge and skills to formatively assess students' learning progress as the curriculum moves along in the classroom. Weigle explained that for large-scale written exams, assessment literate teachers are expected to be familiar with the content of these timed-essay exams and be able to help students get prepared to take exams. For classroom assessment, writing assessment literate teachers are expected to develop clear teaching objectives and assess students' progress based on the stated teaching objectives throughout the semester (Weigle, 2007).

In 2016, Crusan, Plakans, and Gebril (2016) brought up the term “second language writing assessment literacy” (p. 44) when they studied L2 writing teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices of writing assessment at tertiary institutions in their national survey. Crusan et al. argued that in addition to the content and the procedures of implementing different kinds of assessment, discussions of L2 writing teachers' assessment literacy should focus more on “how this content is enmeshed with teachers'

knowledge, beliefs and practices” because these three factors greatly influence what teachers decide to do in their classrooms (p. 45). Using Borg’s (2003) teacher cognition concept, Crusan et al. also maintained that teachers’ prior learning experience and context both influence L2 teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and practices of writing assessment. According to the survey results, over 30% of the participants reported receiving very few training on writing assessment literacy compared with the training they received in other language skills. Institutional reluctance to give more training on writing assessment seemed to be the reason most participants attributed. Up to 90% of the participants reported beliefs in out-of-class writing assignments, and up to 80% of the participants believed in portfolio assessment. When it comes to practices, 80% of the participants reported having students do self-assessment, followed by 62% of the participants reported using writing portfolios in classes. 68% of the participants used integrated writing tasks, and about 60% reported using technology in their writing classes. Meanwhile, the survey also reported that writing assessment literacy is also affected by teachers’ linguistic background and years of teaching experience. For example, non-native teachers seemed to use more writing assessment practices than native teachers do. Non-native writing teachers also gave themselves higher ratings in writing assessment literacy compared with native speaker teachers.

While participants in Volante and Fazio (2007) and Deluca and Klinger (2010) reported teachers’ low confidence in implementing classroom assessment, the survey results from Crusan, Plakans, and Gebril (2016) seemed to indicate that L2 writing teachers are not only familiar with classroom assessment, but also are comfortable with using a specific type of classroom assessment tool—including student self-assessment,

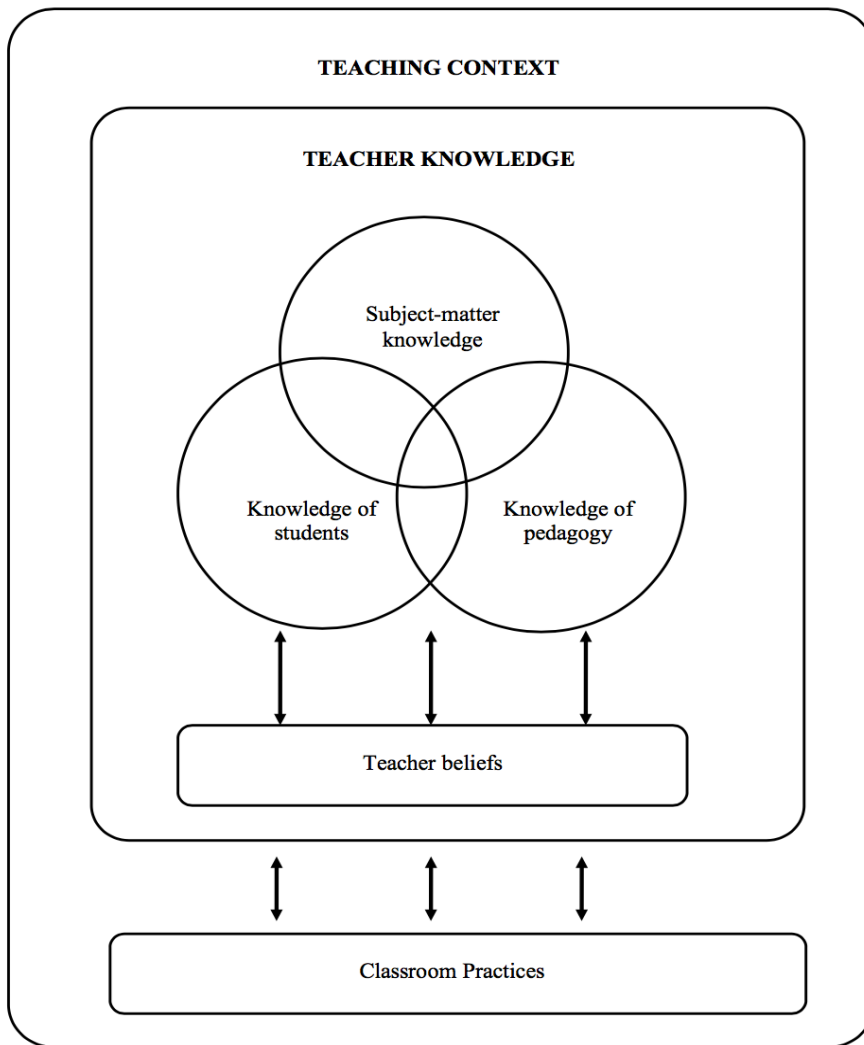


integrated writing tasks, and WPs. The inconsistent results between Volante and Fazio, Deluca and Klinger and Crusan et al. made me wonder whether there may be some opinions that teachers didn't have a chance to report in quantitative surveys, or whether it is possible that teachers believe in the benefit of classroom assessment, but encounter problems when they actually implement it in their classrooms. Because of those concerns, qualitative methods were chosen in order to investigate the issue from a more thorough perspective. Meanwhile, since an e-WP is a common classroom assessment type and there are needs to understand e-WP issues from teachers' perspectives, I choose a framework that allows me to discuss both teachers' knowledge and practices in classroom settings, in order to make sense of my data analysis. In the following section, I present the framework of Elements of Teacher Knowledge (Racelis, 2016) with explanations.

### **The Conceptual Framework of Teacher Knowledge**

Thus far in the literature of second language writing assessment literacy, teachers' assessment knowledge, assessment beliefs, and assessment practices seem to be the three most significant elements that affect L2 teachers' writing assessment literacy. Although Crusan, Plakans, and Gebril (2016) borrowed these three elements from Borg's (2003) argument and associated assessment literacy with teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices of an assessment tool, how these three elements relate to each other was not further explained in Crusan et al. Instead, the conceptualization of teacher knowledge was discussed in Racelis' (2016), as described in the section below.

Figure 1. Elements of Teacher Knowledge



*Figure 1.* The framework of Elements of Teacher Knowledge argues that situated in the worlds of practice and teachers' reflections of these practices, teacher knowledge is composed of teachers' knowledge of subject-matter, knowledge of students, and knowledge of pedagogy. Copyright 2016 by Racelis, J. V., 2016, *Exploring teacher knowledge in multilingual First-Year Composition* (doctoral dissertation), p. 15. Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

Figure 1 describes the integrated nature of different element of teachers' knowledge. By reviewing the literature review of teacher cognition thoroughly, Racelis (2016) proposed the Elements of Teacher Knowledge framework, which argued that

teacher knowledge is situated in teaching experience, teachers' articulated goals and their reflections of teaching experience, and meanwhile affected by institutional factors. The framework utilized Elbaz's (1981) and Clandinin and Connelly's (1987) argument, that teachers build up their "practical knowledge" (Elbaz, 1981, p. 43) within the immediate context of teaching. The framework describes that under the premise that teacher knowledge develops in the world of practice, teacher knowledge comprises knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of students and knowledge of pedagogy. The three elements are interconnected in nature instead of being mutually exclusive. Teacher beliefs can be seen as a kind of teacher knowledge, yet the main distinction is that beliefs refer to the more evaluative, affective, and judgmental side of that knowledge (Pajares, 1992). As the three aspects of teacher knowledge accumulate over time, they form into a belief system, which eventually determine teachers' pedagogical decisions and classroom practices (Kagan, 1992). Because my purpose here is to find out teachers' actual practices of e-WPs as well as possible reasons that affect teachers' e-WP knowledge, I focus on the elements of classroom practices and the three different elements of teacher knowledge in the framework. The element of teacher beliefs, due to its complex nature of personal values, evaluations and judgment, is beyond the scope of this study and is thus not discussed.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

The primary goal of this study was to explore L2 composition teachers' practices of e-WPs in the multilingual section of FYC classrooms. Following teachers' actual practices of e-WPs, the study also investigated the sources that affected and shaped teachers' knowledge of e-WPs along with the process of teaching composition. A qualitative, semi-structured interview and document analysis design was implemented to explore these issues.

#### **Research Questions**

Throughout my journey on researching portfolio issues, I gradually realized that what we need to advance in WP and e-WP research of L2 writing is not more studies of student and teacher perceptions of e-WPs, but more studies on how teachers actually use e-WPs. The two studies conducted by Hamp-Lyons (2006) and Lam and Lee (2010), though reported teachers' WP practices on giving feedback and using delayed grading, did not give teachers the freedom to decide what they themselves wanted to do with WPs. In these two studies, teachers did what the researchers told them to do, based on their research designs. The study conducted by Crusan, Plakans, and Gebriel (2016) surveyed L2 teachers' overall habits of using rubrics, integrated-tasks exams, technology, or self-assessment when assessing writing. However, the study did not specifically focus on e-WP practices. Even if teachers' knowledge and practices are considered important elements that form their assessment literacy, (Stiggins, 2002; DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Crusan, 2010) there are not enough studies looking at how exactly teachers implement a

particular assessment tool in their L2 composition classrooms, and whether any contextual sources affect teachers' knowledge of the tool. Since teacher participants in previous studies mostly used WPs by following the researcher's research designs, it will be worthwhile to take one more step looking at how teachers use their own practical knowledge to *voluntarily* decide what to do with WPs or e-WPs in their own composition classrooms. Simultaneously, as teachers' practical knowledge evolves in the context of teaching, it is worthwhile to find possible sources that may shape and influence teachers' WP/e-WP knowledge in a context where e-WP submissions are required, but the approach to create e-WPs would not be strictly constrained. With the aforementioned gaps and concerns, I addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' actual practices of e-WPs in L2 writing FYC classroom?
2. How does the teachers' knowledge of e-WPs shape?
  - a. What are the sources of influence?
  - b. How do teachers develop such knowledge?

### **Context of the Study**

This study was conducted at a public research university located in southwestern United States, during the spring semester of 2017. The public research university has a large writing program, which enrolls a great number of multilingual writers each academic year, offering various levels of writing courses for both undergraduate and graduate students. In the spring of 2017, the writing program offered around 500 courses with over 10,000 students. The offered courses covered first-year writing, advanced writing, technical writing, and business writing. All students, regardless of their majors, were required to take two-semester of first-year writing (ENG 101, 102), which allowed

flexible placement decisions. Students could enroll in ENG 101 and ENG 102 consecutively, or they can enroll in the multilingual section (ENG 107, 108) of the first-year program. The first-year writing course also included a stretch program titled “Introduction to Academic Writing” (WAC 101, WAC 107), which extended ENG 107 into a two-semester sequence of classes to better prepare students for completing their first year writing courses successfully.

### **The e-portfolio Submission Requirement**

Aligning with the mandatory English composition courses, the writing program at the university requires all students to submit a digital portfolio titled Digication. Digication is the default service that the university uses. It is a university-wide digital portfolio platform that allows students to upload work online. After a series of pilot tests, the Digication e-WP system is now integrated with the university’s online system, so that students can log in directly using their student accounts. In the present study, under the instructors’ guidance, students use the template created by the writing program and uploaded their self-introduction, rationales, three writing projects, and a semester-end reflection under different assigned modules in Digication. Every time a student takes a writing course, he/she is required to create a new digital portfolio on Digication for that particular course and upload the entire digital portfolio at the end of the semester. For example, if a student takes WAC 107 during their first semester, and moves on to ENG 107 and ENG 108 later on, he/she will have three separate e-portfolios in Digication.

Teachers are expected to help students throughout their e-WP creation process. After guiding students to apply the writing program’s templates to their individual e-WP page, teachers have to make sure that students upload all of the required documents in the

assigned modules. In addition to the writing program's mandatory three writing projects, Digication also allows teachers to create assignments, make comments, or grade students' work based on their curriculum. At the end of the semester, the writing program requests teachers to submit one student's Digication e-WP link for each section they taught. This mandatory e-WP requirement was stated in the spring 2017 Standard Writing Program Policy:

“All students will submit a portfolio of their work at the end the semester. This portfolio will consist of the final drafts of all major writing projects. This portfolio will be submitted as a digital portfolio. Additional information and instructions for submission will be provided before the end of the semester” (p. 6).

The writing program emails all faculty members at the end of the semester, to remind them about the e-WP submission requirement (Appendix G). Yet, other than the end-of-the semester e-WP submission, the writing program did not regulate how teachers should used e-WPs. Teachers were encouraged to explore and use all Digication functions based on their own pedagogical goals—including peer review, assignment submission, grading, creating new modules, and the like.

### **The Instruments**

The instruments used for data collection included a recruitment letter inviting participation (Appendix B), an early-stage online short survey (Appendix C), a background information questionnaire (Appendix E), a list of interview questions (Appendix F) for the one time semi-structured interview, and the teachers' syllabi. The recruitment letter gave a general introduction of the study and invited interested L2 writing teachers to participate. The early-stage online short survey was used for screening

purposes, ensuring that each interested participant had been teaching L2 composition and had some experience using e-WPs. The purpose of the background information questionnaire was to illustrate the characteristics of each teacher participant, including their education background, area of specialization, experience with L2 writers, and the kind of L2 FYC course(s) they have taught or were teaching at the time of data collection. The purpose of the semi-structured interview, as Seidman (1991) described, was to help researchers understand people’s experiences, and the meanings people made out of those experiences. This would “allow us to put behavior in context and provide access to understanding their action” (p. 4). Since earlier WP studies on teacher perceptions mostly used surveys, the semi-structured interview in my study aims to explore more deeply into the possible different kinds of ways teachers may implement e-WPs, as well as the reasons why teachers are taking such actions. Therefore, the list of interview questions was then designed to ask questions from multiple perspectives in order to elicit responses that could possibly match the research questions. Table 1 presents the different groups of interview questions designed to answer the two research questions.

Table 1

*Interview Questions and Corresponding Research Questions*

Research questions	Interview questions addressing relevant responses.
1. What are the teachers’ practices of e-WPs in L2 writing FYC classroom?	Where and when did you start to implement portfolios in your teaching career? Can you describe the process?  How do you use portfolios now in your L2 composition classroom? Could you tell me about the experience?



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	<p>What are some of the most interesting experience you've had when using portfolios in your L2 composition classroom?</p> <p>What are some of the most challenging experience you've had when using portfolios in your L2 composition classroom?</p>
<p>2. How does the teachers' knowledge of e-WPs shape?</p> <p>a. What are the sources of influence?</p> <p>b. How do teachers develop such knowledge?</p>	<p>How did you first learn about "portfolio assessment" in your teaching career? Where and when? Can you describe the process?</p> <p>What are some of the most significant reasons that affect your decisions of using/ not using portfolios in your L2 composition classroom?</p> <p>Do your opinions/beliefs in portfolios ever change/evolve throughout your teaching career? Why/why not?</p> <p>What are your views of the writing program's policy on the digital portfolio submission requirement at your current institute?</p>

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Table 1 describes the interview questions designed to address responses from each research question. The first research question focuses on teachers' actual practices of e-WPs, so the interview questions were phrased in a way that could elicit possible scenarios where teachers are most likely to use e-WPs in their classes. It was hoped that by asking

participants to discuss their experiences with using e-WPs at different points in their careers would encourage them to share true stories of e-WP practices, rather than only expressing opinions of e-WPs. To address responses to the second research question, one interview question was designed with the goal of encouraging participants to talk about the place and time they first learned about e-WPs. The other three questions were given in hope that participants would share their thoughts, opinions, questions, and concerns when implementing e-WPs within the institution they were working.

Aligning with the background information questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews, course syllabi are important documents reflecting how teachers structure their curriculum. As Glesne (1999) explained, documents confirm the information and increase more trustworthiness to interview results. Beyond confirmation, documents are also likely to “provide both historical and contextual dimensions to your observations and interviews” (p. 59). Therefore, the purpose of collecting course syllabi was to confirm that the participants’ policies of e-WPs were consistent with the responses given in the interviews. Syllabi analysis is therefore used for triangulation purpose.

### **Sampling, Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures**

Because my study explores L2 teachers’ assessment literacy in electronic writing portfolios, I used homogenous sampling when looking for participants. According to Dornyei (2007), homogenous sampling is chosen when the study aims for “participants from a particular subgroup who share some important experience relevant to our study” (p. 127). Thus, among the huge group of faculty members who teach various writing courses at the current institution, I looked for groups of teachers who have experience with L2 writers in particular. To fulfill such sampling standard, I began my recruitment

by checking the university's course system after my data collection application has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval letter, Appendix A). I obtained a list of teachers, who were either teaching multilingual FYC (WAC 107, ENG 107 or ENG 108) in the current spring semester, or who had taught multilingual FYC in the past two years. I sent recruitment letters inviting participation through the writing program's listserv. To encourage participation, I offered a financial incentive in the form of a 20-dollar Starbucks gift card for each participant. Nine instructors responded to my invitation by replying to my email and left their contact information at the bottom of my recruitment letter. I also visited the paper presentation session on e-portfolio discussion in the annual composition conference held by the writing program at the same university, where I introduced my study to the audience and invited participation. Three instructors attending the presentation responded positively. At the same time, three of my colleagues recommended me some other instructors, whom they believe are using Digication e-portfolio proactively in their L2 FYC classrooms. I followed my colleagues' recommendations and emailed those instructors. Six instructors responded to my email and showed a willingness to participate in my study. At this stage, eighteen instructors in total agreed to participate.

After obtaining the eighteen instructors' initial agreement, I sent them the early-stage short online survey questionnaire (Appendix C) via Survey Monkey. The short survey asked the instructors to check if they were currently using the program-required Digication e-portfolios, and how long they have been using WPs, either traditional or digital, in L2 writing classrooms throughout their teaching career. The purpose of this short survey was to make sure that each instructor has been, or was currently using some

form of WPs with their L2 students, and to exclude instructors who had not used WP/e-WPs at all.

Although the university's writing program requires students to upload their final drafts of each project, and requires teachers to submit students' e-WPs, the writing program does not rigorously impose any rules on how the e-WPs should be used throughout the semester. That is, instructors still have a great amount of freedom to decide how they want to use Digication e-WPs for teaching, how often they would like to use e-WPs, and how they want students to interact with them. Simultaneously, although the study design assumes that e-WPs on the Digication platform may be the most available and accessible option that most teachers would choose when they want to use portfolios, I did not exclude the possibilities that some teachers may use other online platforms that serve the same purpose as Digication. For example, Weebly.com is a website that allows its users to create personalized webpages or blogs. Google Docs, similar to Digication, allows users to archive documents. Google Docs also allows users to comment on other's work via chat textboxes. Thus, in order to grasp the largest possible variation of e-WP practices in L2 composition classrooms, instructors who checked "yes" for both questions in the survey qualified for the interview, regardless of the platforms they used, the frequencies in which they used e-WPs, and the ways they used them.

Among the eighteen participants who completed the survey, one instructor indicated that she uses e-WPs but does not teach L2 writers. Another indicated that she had some experience teaching advanced upper-division writing courses where the class had a mix of native speakers of English and international students. However, that

instructor did not teach the multilingual section of FYC courses. Since the study focuses on instructors who teach L2 writers in the setting of multilingual First-Year Composition, these two instructors were then excluded. Sixteen participants qualified for the study at the end and progressed to the interview and syllabi collection stage. Participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their identities. I then contacted each participant and scheduled individual interview appointments. On the day of the interview, I brought the consent form (Appendix D). After the participant agreed to be interviewed and recorded, they signed the consent form and filled out the background information questionnaire. Then, I conducted the interview, which usually lasted from thirty to forty-five minutes. At the end of the interview, the participant emailed me their course syllabi.

### **Participants**

Participants were sixteen teachers, including two males and fourteen females who were either teaching or had taught L2 writers in the writing program. Teachers who volunteered to participate in my study covered a variety of different faculty positions, including Instructors, Teaching Associates, and one instructional professional faculty member serving in the department. To qualify for the writing program's minimum requirement, all participants hold a degree of a master's or MFA in Rhetoric and Composition, Linguistics/Applied Linguistics, TESOL, English Literature, or Creative Writing. All teaching associates have taught FYC to native speakers of English for one year before they are allowed to teaching international multilingual writers. The following table illustrates the detailed background information of the sixteen participants:

Table 2

*Teacher Education and Area of Specialization*

Education: Terminal degree	Number of participant
Doctoral	3
Master	12
Bachelor (pursuing an MFA)	1
Area of specialization	
Rhetoric/Composition	6 (1 of them also specialize in TESOL)
Linguistics/Applied Linguistics	6 (5 of them also specialize in TESOL)
TESOL	1
English Literature	2
Creative Writing	1

Table 2 describes the participants' terminal degrees and their areas of specialization. Over half of the participants (12 teachers) hold a master's degree and three hold a doctoral degree. One participant holds a bachelor's degree and is currently pursuing a MFA degree. Among the six participants who specialize in rhetoric and composition, one has a specialization in TESOL. Among the six participants whose expertise is linguistics/applied linguistics, five also specialize in TESOL. Among the remaining four participants, one majors in TESOL, two specialize in English literature, and the MFA degree pursuer majors in creative writing.

Table 3

*Current Position and Length of Experience*

Current position	Number of participant
Graduate Teaching Associate	8
Full-time Instructor	7
Instructional Professional faculty member	1
Experience: Length of time teaching L2 FYC course	
Less than 3 years	8
3-5 years	3
6-10 years	3
11-20 years	1
More than 20 years	1

Table 3 presents the participants' positions at the current institute and the length of their experience with teaching L2 composition. Eight were graduate teaching associates, seven were full-time instructors, and one was an instructional professional faculty member. All eight teaching associates had less than three years of experience in teaching multilingual FYC. For the majority of the full-time instructors, including the instructional professional faculty member, their multilingual FYC teaching experiences ranged from three years up to twenty years, with one of them having taught multilingual FYC courses for over twenty years.

Table 4

*Course(s) Taught at Time of Data Collection*

Course(s) taught	Number of participant
ENG 108	7
ENG 107,108 & WAC 107	5
Taught ENG 107 &108 the previous semester	3
Taught ENG 107 in the past two years	1

Table 4 presents the diverse L2 composition courses the sixteen participants were teaching or had taught at the time of data collection. In the semester when the interview was conducted, seven participants were teaching ENG 108 in particular, which is an L2 FYC course that focuses on argumentation. Five participants were teaching more than one session of WAC 107, ENG 107 and ENG 108 simultaneously. Three participants were not teaching a class at the time of the interview (spring 2017), but had taught either ENG 107 or ENG 108 in fall 2016. One participant was teaching other upper division academic writing courses in spring 2017, but had taught ENG 107 in the past two years. In addition to the diverse teaching experiences, all participants had either heard of the

concept of WPs, had used WPs, or were currently using with them, including electronic WPs, in their multilingual FYC classrooms.

### **Data Administration and Archiving**

To archive and manage data in an efficient manner, I handled the large volumes of interview transcripts via a Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CQDAS) called NVivo. According to Dornyei (2007), compared with traditional folders, pens, paper, scissors, and highlighters, qualitative software allows the researcher to do multiple and overlapping coding on the same segments of texts more easily. After the first round of coding, the researcher is able to retrieve, read, and compare various combinations of coding from different transcripts, and then can move on to second-level coding when necessary. Consistent with Dornyei's description, NVivo provided me with a comprehensive list of all the coding. By reading the list, I was able to see the frequencies that each coding appears in different transcripts, and thus compare, combine, expand, or drop categories as needed. The ease of overviewing and organizing data via NVivo increased the degree of rigor during my data analysis process.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

#### **Interview Data**

When coding my interview transcripts, I referred to Dornyei's (2007) *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*; Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) *Qualitative Data Analysis Sourcebook*; and Saldana's (2013) *Coding Manual of Qualitative Researchers* to analyze data. Consistent with Mile et al.'s point of view, Saldana divided the coding cycles into two main stages: First Cycle coding and Second Cycle coding. Between the First Cycle and Second Cycle, there exists a transferring stage, called eclectic coding.



Eclectic coding transitions researchers from the First Cycle to the Second Cycle. At each coding stage, it is appropriate to apply one or more methods to analyze data.

The First Cycle methods are implemented at the initial coding stage, from which researchers select one or more coding method(s), based on the nature of his/her data.

Eclectic coding can be also viewed as open coding, referring to a stage where a “compatible combination of two or more First Cycle coding methods” (Saldana, 2013, p. 188) take place, helping the researcher transition from First-Cycle coding to Second Cycle coding. Once the researcher proceeds through the First Cycle and the eclectic coding stages, the purpose of Second Cycle coding is to reorganize and reanalyze data collected during the First Cycle, and then “develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual and/ or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes” (p. 207). Second Cycle coding, similar to First Cycle, has several different kinds of coding methods that the researcher can choose from, depending on the nature of their project and the collected data.

To follow the First and Second Cycle coding methods, I used holistic coding during my First Cycle coding stage. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) and Saldana (2013), holistic coding is appropriate when the researcher already has a general idea of what to investigate in the data. The method allows the researcher to code a larger chunk of text, such as a paragraph or several lines, in one coded unit, which is a preparatory step before more detailed coding later on. With my research questions ready, I was able to code the interview data in larger chunk of texts based on teachers’ lengthy descriptions of their practices and knowledge development of e-WPs. After the first-round of data analysis, I proceeded to the transitional stage (eclectic coding) by applying

in-vivo coding and subcoding to my interview data. At this point, all of the data had been holistically-coded. As Saldana explained, in-vivo coding allows units of analysis in the format of word or short phrases “from the actual language found in the qualitative data record,” (p. 91), so that terms used by the participants can be included in the coding. Such feature enables the study to “prioritize and honor the participants’ voice” (p. 91).

Subcoding is suitable when the first-round categorized data indicates subcategories and needs extensive taxonomies. By adding in-vivo coding, not only was I able to grasp the gist of participants’ answers from a broader scope, but also able to include the important details and concepts mentioned by the participants. Subcoding also helped me organize smaller ideas or concepts under larger general codes, giving detailed but clearer subcategories for potential themes that may emerge later on.

When the First Cycle coding and the transitional stage (eclectic coding) were both done, I moved onto the Second Cycle method stage and used pattern coding. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) explained that pattern coding takes place after the initial and transitional coding stages. This helps the researcher group larger chunks of data summaries into smaller categories in more meaningful units of analysis. Once the pattern coding is properly done, the more conceptually-meaningful units of analysis can later generate major themes from the interview data. I then read my coded data back and forth for several times. Based on the key words standing out from in-vivo coding, subcategories generated by subcoding and the big pictures brought about by earlier holistic coding, themes emerged from the aforementioned coding methods and became potential answers to my research questions.

In addition to different levels of coding methods, two major principles were also

applied during the process of data analysis. For my first research question, I read the transcripts several times to decide whether a response was relevant to an actual e-WP practice currently being used in the classroom, or whether the response was only a perception, an expectation or an assumption. For example, if the teacher mentioned “Digication,” “portfolios” or “e-portfolios” and gave concrete examples or tasks that he/she has been having students to do via e-WPs, I would count the response as a real practice, which qualifies for answering my first research question. If the teacher mentioned “Digication,” “portfolios” or “e-portfolios” along with words such as “think,” “hope,” or “feel like,” I attributed those responses to the *perception* category, and did not count them as an actual use of e-WPs. The following interview transcript excerpt is an example:

Participant: **I think** it...when we're doing all that development through the e-portfolio on Digication, **I think** that's helpful. But even if we're not doing that, even if it's, the toned-down version of the e-portfolio with their mostly doing, posting the final version of the project and the reflection, **I think** that act of reflecting and having everything in one place to look back on, that alone... If you can't see the process for each individual paper, **hopefully**, you can see the process or the arc over the course.

Researcher: I see.

Participant: And they can...**hopefully** see some developments in their writing... over time through multiple projects instead of just with one project, maybe.

(Interview 10)

In the aforementioned interview transcript excerpts, the participant talked about

the anticipated effect that she *thinks* e-WPs will bring to facilitate students' future learning instead of giving an actual example of how e-WPs have been utilized in her classroom. Responses like these are thus not considered answers to the first research question.

The principles of finding answers to my second research questions were more open-ended compared with that of identifying answers to my first research question. Considering the possibilities that phrases like “sources of influence” and “develop knowledge” may be interpreted from diverse perspectives, I relied on participants' answers to the four interview questions listed in Table 1 (also known as Question 5, 10, 11 and 13 in Appendix F) to identify possible legitimate responses. For example, places, time, and media from which teachers learned about e-WPs were identified as “sources” of influence. The changes, stories, processes, or struggles teachers have been experiencing when using e-WPs, as well as any reasons or factors that arouse teachers' attention during the e-WP use processes, were identified as a path where teachers “develop knowledge” of e-WPs. The following interview transcript excerpt illustrates such example:

Participant: ...there are students who didn't trust that their Digication work was going to be used in a proper way...I think it was kind of cultural in some ways...some students questioned, “where is my work going? Who's reading it?” because it's part of the [the university's name] Digication system, students were worried. So I had to talk to them a lot and say, this isn't what it's being used for. But then again, I don't know what cultural experiences they've had with their governments and their societies in other countries... so it was a valuable and a valued concern that I had and that they had. So I had to listen to that.

(Interview 15)

In the aforementioned interview transcript excerpts, the participant had been using Digication proactively until some of her students expressed concerns about publishing written work on the Internet. While the teacher still believed in the advantages and values of using e-WPs, and continued to have her students create e-WPs, her comments seemed to show that she thought about different cultural and political concerns as reasons resulting in her students' reactions. The teacher then concluded that she needed to listen to her students' voices. In the later section of the interview, this teacher also mentioned that she allowed students to publish written works on other digital platform that are not associated with the university, in order to respond to and respect students' concerns. Since the teacher cared about students' reactions, and such reactions seemed to draw the teacher's attention to the shortcoming of e-WPs, I defined "student reactions" as one of the *sources* that affect teachers' understandings of e-WPs. The negotiating process between teachers and students also developed teachers' knowledge of e-WPs at the same time.

### **Teachers' Course Syllabi**

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), triangulation refers to adding more than one data type to confirm findings. The purpose of triangulation is to use different kinds of measurements to ensure repeated verification. In addition to the sixteen interview transcripts, I also analyzed course syllabi. The purpose of analyzing teachers' syllabi was to triangulate the validity of the interview data and to confirm whether the participants' policies of e-WPs were consistent with the responses given in the interviews. Because the writing program requires all teachers to include the semester-end Digication

e-WP submission requirement in the “Standard Writing Program Policy” section in their syllabi, my principles of analyzing the syllabi have been focused on whether a teacher included only the aforementioned mandatory policy in his/her syllabus, or whether the teacher gave any extra information or descriptions about how e-WPs should be used in his/her classroom. If a teacher only included the writing program’s mandatory e-WP policy in his/her syllabus without giving any additional information about e-WPs, that teacher’s practices of e-WP were categorized as only meeting the writing program requirement. A teachers who explained writing program’s e-WP policy but did not have any other e-WP activities or homework in the syllabi, was also placed in the “meeting the writing program requirement” category. On the contrary, if a teacher gave additional guidelines, explained the purpose, and associated grading schemes with his/her WP activities/ homework, the teacher was categorized as “actively using e-WPs”, no matter how lengthy or concise their e-WP descriptions may have been. The extra information may include steps to create and compile an e-WP, steps to submit homework to the e-WP platform, grading policies, or daily plans for e-WP activities in class. Meanwhile, syllabi that contain extra policies and descriptions of WPs published in non-digital format, such as traditional paper-based WPs, were placed in the “alternative WP” category. Based on these principles, each syllabus was allocated to the “only meeting the writing program requirement,” “actively using e-WPs or “alternative WP” category. The categorization of different syllabi was later compared with each teacher’s interview in order to ensure that what teachers have claimed to do with e-WPs in the interviews actually matched their announcement and descriptions of e-WPs in their syllabi.

### **Data Credibility, Validity and Intercoder Reliability**

The coding of teachers' e-WP practices, sources influencing teachers' knowledge of e-WPs, and the way teachers' e-WP knowledge develop can be subjective and complicated. As Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) reminded, a good qualitative study must meet the standards of being creditable, valid, and reliable. Credibility can be reached in multiple ways, including triangulation and data being considered accurate by the original participants. In addition to analyzing teachers' syllabi for triangulation purposes, I also reaffirmed that my understanding of the interview data matched what the participants meant for each answer. When I was unsure of the exactly meaning the participant(s) intended to express in an answer, I re-confirmed with the participant(s). I would email the transcript to that participant(s) and asked for clarification, in order not to erroneously or subjectively impose my personal interpretations to the participants' responses.

Reliability is another way to guarantee the quality of data. As Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen (2013) stated, reliability in qualitative research is as important as that in quantitative research. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) maintained that an intercoder agreement check can be an adequate way to ensure reliability in appropriate situations. Thus, to ensure the reliability of my coding, a colleague, who was also a doctoral student specializing in rhetoric & composition, TESOL, and L2 writing, tested a portion of my data. I followed the formula given by Campbell et al. (2013) to calculate the inter-coder reliability score in percentage agreement. An agreement counts when both coders put a unit analysis under the same category. A disagreement, on the contrary, counts when the two coders put a unit analysis under different categories. According to the formula, I divided the number of coding agreements by the number of coding

agreements and disagreements combined. At the beginning, I shared the coding scheme with my colleague and explained how I defined the term of each category. Yet, being unfamiliar with coding standards and units of analysis, my colleague had a difficult time and there were disagreement between us. So after the first round, we reached an initial intercoder reliability of only 66%. To reduce confusion, my colleague and I discussed our decisions and clarified any terms that may have caused disagreements during the coding stage. Then I selected portions of interview transcripts one more time, divided the texts into units of analysis, and copied and pasted those units of analysis in tables. I explained to my colleague what each category meant, how I defined the terms in the categories, my units of analysis, and showed the units of analysis coding sheet to my colleague. Lastly, I asked my colleague to put the units of analysis into the six categories that I provided and then noted how often we agreed. With a more thorough review of our decisions, and clearer definitions of term meanings of each category, my colleague and I reached a 100% agreement of intercoder reliability at the end.



## CHAPTER 4

### TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF ELECTRONIC WRITING PORTFOLIOS

This chapter answers first research question by reporting the results of the interview analysis. I reported on the eight categories that present teacher practices for using e-WPs in L2 FYC classrooms. The analysis showed that 37.5 % of the teachers used Digication e-WPs with the goal of guiding students throughout the writing process, and 43.7 % of the teachers did not actively use e-WPs. Instead, they had students upload writing projects to their e-WPs only to meet the writing program's requirement. The remaining 18.7 % used an alternative platform other than Digication, throughout the semester. The alternative WPs could have been in either electronic or hardcopy formats.

### **Findings**

#### **Interview Results**

#### **Research Question 1: What Are the Teachers' Practices of e-WPs in L2 Writing FYC Classrooms?**

An analysis of the data generated eight categories of different ways teachers practically use e-WPs in multilingual composition classrooms. The eight categories are listed and described in the following several paragraphs. For each category, I briefly explain how the themes of each category are defined. I also present interview transcript excerpts as examples to illustrate each e-WP practice. In order to maintain confidentiality and to highlight the main points of the interviews, pseudonyms are assigned and some excerpts have been edited. Words in square brackets indicate the changes made in the

interview transcript excerpts

**Teach the concept of process writing.** The first category presents teachers who use e-WPs to teach students the concepts and procedures of process writing. The process approach here includes allowing multiple draft submissions, peer reviewing activities, and giving analytical assignments in order to help students produce a complete essay via an e-WP platform such as Digication. 43.7% of the teacher participants use e-WPs for those purposes. They ask students to upload rough and polished drafts to Digication. Students are also required to comment on their peers' work by using the conversation boxes in Digication, or complete assignments that help them structure their essays. The following transcript excerpts report examples from each use:

**Implement multi-drafting.** Kerry: I had them turning first drafts and I'll give them comments and feedback... and then the end of the semester they had to turn in a polished draft... Digication is how they... they turned it.

Researcher: Three drafts in total on Digication?

Kerry: Yep, and they also had a... description of ... kind of the process of writing of a draft, for each of the drafts. (Interview 1)

By using the e-WP platform, Kerry delivers the message that a rough draft eventually evolves into a polished draft with teachers' feedback and students' revision. In Kerry's class, students are asked to highlight their revisions via the highlighting function, which helped her to confirm that students were making revisions. After Kerry finished grading the revisions, students had the option to remove the highlights and re-post the essay, which was defined as a "polished draft" that read clean and professional. Kerry also mentioned that in addition to the multi-drafting process, students were also asked to

metacognitively describe their writing process for each project in their e-WP. This allowed both teacher and student to look back on the process student writers experienced when completing a project.

***Conduct in-class peer review.*** Kayla: So, I usually have students for each project, they'll start by posting their topic proposal, and just kind of a general idea -- what they are doing for that project...they'll later post a draft of their project...and when it's a computer mediated classroom, I have them do peer review in the portfolio itself,

Researcher: In Digication?

Kayla: In Digication. So they can highlight and comment directly on the text...and they then can leave and then comment. I usually ask them to do both things if they are doing in-class peer review. (Interview 10)

In interview 10, Kayla stated that she would often use e-WPs for peer feedback. In Digication, the function of peer feedback works when users select a block of text. The selected text will then be automatically highlighted, and a text box will pop up. In the text box, a line that says "Discuss this: type your comments here" appears (Figure 2).

Therefore, students can highlight and comment on any sections in their peers' work.

Kayla often reserves a computer-mediated classroom and requires that students give each other feedback right on the spot. Once the feedback is saved and sent, Digication lists the feedback giver's name, as well as all the comments on the right-hand side of the webpage (Figure 3). Thus, the feedback receiver is able to track the comments, and see who gave them. After reading the comments, the feedback receiver can revise their essay accordingly and upload their final draft. According to Kayla, the evolution from rough

draft to final draft becomes clearer and more visible, when she is able to read peer feedback embedded in a rough draft followed by a revision.

Figure 2. The Peer Feedback Textbox in Digication

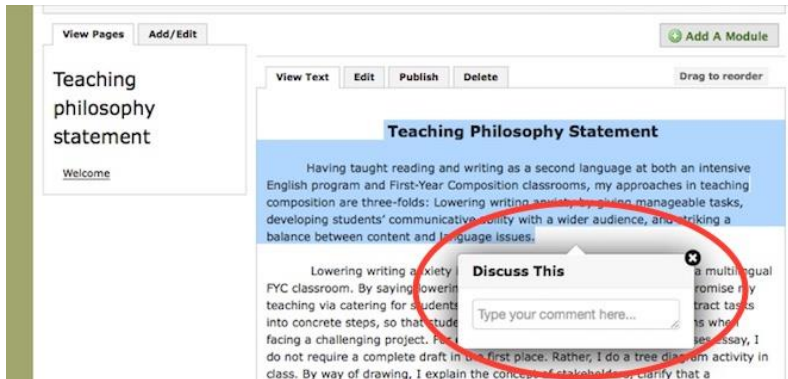


Figure 2. The peer feedback textbox in Digication. When a block of text is selected, a text box automatically pops up on the screen. The feedback giver then types his/her comments in the textbox. Captured from [www.asu.digication.com](http://www.asu.digication.com).

Figure 3. List of Peer Feedback Windows in Digication

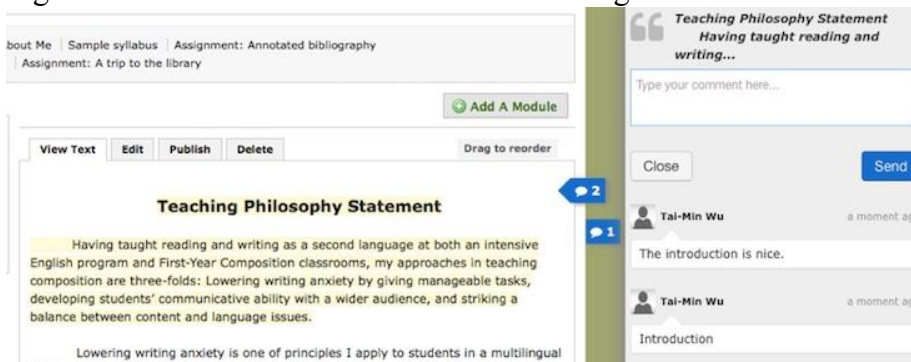


Figure 3. List of peer feedback windows in Digication. Once a feedback giver saves a comment in the textbox, Digication gives a list of boxes, with the name of the feedback giver and all the given comments on the right-hand-side of the webpage. The feedback receiver will see all the comments on his/her end. Captured from [www.asu.digication.com](http://www.asu.digication.com).

**Create step-by-step assignments.** Tiffany: I really like Digication for the assignment side of it. I'm talking about where you can make an assignment and then...steps for the assignment. I like doing that because I really scaffold my

projects a lot. It allows me and them [the students] to keep all of their work together... so they can just log into Digication and then go do a reading review, do a brainstorming, do a free writing, do a response...like, kind of all in the same place. In this physical way, they can see that every project involves like 15 different steps, 15 different brainstorming sessions, or smaller tasks associated with it.

Researcher: Do you have any relevant examples?

Tiffany: Yeah, so for example, right now in my WAC 107, we're gonna do a summary response essay. So for the writing project one, they'll probably be 15 steps or so and the first maybe... six or seven steps will be a reading review and response. So they'll summarize a little piece of an essay that they read and then brainstorm a response to it. (Interview 19)

In the interview, Tiffany constantly emphasized how she made the most of e-WPs by using the *Assignment* and *Steps* functions in Digication. When Tiffany enters her course link in Digication, a small button titled “*Assignment*” directs her to an area where she can design multiple, separate assignments for the whole class. Once Tiffany finishes creating a new assignment, she can click on the *+Add Step* button within the Assignment Workflow window (Figure 4). The *+Add Step* button allows Tiffany to break down an assignment into several smaller steps. By adding small steps and asking students to finish them one step at a time, the teacher reports that *Assignment* and *Steps* in Digication enable her to give students manageable tasks every time and eventually help them succeed in completing their writing projects.

***Create reading assignments via Twitter.*** Ursula: I will post an article and they'll

have to give some sort of analytical comment...and I tell them as always as it's an analytical statements, you can get some extra credit for it... I've seen them incorporate that Twitter feed into their Digication portfolio, and yes, it's extra credits in my class, but the fact that they now have this Twitter feed that shows how they've analyzed some phenomenon in the real world, they...they find that extremely useful. (Interview 3)

The aforementioned four examples seem to show that when walking students through their composing processes, Kerry, Kayla and Tiffany use different functions in Digication to show students the meaning of multi-drafting, how peer feedback can be conducted online, and how a writing project can be accomplished via step-by-step preparatory assignments and saved in one single digital space. For Ursula, reading is an important part of teaching students to write. Thus, posting articles on Twitter and asking students to tweet analytical comments delivers the message that composition goes hand in hand with real-world information, and learning real-world information is possible on a social media. By importing Twitter into Digication, the e-WP serves as a platform from which students can present their in-class efforts. These efforts include examples of interacting with the instructor and practicing critical thinking when reading articles, by way of using social media (Figure 5). Teachers have the freedom to decide what aspects of the technology they will rely on, and the e-WP seems to be flexible enough to provide different features in order to meet the different needs of individual teachers.

Figure 4. The Assignment Tab in Digication

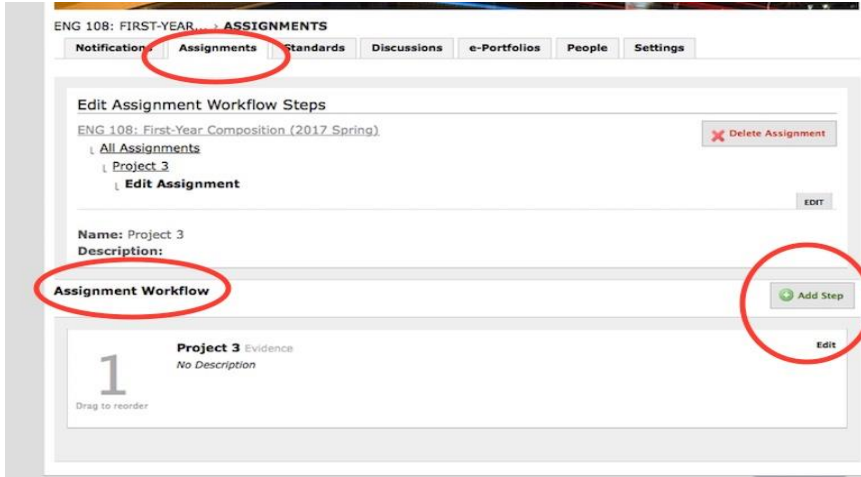


Figure 4. The assignment tab in Digication. When teachers click on Assignments, they can create individual assignment for the whole class. Teachers can also add small steps in the Assignment Workflow window, by clicking the Add Step green button on the right-hand-side of the webpage. Captured from [www.asu.digication.com](http://www.asu.digication.com).

Figure 5. The Social Media Importation Module in Digication

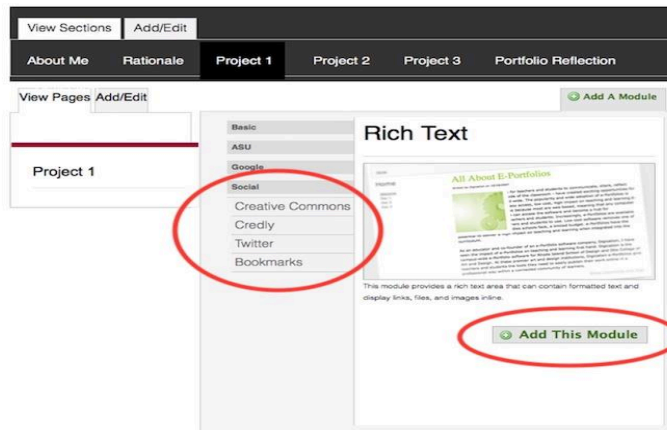


Figure 5. The social media importation module in Digication. When students create a new module, Digication allows students to import outside sources, including Google Docs and social media into their e-WPs. Teachers are also able to check whether students have imported these outside sources successfully once students publish their e-WPs. Captured from [www.asu.digication.com](http://www.asu.digication.com).

**Elicit reflections.** The second category reports reflections, which are one of the main tasks some teachers require students to do for their e-WPs. In addition to the

mandatory end-of-the-semester reflections, 12.5 % of the teachers have their own reflection assignments. In the following transcript excerpt, one of the teachers, Sophie, mentioned that she asks students to upload a philosophy of writing to their e-WPs at the beginning of the semester, and then upload a revised philosophy of writing at the end of the semester:

Sophie: I would ask my students to create...they could also post their philosophy of writing, which I would have them do at the beginning of my class...Their own beliefs about writing and themselves as writers, the importance of writing, which were always very hilarious to read because some of them just didn't see the importance of writing as engineering students, for example, at the beginning. And then at the end of the course it was always really interesting to read their revised philosophy of writing. (Interview 15)

In the above example, the philosophy of writing acts as a reflection assignment in Sophie's writing classes. Rather than only having students submit the mandatory final reflection under the *portfolio reflection* tab in Digication, Sophie has her own way of doing reflections. She uses Digication as a platform for students to compare their thoughts about writing before and after the semester. According to Sophie, many non-English major students thought writing was not important at the beginning of the semester, but usually came to realize how important it was after a semester of coursework. Students' evolving thoughts are then reflected in their revised writing philosophy. Digication then becomes a platform that documents such evolution.

**Practice formative grading.** The third category reports teachers' usage of e-WPs to grade formatively, which means that teachers give students some format of grading



throughout their composition learning process. The term *formative grading* here is consistent with what Hughes (2003) and Brown (2010) had defined for the term *formative assessment*. Hughes explained that formative assessment takes place when teachers use certain tools or methods to check students' learning progress. Brown further noted that formative assessment contains teachers' delivery of information and students' internalization of learning. The internalization of learning is based on appropriate feedback, with the purpose of continuing students' growth. Aligning with such definitions, the interviews showed that 18.7% of the teacher participants used Digication as a learning management tool that gives students formative grades as the writing projects progress. Formative grading goes hand-in-hand with teachers' process writing approach and curriculum design. For example, Sophie monitors students' learning by asking them to upload small assignments to Digication:

Sophie: So I gave them grades based on individual tasks that they had to do, and...because there were deadlines...by this date, you have to have your first assignment and your bio and your writing philosophy up there. By this date you have to have assignment two and your process or draft documents up there. So that was good, because it gave them a deadline, and so they knew they didn't have to wait to the end to upload everything... it was something that they would do on an ongoing basis, and they were given points along the way for doing the tasks.

(Interview 15)

In the above interview transcript excerpt, Sophie explained how she required students to upload several different assignments to e-WPs by certain deadlines. Although she did not mention if she provided additional descriptive comments for each assignment,

the points Sophie gives for each assignment could be seen as a form of continuous feedback that tracks students' learning. The e-WP platform, serving as a place where students document and showcase their finished homework, can also be seen as a learning management tool that teachers rely on when walking students through the writing process.

**Encourage and train ownership.** The fourth category deals with ownership, one of the prominent features that WPs/e-WPs hold for the purpose of developing learner agency. The term *ownership* in WP research refers to a student's right to decide what to include and what to exclude from their WPs, based on their freedom to select and self-assess their own work (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991; Murphy, 1994; Paris & Ayers, 1994; Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005). That is, teachers help students build a sense of “this is my own portfolio” via self-selection and self-assessment. Among the 16 participants in this study, 62.5% of the teachers—including those who use e-WPs actively and passively—seem to define ownership from different perspectives. These teachers ask students to write a small biography in the About Me section, create banners and tags, and design the e-WP's formatting based on their students' preferences. Two examples are from Sally and Wendy:

Sally: ...the most interesting thing to me what I notice first is what image they attach with their bio, with their About Me tab. And I like to see how students identify themselves sometimes with images of nature, sometimes with images that seem on the surface to have nothing to do with them...and others who put rather whimsical images or even pictures of themselves doing goofy things, or travel pictures. I mean that's delightful. I like it. I enjoy how they present themselves.

(Interview 12)

Wendy: ...one of the things I make them do is I make them create text on their banner. I make them create a banner that speaks to the project itself. So for me, this is all part of student ownership of their work. I'm very much a proponent of making students take ownership of what they do. (Interview 16)

In Sally's case, she has students use the writing program's e-WP template. She mentioned that the About Me section is a space that students can use to express themselves in any way they prefer. In Wendy's case, the word "ownership" was explicitly brought up during the interview. The texts and banners Wendy mentioned, refers to the tab buttons on each student's e-WP homepage, marked "About Me," "Rationale," "Project 1," "Project 2," "Project 3" and "Portfolio Reflection." Those tabs are created in the e-WP template created by the writing program (Figure 5). Students are encouraged to copy this template to set up their own e-WPs for their FYC courses. While it is faster and easier for teachers and students to use the writing program's template, Wendy emphasized that she has students create their e-WPs from scratch. This includes editing fonts and colors, as well as designing the format of the e-WP. For Wendy, not using writing program's ready-to-use e-WP template is the first step to establishing her students' sense of ownership and developing the "this is my portfolio" consciousness.

Figure 6. Banners and Tabs in Digication Homepage

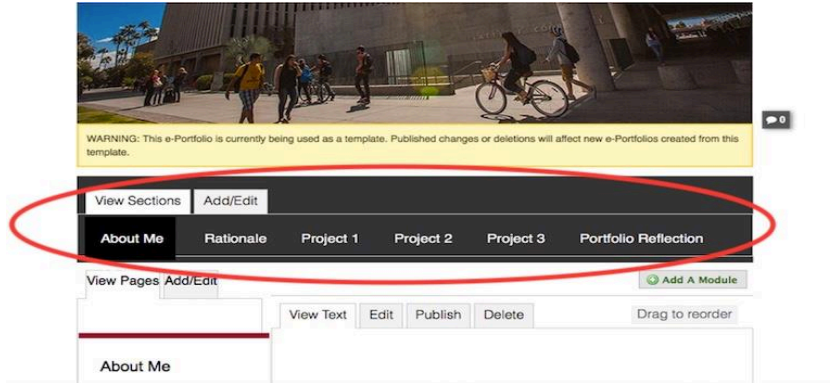


Figure 6. Banners and tabs in Digication homepage. Each student has tabs titled “About Me,” “Rationale,” “Project 1,” “Project 2,” “Project 3” and “Portfolio Reflection” in their e-WP platform. Captured from [www.asu.digication.com](http://www.asu.digication.com).

In addition to Sally’s and Wendy’s interview transcript excerpts, other teachers in the “encourage and train ownership” category also mentioned that they have students upload self-introductions to the About Me section. Students describe themselves in one or two paragraphs with pictures from their home countries. By reading students’ biography, teachers reported that they were able to understand their students better. It is also worth noting that among the 43.7 % of the teachers who do not use e-WPs proactively, the About Me section seems to be the part that these teachers are most willing to use in Digication, despite their unwillingness to use the other functions.

**Use alternative WP platforms.** The fifth category discusses teachers’ usage of alternative platforms other than Digication. These platforms include other Internet-based services, such as Google Docs, Weebly.com, or even traditional hard copy portfolios. 18.7 % of the participants reported that rather than using Digication throughout the semester, they prefer using Google Docs, Weebly.com, or just asking students to submit hard copies for their participation portfolio. For those teachers, Digication is either

replaced by another digital platform or only serves as a space for students to showcase the final drafts of each project at the end of the semester. The following transcript excerpts describe such scenarios in Teresa, Iris, and Sophie's classes.

**Google Docs.** Teresa: So, Google Docs would be where my students drafted all of their papers...once they have finished their rough draft, we will do a peer review on the Google Doc[s] with the comments and the suggestions function, because I can see exactly who is commenting on that paper and who is suggesting those changes on the paper. It records each one of their class members... And then, the reason that I have them publish their Google Doc[s] on Digication is because they are continually revising these documents...and if they revise it in Google Doc[s] and it's published as a Google Doc on Digication, then they don't have to edit the document in two places. It's always current. The Digication document is always current. (Interview 2)

**Hard-copy participation portfolios.** Iris: So participation portfolio, it is all of the paperwork, all of the in class activities, all of the discussions that we have for an assignment. So it's submitted with the final paper. You're not just submitting the final paper, you're submitting all of this back work as well... drafts, activities, worksheets...It's not any extra work. It's just that the students come to class, they do things, they keep that record, they submit it to me, and then they get great grades, when they have a great attendance record...It's just creating that physical portfolio for what they thought...They also have to do the Digication portfolio as part of the assignment instructions. But the Digication portfolio is about the final

papers and the participation portfolio is about day-to- day work. (Interview 13)

*Use Weebly.com instead of Digication.* Sophie: So one of the things I had them do was create portfolios through Weebly, Weebly.com... another online platform which is... very similar to Digication except that it's an Internet based portfolio platform. (Interview 15)

The aforementioned examples report that teachers have different reasons why they choose to use platforms other than the mandatory Digication. In Teresa's case, she prefers Google Docs over Digication because according to her, Google Docs keeps records of her students' writing and revisions. This makes it easier for Teresa to track when she grades comments that students give to each other in peer feedback activities. At the end of the semester, she asks her students to import everything in their completed work from Google Docs into Digication. Thus, Digication becomes the final platform for students to showcase their semester-long work. A similar scenario happens in Iris' classrooms. The hard copy participation portfolio that Iris assigns contains students' learning progress throughout the semester. Iris mentioned that the greatest advantage of hard-copy participation portfolios is that students simply collect what they have been doing in class, rather than having to do extra work. For Iris, Digication is a place for her students to publish their final drafts, without demonstrating their daily efforts.

The reason why Sophie uses Weebly.com is more complicated. In my interview with Sophie, she mentioned that students seem to be more comfortable uploading assignments on Weebly.com, rather than doing portfolio work in Digication. In order to

respect her students and maintain teaching and learning effectiveness, Sophie uses Weebly.com in her multilingual FYC classrooms. More information from Sophie's case will be discussed in the later section of this chapter when I discuss teachers' concerns about e-WPs.

**Elicit learning transfer.** The sixth category reports teachers' uses of e-WPs as tools that facilitate transfer of learning. According to Perkins and Saloman (1994), learning transfer, or transfer of learning, takes place when "learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with another set of materials" (p. 6452). In this study, 25% of the teacher participants used e-WPs with the goal of facilitating learning transfer. In the interview, Sophie and Ursula reported that their curriculums are designed to give students opportunities to think about how the learned skills in composition can be applied to their own majors. The e-WP is then used as a platform that demonstrates evidence of the learning transfer. The following two interview excerpts show the process:

Sophie: ...because I think they realized that writing for them even as engineering or business students come in many different formats. It could be a technical memo, it could be a problem solution report, it could be a memo or a report that is attached to a specific design of bridge, or a product and so they would revise that. And I would have them post things on there... I had them create things like a learning transfer reflection, which meant that I would have them take examples of their writing from the semester, and tell me how those tasks or activities throughout the semester helped them to write in their other courses. So I would have them make explicit connections to their other classes. So they would post all

kinds of interesting things on those portfolio platforms. (Interview 15)

Ursula: I'll tell students a lot of times like... if you want to bring in a lab report, if you want to be...bring in... writing that you are doing for another class during my office hours, that could be something that you incorporate into your portfolio, to show that your development as a writer...I had a business student who...started pulling in the speeches that he had would have to give for presentation, so what he did for speech prep...his final project was extraordinary because he had developed this entire business plan. He was bringing in the stuff that he was using in his business coursework, as well as the stuff for our class, to say this is something that we can develop, for [an] advocacy [proposal]. (Interview 3)

In the aforementioned examples, e-WPs are not used to showcase students' final drafts, nor are they only used for demonstrating students' process work. Instead, aligning with Sophie' and Ursula's curriculum design, e-WPs are used with a specific purpose. e-WPs become a tool that confirms students' efforts of transferring learning when students presents how they incorporate composition into their own majors in various formats on the Digication platform. Sophie and Ursula's examples seem to suggest that e-WPs are able to fit into teaching and learning fairly well, as long as students are clear about the goal of the curriculum.

**Teach audience awareness.** The seventh category talks about teachers who use e-WPs to teach L2 students the concept of audience awareness. Within the context of composition, audience awareness refers to student writers' awareness of a particular



group, or groups of readers, who read, comment, or judge the effectiveness of their drafts. The audience here differs from the speaker's audience. It is the writer's responsibility to notice and understand their audience's possible attitudes, beliefs, and expectations when reading certain genres (Ede & Lunsford, 1984). In this study, 37.5% of the teachers report that they use Digication to remind L2 students of the existence of a wider readership.

According to those instructors, students are told that in addition to their instructors, there are others who may also read their writing. Thus, a student's goal is to consider how a wider group of readers will become interested in reading their work. "So what I'm trying to make them understand is that there is a model that has been long standing at university level writing, the MLA formatted Word document, and then with Digication, how we can use visual rhetoric to help augment the claims they're making about a topic," said Wendy (Interview 16). Based on Wendy's description, the following excerpts show examples of the way Edward and Wendy use e-WPs to teach the concept of audience awareness.

Edward asks his students to use visual effects in their recipe design project and publish it on Digication. In Wendy's case, she uses e-WPs to teach various concepts. She stresses the importance of maintaining the audience's interest by requiring students to complete four tasks: 1) write rhetorical analyses of movie reviews in a contextual paragraph 2) reorganize essays into a magazine article format 3) compile a collected bibliography and 4) carefully design hyperlinks that do not distract readers by directing them to a new webpage.

*Address the importance of visual effects.* Edward: ...visual record is a big part of my class...so they're given this blank generic template, and...we talk about color, what that can convey, design, information design of prioritizing information, and

they incorporate that into their portfolios...in 107 for example, the final project was based on cooking so it was doing a recipe...they had to make the choices of what would the font look like, the size, the color, are you going to incorporate pictures and visual aids, which in a recipe makes sense. Is it going to be written in paragraph form or bullet points? Are you going to use section headings, and that last project they had to make all those decisions on their own. The category on the rubric was they got an A is if all that stuff made it easy to read and served their purpose, and if it didn't that went on down the rubric. (Interview 11)

***Write a contextual paragraph in e-WPs.*** Wendy: So my film of choice for this semester was “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” and so basically I create a sample portfolio that works alongside of them. I say, “Okay, so, right now what you have to do is you have to create a contextual paragraph. This is my contextual paragraph, I wrote this last night,” and then I show them previous year’s portfolios and I’ll say, “This is a contextual paragraph although the topic was talking about i-watches, you can now see what kind of information a contextual paragraph includes.”... What I used this semester was “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” and I started off with a rhetorical analysis of a film review and then I also, like them, I reported on the transnational and I have students write... (Interview 16)

***Reorganize essays into magazine article format in e-WPs.*** Wendy: I do have separate requirements for what goes on Digication. So for projects two and

projects three, they had to think about how they were informing their audience. They had to imagine that they were presenting their work to an audience who's not part of the class... So this is the analogy that I use is, I think about this as being more of a magazine article. When you open a magazine, how do you get your information? You get your information through images, captions, headers, white space and we need white space as a break for audience members so that we can have a moment to digest the information that we're taking in. Captions are important because you shouldn't just let visuals do the work. You have to explain how they connect to the text. (Interview 16)

***Compile a collected bibliography.*** Wendy: ...on the tab...on this section for the work cited and the reason why we do this is, I suggest that in many ways the portfolio is an analogy to an edited collection or work, a book that's put together. I explain to them [the students] that, you know, format matters, how the information is presented matters, so often a textbook or a book like this will have a collected bibliography at the end. (Interview 16)

***Hyperlink design.*** Wendy: I tell them, "...in your futures you're going to be doing more desktop publishing and so we can think of the Digication platform as desktop publishing, and so you really need to think rhetorically about how you present yourself and your information in ways that audiences want to work with you." So...one of the points I make to students is that... I ask them to see if they can hyperlink some of their information to an outside source... one of the lessons

I try to present to them when they're using Digication—when we click on a hyperlink in your Digication port a we don't lose your audience. They don't... they still have access to your Digication. It hasn't overridden. (Interview 16)

The aforementioned excerpts show that teachers address students' attention to readers' needs using different methods. Edward situated his teaching of visuals in the theme called cooking and the design of a recipe. The recipe design lesson offers students the opportunity to think about what readers may need when they use a cookbook. Wendy uses Digication as a tool to teach students important factors worth noticing in order to not only catch audience's attention, but also to maintain the audience's interests. When asking students to write a contextual paragraph, Wendy emphasizes a need for contextual information so that the audience is given enough background knowledge to understand the writer's analysis. Wendy chooses a movie review, uploads the movie's poster, and writes a rhetorical analysis of the movie review as an example of the contextual paragraph on her personal e-WP page. She then shows the contextual paragraph to students. The magazine format assignment goes hand in hand with the contextual paragraph assignment. Wendy reminds students that while their rhetorical analysis essays are in a standard Microsoft Word Processor format, the Digication version of students' rhetorical analysis paragraphs must read like a magazine article. That is, students are responsible for attracting the audience's attention by re-editing and redesigning the "appearance" of their contextual paragraphs. Students in Wendy's classes are expected to make good use of blank spaces between paragraphs, insert images, pictures or videos, and give noticeable captions and headers. Students integrated these elements into the

contextual paragraphs, and format their paragraphs into a magazine article. For the next step, Wendy's students compile a collected bibliography in Digication. The reason that Wendy makes such requirement is that since Digication e-WPs are treated as a platform for students to practice editing a magazine article, the way references are organized should also resembles the way that real magazines handle references. According to Wendy, the collected bibliography requirement reminds students of readers' expectations when reading an analysis of a movie-review on a digital e-WP platform.

After Wendy's students understand how to compose a contextual paragraph and how to compile a collected bibliography, there is one more task she asks of her students. She asks her students to hyperlink some part of information in their magazine article to outside sources. One detail that Wendy cares about, however, is that when the readers click on students' hyperlinks, the pop-up window opened by the link does not replace or override the Digication window. Wendy explained that the purpose of a hyperlink is to give readers additional information about a student's magazine article topic, not to distract readers. In other words, it is the writers' responsibility to keep their audience's focus on their writing in Digication e-WPs. Therefore, in class Wendy demonstrates how to hyperlink *within* Digication, so that readers will still have access to the Digication page and will not become distracted by too much additional information. According to Wendy, students lose points if their hyperlinks replace the Digication window. Although concerns about hyperlinks may seem trivial and have more to do with technical issues rather than the issues of composition, Wendy reported that her goal is to teach the importance of maintaining the audience's interest and attention throughout the e-WP creation process.

**Avoid using e-WPs.** The eighth category, being the last category of teachers'

practices of e-WPs, presents teachers' avoidance behavior of using Digication e-WPs in multilingual FYC classrooms. While the previous seven categories presented the different ways teachers utilize e-WPs and seem to show that e-WPs help with teaching, 43.7% of the participants reported that they do not proactively use e-WPs in their classes. By defining avoiding using e-WPs here, I refer to teachers' decisions of not using Digication in any part of their teaching, even if they are meeting the e-WP submission requirement given by the writing program at the end of the semester. For teachers who use WPs in traditional hard-copy format or on an alternative platform other than Digication, I classified them into the fifth category "use alternative WP platforms" as stated earlier in this chapter. Thus, the 43.7% of the teacher participants who avoid using e-WPs and the 18.7% of the teacher participants who use an alternative e-WP platform do not overlap because they belong to separate groups.

Three themes emerged under the category of avoid using e-WPs. They are "lack of goals and purpose," "insufficient amount of time" and "only meeting the writing program's requirement." These three themes seemed to explain the reasons for teachers' avoidance of using Digication e-WPs. The following interview transcripts show some examples.

***Lack of goals and purpose.*** Amy: "I don't want to see like... "Just leave some comments, leave some comments to others and people don't see what's the purpose... if I want to include that kind of "providing feedback activity", I want to be clear in the goal of that activity. [If] It's just for sharing or doing one critique or what... I don't see the clear goal here." (Interview 4)

Oliver: I'm still not sure about the usefulness of this assessment tool, Digication, because I just can't see the practical value of this from the students' perspectives.  
(Interview 7)

***Insufficient amount of time.*** Tina: “Like time sometimes...I want to have time in class to do it [Digication], but sometimes I'm like, ‘Okay, can you do it on your own, and we'll see if you have issues?’ because there's a lot of things I'm doing in class where I guess it doesn't feel like it fits in. If I built it in more maybe, but there's always a lot to do. (Interview 5)

Zoe: And then second problem is I only have 50 minutes per class... I figured their problems [students' questions when creating the Digication e-WPs] one by one, and I ask them to type out their self-introduction, their bios. That's basically one class. It's over. For 50 minutes, that's pretty short when you're doing something [like Digication]...(Interview 8)

***Only meeting the writing program's requirement.*** Oliver: I don't use it from the very beginning of the semester. I only use it as part of the assessment in that they just need to turn in all their work to meet the requirement of the writing programs and that's it. (Interview 7)

Kristine: ...because as far as I know, according to that, it [the Digication e-WPs] is like managed by the department, so, I just think that they [the students] only

need a final draft... So I don't know like...for the e-Portfolio, I don't do it with my personal motivation...because the department asks us to do that. (Interview 6)

The three subcategories nested under “avoid using e-WPs” seem to be highly relevant to one another. When teachers do not see the goals, purpose, and objectives of using e-WPs, the limited amount of classtime naturally leads to their decision to not use e-WPs. In the end, they only have students submit e-WPs at the end of the semester to meet the writing program’s requirement. For example, Oliver is unsure of the e-WP’s practical value. For Kristine, e-WPs are only a departmental requirement, so she asks students to upload the final draft of each writing project without specific reasons. Time constraints seem to be another significant reason preventing teachers from using e-WPs frequently in their multilingual FYC classrooms. As Zoe mentioned in her interview, L2 students need more time to understand the concept of e-WPs, and they also need more time to learn the technical terms and procedures when creating an e-WP—especially when those technical parts are written in a second language that they are still learning. Thus, it took Zoe much longer to walk student through e-WP creation procedures, and she quickly found herself running out of class time.

### **Summary of Teachers’ e-WP Practices**

The first section of this chapter has presented the results relevant to my first research question. Teachers’ practice of using e-WPs seems to be diverse. 37.5 % of the teachers proactively use e-WPs on Digication. Those teachers use Digication e-WPs to teach the concept of process writing, elicit reflections, practice formative grading, create a sense of ownership, elicit transfer of learning, and teach the concept of audience



awareness. The use of alternative e-WP platforms category describes the 18.7% teachers who did not choose to use Digication, but used other WP formats instead. These alternative platforms include hard copy participation portfolios, Google Docs, and Weebly.com. According to those teachers, the alternative platforms enable them to run their curriculum based on their own teaching objectives in multilingual FYC classrooms as effectively as using Digication. Lastly, the remaining 43.7% of the teachers reported that except for having students upload their final drafts to Digication in order to meet the writing program's requirement, they personally do not use Digication on a regular basis. The reasons these teachers do not use Digication e-WPs include a lack of goals and purpose for using them, uncertainties of how to incorporate e-WPs into their course design, lack of time in class, and the perception that Digication is merely an official requirement they have to check off on their to-do list to satisfy the writing program's administration. As teachers' pedagogical practices are interrelated with their professional knowledge and contextual factors, such as students or materials (Kagan, 1992), exploring the possible sources that may affect and shape teachers' knowledge of e-WPs is the second research question that I will discuss in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5  
SOURCES INFLUENCING TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF ELECTRONIC  
WRITING PORTFOLIOS

This chapter answers the second research question by continuing to present the interview analysis. In addition to reporting the interview analysis results, this chapter also reports the e-WP policies described in the teachers' course syllabi for the purpose of triangulation. To answer the two inquiries under my second research question, I described the sources that introduce, influence and shape teachers' knowledge of e-WPs—from their preservice stage, and throughout their teaching careers. These sources included 1) undergraduate school education 2) graduate school education, including training received as graduate teaching associates 3) work experience outside of graduate schools 4) technical difficulties in the e-WP platform 5) writing programs' portfolio policies and 6) students' reactions to e-WPs.

Syllabi were also analyzed to confirm the pattern found in the interviews. Teachers who proactively used e-WPs tended to give more detailed descriptions of their e-WP instructions in their syllabi. These detailed descriptions included an explanation of the definition and purpose of using e-WPs, the grading standards that were used, specific assignments students were required to upload to the Digication platform, and visuals teachers asked students to create to personalize students' individual e-WP webpages. Similarly, teachers who chose an alternative e-WP platform other than Digication, made their requirements clear in their syllabi. By reading the requirement in the syllabi, students were therefore aware that their instructors were asking for a particular kind of

portfolio different from Digication. Teachers who avoided using e-WPs only included the mandatory e-WP submission requirement from the writing program's policies in their syllabi. Except for inconsistencies that appeared in two of the teacher participants' reports, the content of the syllabi matched what teachers reported in the interviews.

## **Findings**

### **Interview Results**

#### **Research Question 2: How Does Teachers' Knowledge of e-WPs Shape?**

##### **a. What Are the Sources of Influence?**

##### **b. How Do Teachers Develop this Knowledge?**

An analysis of the data I collected showed that sources influencing L2 teachers' knowledge of e-WPs came from six categories: 1) teachers' undergraduate school education 2) teachers' graduate school education, including training received as a graduate teaching associate 3) teachers' work experience outside of graduate schools, 4) technical difficulties in the e-WP platform 5) concerns and confusion about the writing program's e-WP policies and 6) students' reactions in the classroom. These six sources are not discrete from each other. Instead, they seem to be highly interrelated. These sources continue to shape and influence teachers' knowledge of e-WPs from their preservice training stage and throughout their careers. For example, some teachers were required to "collect all written works and compile a folder" as undergraduate students without knowing the purpose of such requirement. Later, when these teachers studied assessment theories in the TESOL program at graduate schools, they realized that they had been doing something called "portfolio assessment." Other teachers were exposed to

a mandatory portfolio curriculum when they taught as teaching associates while attending graduate school, and later developed their own preferred ways of using a WP or an e-WP in writing classrooms. Meanwhile, it seems that teachers' undergraduate education, graduate education, and work experience outside of graduate schools played a role in *introducing* teachers to professional knowledge of WPs; whereas technical difficulties with e-WP platforms, writing program's e-WP policies, and students' reactions in the classrooms *shape and influence* teachers' current knowledge of WPs as their teaching careers move on. In the following sections, I present examples of how undergraduate education, graduate education, and work experience outside of graduate schools introduce teachers to the concept of portfolios. After that, I move onto presenting how writing program policies and student reactions influence the way teachers develop their knowledge and understandings of e-WPs.

**Undergraduate school education.** 31.2% of the teacher participants reported that the first time they either heard of, or had experienced, creating a portfolio took place during their undergraduate education period.

Tina: Even before [coming to the current institution], as an undergraduate student, I've had to create portfolios as an undergraduate... This wasn't really teaching, though. I was a student, and I had to create portfolios myself as an undergrad, and then coming here, the first practicum I had was for [teaching English] 101.

(Interview 5)

Teresa: ...so I did my undergrad at [a university in the U.S.] you know, and Professor R was actually one of my capstone teachers...I had a culminating

portfolio of all of my creative and technical writing from my undergrad...”

(Interview 2)

Kristine: “Yeah, I've experienced [using a portfolio] because in my the college years, I was an exchange student to the school in the US... from Korea to the US, and then I took writing classes... and the instructor used a portfolio...she asked us to submit every draft from rough to the final, and then reflective essay at the beginning...and then asked us to submit them to her. (Interview 6)

The aforementioned three examples demonstrate three kinds of scenarios when teachers first learned about the concept of portfolios during their undergraduate studies. Tina reported having compiled a portfolio as an undergraduate. For Teresa, she compiled and submitted her first portfolio in her capstone course when she was pursuing her undergraduate degree. In Kristine’s case, she traveled from Korea to North America and studied at a public university in the north-western part of the United States. At that university, Kristine took writing courses where her instructor required a portfolio. Although the methods and the purpose for constructing a portfolio differ from case to case based on teachers’ personal learning experience, undergraduate education seems to be one of the occasions where teachers first start learning about WPs.

**Graduate school education.** With some overlapping rate from the undergraduate education source, up to 68.7% of the participants either first learned about WPs, or continued to learn more about WPs in graduate schools. As mentioned earlier, graduate school education seems to be a source that introduces WPs to teachers, or reinforces

their knowledge of WPs if they have already had some teaching experience. The following interview excerpts present some examples:

Researcher: ...how did you first learn about portfolio assessment in your teaching career? Where and when?

Iris: I have to say when I was at the University of [name of the university], we read [a book's title]...this little booklet that promoted the portfolio system. Then it was considered for the major papers, to think about continually writing and then at the end of term, having a showcase where all of your works were then gauged, based on your...all of the lessons that have been sort of tantamount-graded assessment.

Researcher: Was that in a course or...?

Iris: Just composition. That was when I was getting my master's...when I was twenty-two...twenty-two and teaching freshmen [composition]. (Interview 13)

Researcher: ...how did you first learn about portfolio assessment in your teaching career? Where and when?

Tiffany: It was...assembling a portfolio was a requirement from the very first semester that I taught as a TA. I taught as a TA starting fall 2010 and I took extensive TA training at that time with Dr. R, Dr. W and Dr. N. (Interview 14)

Researcher: ...how did you first learn about portfolio assessment in your teaching career? Where and when?

Oliver: I learned about it when I started my Ph. D degree here. It was during the

first semester of first year composition practicum, ENG 594. We were introduced to Digication. (Interview 7)

Ursula: ... so like when I started the M. TESOL program... that all I had all of the practical experience [from work], but I didn't have theoretical... foundation to know exactly what I had been dealing with... so once I got into the M. TESOL program, like "Oh! That's what we were doing!" And so... we had this portfolio assessment.

Researcher: So you're saying that you... your [work] experience in Japan came first and then you...

Ursula: understood that it was portfolio assessment. (Interview 3)

In the aforementioned examples, Iris, Tiffany, and Oliver all learned about WPs during the time they taught as teaching associates while they were earning their master's or doctoral degrees. In Iris' case, she first learned about WP assessment from the program in which she was doing her master's degree and teaching freshman composition. The similar scenarios took place in Tiffany and Oliver's cases. Both Tiffany and Oliver were introduced to e-WPs in their TA training courses when they were teaching First-Year Composition as graduate students. For Ursula, work experience and graduate education were both sources that continuously influenced her developing knowledge of WPs. The next category gives more examples and detailed descriptions of how teachers learn about WPs from their full-time teaching experiences.

**Work experience outside of graduate school.** In addition to undergraduate and

graduate school education, teaching experience gained from workplaces outside of graduate schools seems to be another source that enables teachers to become acquainted with WPs. About one-third (33.3%) of the teacher participants reported that they first learned about the concept of WPs, either traditional or electronic, in workplaces during their teaching careers. The following interview transcript excerpts present some examples.

Researcher: How did you first learn about portfolio assessment in your teaching career? Where and when?

Ursula: Portfolio assessment in general, it was starting to kind of infiltrate when I was teaching in Japan...in...the super science high school that I taught in part time...it was a STEM school, their main focus was science technology and math...they had a partnership with one of the more prestigious technical universities in Japan, the students worked with mentors at that university as well as doing this track coursework. So what the students were doing is over the course of the semester, they built up this presentation portfolio on an experiment they developed from the beginning of the school year. That was where it [portfolio the assessment] had been introduced [to me]. (Interview 3)

Researcher: How did you first learn about portfolio assessment in your teaching career? Where and when?

Sophie: I learned about it in, well 17 years ago, when I was working at the University of [name of the institution] and that was something that was really part of the curriculum there...the individuals who I was working with, my colleagues,



two of them were using portfolios as part of their writing projects and curriculums with their students, and through conversations with them I really thought that was a great idea. And from that grew this idea of incorporating portfolios into my teaching curriculum. (Interview 15)

Researcher: How did you first learn about portfolio assessment in your teaching career? Where and when?

Sally: Yeah. It's been around for quite some time, back in the '90s, [when I was] teaching at [name of the institution] College in Texas. That's when we first began to encourage students to use a portfolio. Not only for us to assess their work, but [also] for them to look at their own performance over the course of the semester.

(Interview 12)

The aforementioned examples seem to indicate that compared with undergraduate school education, teachers' work experience outside of graduate schools, as well as their subsequent learning and teaching experiences at graduate schools, are integrated sources that expand teachers' knowledge of both traditional and electronic WPs in writing classrooms. Take Ursula's case for example, she reported that while helping Japanese high school students put together their lab reports and experimental results throughout the semester, she did not understand why they were doing such purposeful collections. Yet later, when Ursula began her master's TESOL program at graduate school, she learned that students' collection of scientific experiments from their STEM courses is a format of meeting the requirement of portfolio assessment. Ursula was then able to connect her new

knowledge of assessment with what she had been doing in Japan, realizing that she was actually conducting portfolio assessment before she knew what it was.

As for Sophie and Sally, both reported that they first learned about and used WPs after earning their master's degree and began teaching full time. Sophie had heard of e-WPs from her colleagues and started integrating WPs into her curriculum. Sally clarified that although the institution where she worked encouraged teachers to assess students' writing progress via traditional hard-copy WPs, she focused more on reading her students' end-of-the-semester reflections, instead of requiring students to collect written drafts in the hard-copy WPs throughout the semester. The following is Sally's partial quotation:

I haven't in the past always required them to put together a physical portfolio. We might have done a reflection at the end of the semester about the work that they completed, but that didn't mean that literally they must turn into me a folder with their work and the self folder. In other words it could be disembodied so to speak.  
(Interview 12)

While the above examples seemed to show that teachers acquire knowledge of WPs from their work, undergraduate and graduate education, schoolwork and work experience are not the only sources that affect the way teachers understand and use e-WPs. In the interviews, many teachers brought up the challenges, concerns, and confusion they encountered during the process in which they used e-WPs with multilingual students. Data analyses show that from technical difficulties, concerns and confusion about writing programs' policies, as well as students' reactions, were three emerged themes that seemed to influence the way teachers develop their knowledge and

beliefs in e-WPs in multilingual FYC classrooms. I present results from these three categories in the following sections.

**Technical difficulties in the e-WP platform.** Teachers who reported encountering technical difficulties with Digication include those who proactively use it, those who passively use it, or those who avoid using them altogether. Over half (68.75%) of the participants reported that regardless of the frequencies and the different ways they use e-WPs, technical issues with Digication gave them the impression that e-WPs are not user-friendly. The ease of editing and uploading drafts, efficiency of navigation, and degree to which L2 student writers can understand technical terms in Digication seem to be major factors that affect teachers' understandings of e-WPs. The following interview transcript excerpts show some examples:

Researcher: ...what are some of the most challenging experience you've had with portfolios in your L2 writing classroom?

Teresa: The technological difficulties...if you're requiring someone to use a platform, you need to be able to teach them how to use the platform. I personally hate...the design of the Digication...it is one of the clunkiest programs ever. It has so many ins and outs.

Researcher: So many repetitive steps in there?

Teresa: "Would you like to publish this?" "Are you sure you'd like to publish this?" So annoying! That's something that I wrote about in the syllabus too, like "do not forget to save your work" "do not forget to publish it" "do not forget to publish all changes." (Interview 2)

Iris: ...they [the students] were having such a difficult time, because it's just a very foreign language, trying to understand...the language in the platform...maybe the overall design of the platform...whether it's user-friendly or not. Some people are more tech-savvy than others, I am not. How do you describe an icon? You say, well, it looks like a page with a little dot on it. They're [the students are] saying, "Page? I'm looking for a page, I don't see that." It's like, "Well, I don't know, rectangle, whatever..." (Interview 13)

Oliver: ...when you paste a text, of course you don't want them to just upload a file. You want them to paste the text and then there's this problem with the tab button. It doesn't work. You can't tab, you can't indent.

Researcher: You have to edit it manually.

Oliver: Yeah, you have to do it manually. You have to use the space bar on the keyboard. I told them, "Okay, you should space ten times and remember that you always space ten times in each of your paragraphs." All right, and then when it gets to works cited, there's also problems. If you want to follow the conventions, you can't indent, like you can't indent point 5 [inches in the first line of your paragraph]. (Interview 7)

In the above three examples, Teresa, Iris, and Oliver all reported that the technical difficulties they encountered in Digication discouraged them from using e-WPs on a regular basis, and gave them the impression that e-WPs are difficult to use. In her interview, Teresa emphasized the tedious and seemingly unnecessary steps students have

to go through when uploading their drafts. Iris mentioned that the language in Digication confuses L2 students, making her interaction with students challenging when she walks students through the process of using Digication. Oliver specifically pointed out that in Digication, students cannot indent their essays when transferring their completed drafts to Digication because the tab key does not work. Oliver explained that with Digication's inability to allow authors to properly edit their work, readers who do not understand the problems of Digication may think his students' essays as unprofessional—not only the paragraph indentation issues, but also the format of the citations page where a clear list of sources in MLA convention is expected. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Teresa and Iris ended up choosing alternative e-WPs to guide students through the process of writing. Iris used hard-copy participation portfolios in her classroom. Teresa chose Google Docs as the main online platform to document students' drafts, rather than relying on Digication. Oliver continued his own curriculum without doing any format of portfolio assessment. Other teachers in this category gave similar feedback, saying that technical issues, both small and large, gave them a bad impression of e-WPs and affected their willingness to voluntarily use them. Among these three categories that affected teachers' understandings of e-WPs, technical difficulties seemed to be one of the most influential factors mentioned by the majority of the participants.

**Concerns and confusion about writing program's policies.** Following technical difficulties, teachers' concerns and confusion about the writing program's policies on e-WPs seemed to be another source that significantly influences teachers' opinions and understanding of e-WPs, as they use Digication along with their teaching processes. Data analysis shows that up to 75% percent of the participants reported being concerned and

confused about the writing program's policies on Digication e-WPs. Those concerns are more or less relevant to the e-WP submission requirement and include the following four subcategories: 1) concerns about how to integrate e-WPs with teaching and learning, 2) ethical concerns about publishing students' e-WPs on the Internet 3) confusion about the role e-WPs play and 4) confusion about the semester-end submission requirement. The following interview transcript excerpts present examples from each subcategory.

*Concerns about integrating teaching and learning with e-WPs.* Amy: ...the TA practicum [hasn't] mentioned how to use portfolio...[the practicum] just[talked about] how to upload your work, but after uploading and what activities can be applied? ...After publishing [in Digication], what do we do with that? We don't learn anything about any kind [of] in-class activities...(Interview 4)

Iris: I'm still weirded out, trying to figure exactly how the Digication portfolio could be best integrated to be a learning tool, rather than just an assignment...it doesn't quite feel right at the moment, it's not fully integrated into the curriculum. It's this nuisance activity we do at the end. It's this thing we drop on the students. (Interview 13)

Edward: ...If the portfolio and Digication aligns in the way with the process aspect, with the visuals and digital literacy aspect, so for me they totally make sense... that's part of the justification for why I'm incorporating them, is because I'm trying to emphasize those visual and digital literacy. But if you don't have professional development to have teachers think about how does this fit into your

teaching philosophy, into your pedagogical approach, and you're just telling them to do it, the whole purpose is lost. (Interview 11)

***Ethical concerns about publishing students' work online.*** Tiffany: ...I tell them [the students] that it's used for research, but I don't think that, they have a good sense of what that might be. In fact, I don't think I have a very good sense of who uses it for research or if anybody even does. (Interview 14)

Oliver: It makes me question also about...the consent of students because you ask the instructors to submit their work and then you make use of their work for researching purposes, then isn't that without consent because the students are not aware of that?

Researcher: Didn't they [the students] check, "I consent" it to [allow their e-WPs be] used for research when they submit it [the e-WPs]? You should have [known] that when you guided them to [over the uploading process...]?

Oliver: So then, that should be made clear too, that you should only submit a student's portfolio if they have checked that box. There was nothing in the instruction. It just says that you need to submit one portfolio for each class. (Interview 7)

Wendy: ...I also, on the other hand, have concerns about the ethical implications of making student work permanently accessible. To whom? I always tell students when they set up their portfolios, "You don't have to put your name here. You can

create a pseudonym if you want to.” (Interview 16)

Wendy: ...For instance, if you’re a student who now writes about “Captain America” but in the future you might end up being the CEO of a law firm, or maybe you don’t want people seeing your early work. So you have to really think about how you’re identified in your work. So...I don’t really understand why this is important to the Department of English. I don’t necessarily know if my first year composition students should, without their explicit knowledge, without them explicitly knowing that their work is being used even if it's being anonymized. I don’t know how I feel about that ethically. (Interview 16)

***Confusion about the role e-WPs play.*** Oliver: ...having students use this platform and then what? How about the Blackboard thing? Students use the Digication platform to turn things in just at one place, or do we have to do both? ... There was no workshop or anything for instructors. Why don't you have a workshop to go over with the instructors, with the TA so that they could ask questions... (Interview 7)

Oliver: It’s [also] not clear whether you want it [the e-WPs] formative or summative, as a formative or summative assessment tool...(Interview 7)

Amy: ...another bigger problem is I don't know how to incorporate those activities [in Digication e-WPs] without the grading [and] assessing...if I highly



emphasize [to the students] “your activities will be all tracked and it’ll be all related to your grade,” and they [the students] would be really, really active...if we really want to emphasize applying or using portfolio, there should be some kind of assessment...(Interview 4)

***Confusion about the semester-end submission requirement.*** Teresa: It feels like surveillance, which is fine, but I know a lot of people aren't fine with surveillance... if they're struggling with understanding the platform. And they're struggling implementing it into their class... that move [the requirement] is like “did you do it” or “did you not do it?” (Interview 2)

Tiffany: It’s not hard, it’s just annoying because... I don’t think that anyone is looking at the work that I am doing because I work to select two representative portfolios and I truly don’t believe that anyone looks at them. Like all they’re doing is checking to make sure that everyone did it...every time I do it, I feel confronted by the indifference of the administration to anything except token gestures that are really easy to quantify. (Interview 14)

Edward: ...it needs to be more than an email. It needs to be a professional development opportunity that should come before the requirement. Not here’s the requirement and here’s an explanation for why were doing it. That process should've been reversed. (Interview 11)

The aforementioned interview transcript excerpts show the teachers' concerns and confusion about e-WPs during the process of implementing e-WPs into to their teaching. Those concerns and confusion seem to make teachers' e-WP experience even more challenging, affecting the way they develop their knowledge of e-WPs. Moreover, teachers' concerns about integrating teaching and learning with e-WPs also seem to go hand in hand with their avoidance of using e-WPs. Many teachers do not seem to know how to implement, or have not figured out ways of embedding e-WPs into their existing curriculum. In Amy's case, she learned about Digication from her TA seminar course. Yet, Amy clearly pointed out that she would like to learn more about how to design in-class activities *with* Digication, rather than just learning how to upload documents to the e-WP platform. Iris uses her own hard copy participation portfolio in her class, and for her, Digication remains a "nuisance activity we do at the end" (Interview 13) that hold students and teachers accountable without being helpful with day-to-day course designs or classroom activities. Edward explained that his purpose for using e-WPs is to teach visual and digital literacy. However, Edward stressed that teaching visual and digital literacy is the goal he developed based on his knowledge of e-WPs. He still believes that professional development opportunities for e-WP implementation are necessary, so that teachers are given a chance to think about how to implement e-WPs effectively into their existing curriculum. These participants' comments point to the possibility that while Digication e-WPs is currently required by the writing program, information about how e-WPs can be properly used aligning with learning and teaching L2 composition is lacking. Even if the writing program has been constantly explaining that e-WPs are submitted for showcasing purposes, teachers do not seem to find such showcasing meaningful because

the most important thing they care about, that is, how e-WPs can assist with learning and become helpful pedagogical tools, remain questionable. When teachers cannot seem to find answers to their questions, concerns and doubts on e-WPs stay, from which teachers gradually develop the belief that situating e-WPs in teaching is difficult.

In addition to teachers' concerns about integrating teaching and learning with e-WPs, "The ethical concerns about publication" is another subcategory that seems to affect teachers' understandings of e-WPs significantly. For Tiffany and Oliver, they question where students' work goes after they upload their drafts to Digication. Although Digication asks for students' consent by having students check "I hereby give consent for the content I submit now to be used for the purpose of research on student learning" or "I give consent only on condition that it be submitted anonymously" (Figure 7) before uploading assignments, such statements do not seem to give enough justification from teachers' perspectives. Tiffany explained that even if students check the consent options and are told that their work will be used for research purposes, she still does not know how students' works will be researched and who the researchers will be. Oliver pointed out that if students agree to release their uploaded work for research, then the writing program's submission requirement should be consistent with students' consent and ensure that teachers are aware of such consent, when deciding whose work to submit. Wendy expressed a sense of insecurity when students' e-WPs are uploaded to the Internet because "anything uploaded to the Internet may permanently stay, even if you set certain restrictions" (Interview 16). Wendy admitted that the ethical concerns about how her students' uploaded works will be used in the future have been "disturbing" for her (Interview 16). Similar to Oliver and Tiffany's points of view, Wendy expressed that the

English department should explain more clearly the purpose of having students publish their e-WPs online, even if students are allowed to upload their writing projects anonymously with consent to release their work for research.

Figure 7. Consent Statement Page in Digication

The image shows a screenshot of a web form for a consent statement. At the top left is a text area labeled 'Comment:'. To its right is a 'Comments' section with the text 'Comments may be used to provide additional feedback and suggestions.' Below these is a red warning line: 'If you click "Save and submit", you will no longer be able to submit more or make changes to existing evidence.' Underneath are two radio button options: the first is 'I hereby give consent for the content I submit now to be used for the purpose of research on student learning.' and the second is 'I give consent only on condition that it be submitted anonymously.' At the bottom are three buttons: 'Save and submit' (highlighted with a red oval), 'Save, do not submit', and 'Cancel'.

Figure 7 Consent statement page in Digication. At the bottom of each assignment submission webpage, Digication offers students options of whether they consent their works being used for research identified or anonymously, before they officially publish their written work online. Captured from [www.asu.digication.com](http://www.asu.digication.com).

The other two subcategories, “confusion about the role e-WPs play” and “confusion about the semester-end submission requirement,” seem to give teachers an even worse impression of Digication, and do not seem to help improve teachers’ knowledge of e-WPs. Confusion about the role e-WPs play refers to teachers’ not being clear about what exactly electronic writing portfolios are, or to be more specific, “what is a writing portfolio?” seems to be a fundamental question that many teachers have. Oliver’s statement describes such confusion. He seemed to be confused about the differences between Blackboard, a digital learning management system widely used by many teachers and students, and Digication e-WPs. Oliver seemed to interpret the e-WP platform as a digital space equal to Blackboard for students to submit projects and *only* a

digital space for project submission. Because of such interpretation, Oliver questioned why the writing program asks students to submit drafts repetitively in different places. When it comes to portfolio assessment, Oliver was also unsure of whether the e-WPs should be used for formative assessment or summative assessment, or whether there is any other ways to effectively use e-WPs as an assessment tool. For Amy, it seemed that she wanted to use e-WPs for grading purposes so that students could be more proactive in completing tasks on Digication. Yet, Amy also reported that while she believes that it is legitimate to grade e-WPs, she still does not know how run such grading with purposefully designed activities via Digication. Both Oliver and Amy's reports suggest the possibility that, while teachers appear to know that e-WPs are for assessment purposes, they do not seem to understand clearly enough about what kind of assessment e-WPs are most suitable for in a process-based composition class.

In addition to confusion about the role e-WPs play in multilingual FYC classrooms, teachers are also confused about the writing programs' requirement that they must submit two students' e-WPs at the end of each semester. Although the writing program states that e-WPs are turned in for showcasing purposes, teachers do not seem to understand what showcasing means, and why showcasing e-WPs is necessary. Eventually, the teachers simply interpret such administrative requirement as extra work. From the interview transcript excerpts, both Teresa and Tiffany admitted that for them, the e-WP requirement policies seem to exist for surveillance purposes only. Tiffany also reported her frustration that even if she spent time reading and selecting particular students' e-WPs for submission, there has been no feedback from the writing program telling her how well she has been working with students in Digication e-WPs. Edward

pointed out that it is problematic for the writing program to simply send an email asking for e-WP submissions every semester. Edward stressed that professional development opportunities, including e-WP workshops, should come first, and that the e-WP submission policies should come later. He believes that without sufficient information, such as educating teachers on how e-WPs can be implemented, the submission policy does not mean much.

The above examples from the three subcategories under “concerns and confusion about the writing program’s policies” describe the frustrations, doubts, afterthoughts, opinions, and unanswered questions that teachers develop throughout the process in which they try to figure out how to use e-WPs and meet the submission requirement. Although the writing program does not impose rigorous rules on e-WP implementation and seems to give teachers a great degree of freedom to use e-WPs, the main problem brought on by these mandatory submission policies is that, in order to meet the requirement, teachers are pushed to figure out, use and submit e-WPs by themselves based on ignorance of the tool. Teachers seem to expect more detailed information about e-WPs from the writing program. Information teachers need, include what a writing portfolio is, what an *electronic* writing portfolio is, what it means to create a showcase WP/e-WP, how to walk students over the WP construction process, how to solve technical issues encountered in an online platform when WPs are digitized, and so on. Such ignorance of e-WPs inevitably leads to teachers’ negative impressions, interpretations, comments, and misunderstandings of e-WPs, which indirectly affect students’ reactions to the e-WP tool as well. The following section presents how students have been reacting to the use of e-WPs, which is also the third category that seems to

shape teachers' understandings of Digication e-WPs.

**Student reactions to e-WPs.** Student reactions to Digication e-WPs emerged as the third main category that significantly influences teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices of e-WPs as teachers develop their understandings of e-WPs. Up to 93.7 % of the participants, including those who use e-WPs proactively, those who avoid using e-WPs, and those who use an alternative portfolios, reported that students' reactions to e-WP Digication could motivate or demotivate them to continue using e-WPs in their multilingual FYC classrooms. The category of students' reactions to e-WPs has four subcategories: 1) sense of achievements 2) concerns about publications 3) abstract audience and 4) lack of values and purpose for using e- WPs. The following interview transcript excerpts show examples of students' reactions to e-WPs.

***Students' sense of achievement.*** Researcher: ...and do you think your belief in portfolios ever changed or evolved starting from your... throughout your teaching career?

Sophie: Oh yeah absolutely...when I first started doing portfolios, I thought about it more about a space to keep the documents safe or like archiving...and then as I got into it and I started seeing how my students were engaging and interacting with the technology, I suddenly realized oh, this is not just an archive, this is a way for my students to express themselves with their writing... (Interview 15)

Sophie: ...the more I see my students responding well and engaging with the technology and the portfolio, the more it motivates me to find and encourage ways for students to optimize and capitalize on using it...now I encourage

students to upload videos or to upload cartoons, memes or something meaningful to connect to their writing... [my beliefs in portfolios] evolved, from this archive to a much more expressive package of materials that students can use for their writing. (Interview 15)

Sophie: ...through the portfolio work because the students were able to customize the writing to their own experiences... they were very open minded to it and they saw the value in it themselves when they could say “I’m an engineering student and here’s my writing portfolio, here are all the different ways that I’ve improved or I’ve demonstrated my writing skills in my area of study,” and that was really great. I really enjoyed seeing that open mindedness, that consciousness-raising to the value of writing. (Interview 15)

Teresa: ...because we’re putting this portfolio together it’s all in one place, all they have to do is [to] go click through it again, and remind themselves... just how much they’ve done! And there’s enough time between each writing project in each upload...just how much they’ve learned and all the changes that they’ve made. (Interview 2)

Ursula: ...I’ve seen them incorporate that Twitter feed into their Digication portfolio, and yes, it’s extra credits in my class, but the fact that they now have this Twitter feed that shows how they’ve analyzed some phenomenon in the real world, they...they find that extremely useful. (Interview 3)



Wendy: ...sometimes I think a platform like Digication transcends linguistic differences...although I might use a term like affordances, they understand concept without being able to use the term itself. They do figure it out. (Interview 16)

***Students' concerns about publications.*** Sophie: ...there are students who didn't trust that their Digication work was going to be used in a proper way... I think it was kind of cultural in some ways...some students questioned, "where is my work going? Who's reading it?" because it's part of the [the university's name] Digication system, students were worried. So I had to talk to them a lot and say, this isn't what it's being used for. But then again, I don't know what cultural experiences they've had with their governments and their societies in other countries... so it was a valuable and a valued concern that I had and that they had. So I had to listen to that. (Interview 15)

Wendy: Last semester in English 108 I had a student from the Middle East who was writing about feminist issues and he said, "I really am very uncomfortable putting it on Digication," ... the only student peer review [this student] could have was somebody who fully agreed not to share the work with anyone else and his peer reviewer was somebody I had to hand pick... we're actually talking about a student who could be threatened for his political views. [The student] said, "If anyone else from my country sees me and associates me with this, it's dangerous for me." (Interview 16)

Tiffany: A lot of my students don't want anyone to see them, so I tell them it's okay if they make them private or visible only to the instructor. (Interview 14)

*Abstract audience.* Zoe: ...I can see the purpose of having that [e-WP] platform, but I guess part of the reason is audience. When they [students] post it [their drafts] online, I'm still the one going to grade it [the e-WPs]... and...I told them that's not only for me, this is for writing program too, but they're not receiving anything from the writing program.

Researcher: You're saying that students are not getting any rewards, feedback, or comments from the so-called "writing program" that you mention [to the students]?

Zoe: Right. In the sense I guess, for me and for the students too, the audience is exactly the same when they hand in their writing projects through Blackboard. (Interview 8)

Tiffany: I tell [the students] that it's [the e-WPs are] to show their own work, but I don't think they really care about showing their own work. I think a lot of them are ...at least a big percentage of them are just like, "I'm glad to be done with the class. Let's go on to the next thing." And then...I don't think there's a real sense of who their audience is. (Interview 14)

*Lack of values and purpose for using e-WPs.* Sally: ...something I see too often that disappoints me is that students are not willing to think very deeply about what

it is they've accomplished over the semester... perhaps this is partly my fault in that I have not emphasized the use of Digication until the end of the class or toward the end of the semester. (Interview 12)

Sally: ... especially for those who are not in majors in which writing is really vital. They don't think to themselves, "Oh, this is something I must do because it will help me with my major or advance in my major." And so we have to face the fact that those students are not as committed or invested.

Researcher: So you're saying that in the reflection task on Digication, students do not seem to give...

Sally: Yes, and in the rationale too. They don't seem to give much value.

(Interview 12)

Tiffany: ...on the end of term, the student evaluations, there's one question, "What projects or assignments were the most helpful," and another one, "Which were the least helpful?" and then, so many people say the portfolio is the least helpful. (Interview 14)

Kristine: ... from the teaching evaluation...[the students] commented "I have no idea why you would have to put up... the Digication." But I always try to be clear why you have to put them [the writing projects ]in here [Digication] by introducing the department writing programs like the policies, what we are doing with the policies. (Interview 6)

Zoe: ...last semester I had received several emails from my students. They asked, “Why are we doing this? It is only for you or this is for the program too?”

Researcher: 107 students, at the end of the semester?

Zoe: Yeah, 107 students at the end of the semester. I asked them “upload everything on portfolio. Turn it in.” They said: “I have a question about portfolio. Is it really important? Is it for you or for the department? Why are we doing this?”

(Interview 8)

The aforementioned examples illustrate the interactions and conversations between teachers and students during the e-WP creation and uploading process. According to Sophie and Teresa’s observations, the e-WPs served as a platform where documenting process work becomes more feasible and convenient, which seems to allow students to observe the improvement between revisions and reflect on their finished work more easily. Sophie also mentioned that by reading students’ WP works, her perceptions and experiences with e-WPs appear to have evolved. In the past she viewed e-WPs as merely online archiving tools, but now Sophie understands that the e-WP is an advanced piece of technology that enables students to express writing ideas in multi-media formats. Ursula reported that after she had students practice analyzing tweets, she found that students were automatically willing to incorporate Twitter analyses into Digication to showcase their learning results. For Wendy, she reported that even if students are not familiar with technical terms in the e-WP platform, the digital environment seems to “transcends linguistic differences” and enables students to complete their tasks. Wendy used an example that one of her students once walked in her office, explaining to her that

she forgot how to create a hyperlink. After Wendy helped the student, they recalled the steps successfully and finished their task. In Wendy's eyes, technologically savvy students can easily pick up how to manage and maneuver the e-WP platform, even if Digication is in English. The positive reactions from students seem to reassure teachers that although there are existing technical issues with e-WPs, they still seem to benefit students' learning of composition because it give them a sense of achievement.

Despite students' sense of achievement that is seemingly elicited by teachers' implementation of Digication e-WPs, there are also negative reactions that affect teachers' views on e-WPs. Students' concerns about publishing their writing projects on the Internet seem to be a source that has teachers hesitating when they work with students during e-WP implementation. For example, although both Sophie and Wendy use e-WPs proactively and reported the benefits that e-WPs have brought to their students, they still have students who feel uneasy about having to publish writing projects on e-WPs because of cultural and political reasons. Sophie explained that some of her students perceive Digication as a university-affiliated tool and have concerns about uploading writings that critique university policies. Thus, Sophie ended up allowing students creating e-WPs on Weebly.com, a website that is not affiliated with any educational institutions, to lessen students' worries. A similar scenario happened to Wendy. A student made it clear to Wendy that his/her essay on feminism would bring life threats, so Wendy allowed the student to delete his/her e-WP on Digication at the end of the semester. Wendy also revealed in the interview that students' concerns about publishing sensitive contents on the Internet pushed her to take ethical uses of students' work in e-WPs even more seriously. From here, both Sophie's and Wendy's understanding of e-WPs seems to have

evolved. They do not only see the benefits of e-WPs but have also become aware of the issue that a published e-WP sometime crosses the boundaries of personal privacy. This is especially true when students have different cultural and political values. It also seems that teachers' ethical concerns about submitting students' e-WPs online are somewhat associated with students' concerns about publishing e-WPs.

Another negative reaction from students that seems to influence teachers' opinions on e-WPs is the abstract concept of audience. In Zoe's example, she reported that students did not seem to understand what the "writing program" refers to when she explained the purpose of Digication e-WPs. Zoe observed that from her students' perspective, uploading writing projects to Digication does not seem to be different from submitting the same writing projects to Blackboard because the reader and grader on both platforms end up being same the course instructor. Since the writing program does not offer any feedback to students' submitted e-WPs, Zoe reported that it is difficult for the students to picture an audience who actually sees and reads their e-WPs on Digication. Because of this reason, some of Zoe's students have failed to submit their e-WPs at the end of the semester, even if Zoe had been constantly reminding them to do so. Tiffany made a similar observation. She reported that the showcasing purpose proposed by the writing program does not seem to work effectively for her students' because they have not been receiving any feedback by the so-called "writing program."

The last subcategory that illustrates students' reactions to e-WPs seems to be students' inability to see the value and purpose of e-WPs. From the interview transcript excerpts, it seems that teachers learn about students' attitudes towards e-WPs mostly from e-mails, teaching evaluations, and the final reflective essays submitted at the end of

the semester. Sally reported that students' portfolio rationales and end-of-the-semester reflections do not seem to show an in-depth retrospection on their learning of composition. Tiffany, Kristine, and Zoe reported that from the teaching evaluations and the email messages they received, their students questioned why there is a need to use Digication e-WPs. These three teachers also reported that e-WPs seem to be the least helpful assignment in students' eyes. Simultaneously, teachers' explanations that e-WPs in Digication are used "for the writing program" and "for sharing your work with peers" do not seem to persuade students that e-WPs help with learning composition.

The four subcategories under "students' reactions to e-WPs" describe the sense of achievement, questions, concerns, and confusion students experienced when they follow teachers' guidelines for using e-WPs. Students' positive responses to e-WPs seem to reassure some teachers that e-WPs are somewhat beneficial to learning composition. At the same time, these teachers are equipped with the ability to deal with issues brought on by e-WPs during the teacher-student interactions. For example, both Sophie and Wendy found their course designs work effectively in combination with e-WPs, and both of them have developed their own ways to respond to students' privacy concerns (using Weebly.com as an alternative or allowing students to delete the entire e-WP when the semester ends). On the contrary, however, students' negative reactions to e-WPs seem to reinforce teachers' already-poor impression of e-WPs. For example, Sally observed that e-WPs do not seem to elicit in-depth reflections. Tiffany, Kristine, and Zoe seem to view e-WPs as unnecessary, redundant, and non-helpful for learning based on the messages they received from students. Students' reactions therefore appear to be another important source that shapes the way teachers develop their understandings of e-WPs in addition to

all other sources mentioned earlier in this chapter.

### **Summary of the Sources Influencing Teachers' Knowledge of e-WPs**

This interview results presented in this chapter answered my second research question. Data analysis showed that six sources seem to shape teachers' knowledge of e-WPs. These sources included: 1) undergraduate school education 2) graduate school education, including trainings received as a graduate teaching associate 3) work experience outside of graduate school 4) technical difficulties in the e-WP platform 5) teachers' concerns and confusion about the writing program e-WP policies and 6) students' reactions to e-WPs. Among these six sources, undergraduate education, graduate education, and work experience in the early stage of teachers' teaching career seem to play the role of introducing teachers to the concept of work portfolios—both traditional hardcopy and electronic. As teachers' careers move on, their knowledge of e-WPs seems to develop and evolve, influenced by technical difficulties with the e-WP platform, writing program e-WP policies, and their students' reactions. Being required to help students create and submit e-WPs at the end of the semester causes, many teachers seem to be concerned and meanwhile confused. They are concerned about how e-WPs can be integrated with teaching and learning, and whether it is ethical to publish students' e-WPs online for “research purposes,” as claimed by the writing program. Some teachers are also confused about the differences between Blackboard, an online learning management system and Digication, asking why the writing program requests students to submit the same assignments twice on separate online platforms. Some teachers expressed confusion about the writing program's mandatory e-WP submission requirement, which in their eyes, function for the purpose of tracking their progress.



Teachers also mentioned that the writing program should provide professional development workshops that offer more detailed information about e-WPs. When teachers do not appear to understand the features of e-WPs well enough during the e-WP creation process, students' reactions to Digication e-WPs seem to affect teachers' opinions even more significantly. Students' reactions to e-WPs include their sense of achievement after creating e-WPs, concerns about publishing e-WPs online, the abstract concept of audience, and the lack of value and purposes when using e-WPs.

The aforementioned data shows the results of the semi-structured interviews from sixteen participants. As the interviews are based participants' on self-reports, data from other sources will help confirm the validity of the interview data from another perspective. The following section reports the results of teachers' syllabi analysis, which focuses on the way teachers describe and structure the Digication e-WP information when communicating with students.

### **Syllabi Analysis Results**

Because the writing program requires every teacher to include the e-WP submission policies in their syllabus, all sixteen participants' syllabi have at least one section describing the e-WP assignment. The policies regulated that an e-WP containing the final drafts of each writing project must be uploaded to the online Digication platform at the end of the semester. Other than this mandatory description, teachers' e-WP policies in the syllabi seemed to vary based on the whether the teacher avoids using e-WPs, uses e-WPs proactively throughout the semester, or implements alternative WPs for their students. For teachers who avoid using e-WPs, and only have students upload final drafts of each writing project to Digication, there is almost no additional e-WP requirement

given in their syllabi, except for the e-WP submission descriptions placed in the writing program policy section. Some teachers in this group may add a reminder to students that all final drafts and a course reflection must be uploaded to Digication at the end of the semester. Yet, such reminders only seem to reflect what some teachers mentioned in their interviews, that those reminders are included only to meet the writing program's e-WP requirement.

For teachers who proactively use e-WPs throughout the semester, their syllabi contain more detailed information about e-WPs. The extra information covers explanations of e-WP grading standards, specific assignments expected to be uploaded to e-WPs, and purpose of using e-WPs. For example, when Sophie combined her learning-transfer curriculum with e-WPs, she included a "Learning Transfer Reflection and e-Portfolio" section in her syllabus where she explains how the reflection should be written and uploaded. In Wendy's syllabus, she uses simple languages, that "All writing projects are submitted via our Blackboard and Digication." In her daily plan section, Digication is on the agenda in almost every class-meeting starting from week seven. Throughout the semester, Wendy introduces students to the platform, teaches them how to form a working bibliography, how to create effective visuals and hyperlinks within their written work, and how to personalize their e-WPs. Both Sophie's and Wendy's syllabi seemed to match what they reported in their interviews. That is, their e-WPs are used to assist with different course designs based on their teaching goals.

For teachers who reported using alternative e-WP platforms, their syllabi contain information about how those different e-WPs function in their classes. In Iris' syllabus, for example, she placed her portfolio requirement in the "Participation Work" section

because hard-copy participation portfolios are one of the main pedagogical tools she uses in her L2 FYC courses, as shown in the following:

### **Participation Work**

Participation work includes oral and written responses to readings and other course material, in-class assignments, group work, drafts, revision work, and anything else we do in the course of the writing process for each project.

Participation activities will equal 15% of the course grade (7.5% per portfolio).

(Document 13)

The above description states Iris' policy for her participation portfolios, which asks students to compile their paperwork, in-class discussions, and reading-writing responses that have been produced from their routine classroom work. Iris' participation portfolio policy also seems to reflect her interview, that the participation portfolio does not require any extra work from her students as long as they attend the class on a regular basis. As for Teresa, her syllabus defines of what an e-WP is, what the Digication platform contains, the sections they need to complete, and the sources students can refer to when creating and designing their own e-WP pages in Digication. An inconsistency between Teresa's interview and her syllabus, however, is that her syllabus does not seem to mention the requirement of importing Google Docs into Digication. This inconsistency may be due to the possibility that Teresa uses the syllabus only for the purpose of giving students a basic concept of what an e-portfolio is, and verbally instructs her students to import Google Docs into Digication at the end of the semester. An inconsistency was found in Stella's syllabus. She reported only using e-WPs for students to upload and edit their final drafts for each project at the end of the semester. Yet in Stella's syllabus, she

states “The e-Portfolio will be something that we work on *all semester*, and so it should be seen as a culmination of your work in class.” It is possible that “all semester” and “culmination” refers to asking students to collect all final drafts for each project throughout the semester and creating a showcase e-portfolio, instead of asking students to collect process work (such as a rough draft) and creating a working e-portfolio. No matter what kinds of possibilities there are, the overall analysis of the sixteen course syllabi matched the different degrees of e-WP implementation reported by the sixteen teachers in their interviews. Small inconsistencies in the above two cases did not seem to affect the results of the analysis.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter answered the two inquiries under the second research question, by reporting the sources that shape and affect teachers’ knowledge of e-WPs, and the analysis of their syllabi. When it came to teachers’ knowledge of e-WPs, the interview results seemed to indicate that undergraduate school education, graduate school education, and work experience outside of graduate school were the three sources that introduced teachers to the concept of WP/e-WP assessment. When teachers accumulated more experience, technical difficulties in the assigned e-WP platform, writing program’s e-WP policies, and student reactions to e-WPs seemed to be the sources that constantly influenced teachers’ knowledge of e-WPs. Finally, teachers who proactively used Digication, or used alternative e-WP platforms, tended to give more detailed explanations and information about e-WPs in their syllabi. On the contrary, teachers who avoided using e-WPs did not include extra information about e-WPs in their syllabi—except for the writing program’s e-WP submission policies. The information and requirements

teachers put in their syllabi were thus consistent with teachers' different ways of e-WP implementation as reported in their interviews.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Following the results presented in chapters four and five, I summarized the study and discussed possible interpretations of the interview and syllabi analysis results in this chapter. The discussion covered 1) how teachers' e-WP practices confirm or differ from previous WP and e-WP literature and 2) how the results described the interactions among teachers' writing assessment practices, assessment knowledge, and institutional factors. At the end, I reported limitations of the study, pedagogical implications, and suggestions for future research.

#### **Summary of the Study**

In this study, I explored teachers' practices of electronic writing portfolios (e-WPs) as well as the sources that affected and shaped teachers' knowledge of e-WPs in the context of multilingual First-Year Composition (FYC) classrooms. The goal of this study was to use e-WPs as an example to better understand L2 teachers' writing assessment literacy—particularly how L2 teachers are depending on such literacy to assess student writers' learning in the context of classroom assessment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to address teacher participants' responses, and the syllabi analysis was implemented to triangulate the interview data. I drew on the definition of second language teachers' writing assessment literacy (Crusan, Plakans, & Gebril, 2016) and the framework of Elements of Teacher Knowledge (Racelis, 2016) to interpret data. Findings report that 37.5 % of the teachers use Digication e-WPs with the goal of guiding students

throughout their writing process. Those teachers use Digication e-WPs to teach the concept of process writing, elicit reflections, practice formative grading, create a sense of ownership, elicit transfer of learning, and teach the concept of audience awareness. 18.7 % of the teachers use WPs on alternative platforms other than Digication throughout the semester. These alternative WPs included traditional hard-copy WPs, or e-WPs created in Google Docs or Weebly.com. 43.7 % of the teachers do not actively use e-WPs and have students upload their writing projects to Digication e-WPs only to meet the writing program's requirement at the end of the semester. These teachers avoid using e-WPs because they do not seem know the purpose of e-WPs, are not sure how to incorporate e-WPs into their curriculum, do not have enough class time, and they perceive e-WPs as a requirement that they only have to check off on their to-do list to satisfy the writing program administration. Six sources seemed to influence teachers' knowledge of e-WPs and constantly shape such knowledge as teachers move on in their teaching career. These sources included undergraduate school education, graduate school education including training received as graduate teaching associates, work experience outside of graduate school, technical difficulties in the e-WP platform, writing program's e-WP policies, and students' reactions to e-WPs.

The contributions of this study were two-fold. First, the study adds teachers' actual implementation of e-WPs in multilingual FYC classrooms to portfolio assessment literature, rather than merely talking about teacher perceptions of e-WP. Understanding L2 teachers' practices of e-WPs gives the writing program administration clearer information about the concerns, challenges and obstacles teachers really encounter in terms of using the tool. Such information should then help writing program

administrations provide adequate support for teachers, especially when they are required to have L2 students construct e-WPs and submit them for the whole FYC course.

Secondly, this study added more information to the still-developing literature of writing assessment literacy—particularly in the subarea of second language writing assessment literacy situated in classroom assessment.

### **Discussion**

Results from the current study revealed several pieces of information. Some information confirmed previous research, whereas some other information was inconsistent with arguments that have been constantly accepted in WP and e-WP literature. One significant finding that should move the WP/e-WP scholarship forward, was teachers' changing and evolving views on e-WPs. Despite the history that WPs have once been used as a high-stakes testing tools in writing programs at higher education, composition teachers, including those who use Digication e-WP proactively and those who use e-WPs in other alternative formats, now understand that e-WPs function most efficiently as a pedagogical tool. These teachers are using e-WPs to assist in their own teaching, and they also did not count on e-WPs as a single or the only assessment tool to determine students' pass-or-fail destiny in multilingual FYC composition. The way these teachers use e-WPs, seemed to reflect Murphy and Smith's (1991) description, that "when teachers make portfolios primarily for teaching and learning, they do not get carried away with the final judgment day" (p. 77).

Although it is a positive sign that some composition teachers at higher education these days seemed have the sense of using e-WPs as a pedagogical tool, inconsistencies still exist between the claims of what e-WPs could do in the literature, and what teachers



found challenging after they actually implemented e-WPs with L2 student writers. The first example that showed such inconsistency is the value of reflection. While past WP literature constantly stressed that reflective essays at the end of e-WPs elicit students' reflective thinking on the learning process (Yancey, 1992; Elbow, 1994; Camp & Levine, 1991; Conway, 1994; Cardoni, Fraser, & Starner, 1994; Murphy, 1994; Hamilton, 1994; Herman, Gearhart, & Aschbacher, 1996; Murphy & Camp, 1996; Barr & Hallam, 1996; McCabe, 1996; Moore, 2012), the current study reported that only 12.5% of the teacher participants proactively use e-WPs to ask students to do reflections throughout the semester. One possible reason for this low percentage, may be that most teachers already follow the writing program's e-WP requirement and have students upload a mandatory reflection at the end of the semester—no matter whether these teachers use e-WPs or not during the semester. Since a reflective essay is already required by the writing program administration and has to be turned in by any means, teachers may not have viewed it as a creative or unique activity associated with e-WPs, and therefore did not stress the importance of reflections in the interview. Another possible reason that fewer teachers mentioned reflections in the current study, like participant Sally reported, may be that students do not seem to talk too deeply about their accomplishments over the course in their final reflections. Sally also perceived students' shallow reflections as her responsibility because she only emphasizes reflective essays when the semester draws to an end. Sally's observation responded to the findings from Liu (2003) and Struyven, Blicek, and Roeck (2014). By analyzing L2 students' reflective short essays, Liu reported that while teachers expect students to be able to identify specific growth and improvement over multiple drafts and revisions and articulate such growth in reflections,

L2 student writers may still “have difficulty identifying their specific growth” (p. 204) over a short period of time. Liu also reported that some other L2 students did not seem to engage deeply enough to draft a reflection because of the insufficient amount of the time they have at the end of the semester. Similarly, in Struyen et al.’s (2014) study where preservice teachers at a university teacher-education program were asked to create teaching e-portfolios, participants reported that they were doing an “overdose” amount of reflections but couldn’t see any benefits of e-WPs (p. 51). Student writers and preservice teachers, as reported above, may perceive reflections at the end of their WPs not as valuable and helpful than what teachers originally expected.

Despite the low percentage of teachers who actively use e-WPs for the purpose of reflection, however, the 12.5% of the participants who ask students to upload reflections to e-WPs seemed to receive positive feedback from students. Take Sophie’s class for example, she specifically asked students to draft reflections on learning transfer because her curriculum focuses on helping students not only learn composition, but also implement the learned composition skills to other writing projects based on students’ individual majors. Since Sophie asked students to explain how they plan to apply the learned skills from FYC to other projects in other courses, students in Sophie’s class seemed to know more clearly about what to put in their reflective mini essays, rather than merely meeting the assignment requirement by writing empty reflective content. The way Sophie scaffolded her reflective assignment also seemed to respond to Takzak’s (2011) argument, that reflection helps students create an occasion for learning transfer because “reflection in a composition classroom provides the practice that facilitates transfer by explicitly tapping into students’ prior knowledge and asking them to reframe this

knowledge for a new writing situation (p. 8). To allow the opportunity for students to practice learning transfer via reflective essays, however, requires teachers' awareness and knowledge of giving clear goals and guidelines for the reflection homework, instead of asking students to just "talk about your improvement" or "tell me what you have accomplished in writing" vaguely and hectically at the end of the semester. Sophie's case seemed to suggest that, while reflections have long been associated with WP implementations, it is actually the course objectives and curriculum design teachers *combine with* an e-WP platform that matter, rather than only using e-WPs because e-WPs usually come with reflection assignments. Asking students to only do a reflection and upload it to e-WPs, therefore, may not necessarily endow students with the ability to see the value of this assignment, if reflection is not embedded in a well-designed curriculum structure. The blurred line between merely using e-WPs for reflection's sake and using e-WPs as a platform to showcase students' efforts under effective teaching objectives, nevertheless, has been a slight but important difference neglected in WP and e-WP literature.

Another example that revealed the inconsistency between the WP/e-WP literature and teachers' actual uses of e-WPs, is the claim that WPs/e-WPs help students develop a sense of ownership (Graves & Sunstein, 1992; Paris & Ayers, 1994; Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Hamp-Lyons and Condon, 2000). The term "ownership," though not being rigorously defined in the WP and e-WP literature, generally refers to the concept that teachers change their roles from an absolute judge to an objective facilitator when evaluating students' performances, and the concept that students have more freedom to decide how to assess their own work. While many different online learning platforms

these days—including Blackboard and Google Docs—allow students to turn in assignments and publish their work in digital formats like Digication does, ownership is one of the important features that distinguish an e-WP from other digital learning tools. Once teachers allow students to take control over the content of the e-WPs, students can select the drafts they wanted to include and comment on their writing experience via reflections and self-assessment. WP/e-WP scholars believe that such processes will encourage students to present their identities as a unique person and writer who “owns” their e-WPs, which may help students become self-regulated learners.

Despite such assumption, however, teacher participants in the current study did not seem to spend too much time developing students’ sense of ownership via implementing e-WPs. Except for the 33% of the teachers who mentioned that students’ uploaded biographies in the “About Me” section seemed to personalize their e-WPs, almost no teachers reported that creating e-WPs enabled students’ ownership of this tool. Among the 37.5 % of the teacher participants who proactively use Digication and among the 18.7% of the participants who use e-WPs or traditional WPs on alternative platforms, not too many teachers gave students complete freedom to select and decide what to include in their e-WPs. Even for Sophie, who allowed students to build up e-WPs on Weebly.com and for Wendy, who asked students to turn essays into magazine article format and publish them in Digication, scaffolded the e-WP content for students and told students what kinds of writing projects should be included in their e-WPs. For students, the process of getting familiar with the idea and methods of e-WPs by following teachers’ instructions is important before they can completely decide how their e-WPs should look like without problems. Just as Lam (2014) reminded, writing teachers should not assume

that L2 students automatically know how to actively engage in the e-WP process due to the possibly different educational background they were brought up, before these students journeyed to the U.S. It seemed that student writers in multilingual FYC classrooms still need careful, step-by-step guidance from teachers to build up and organize the e-WP content.

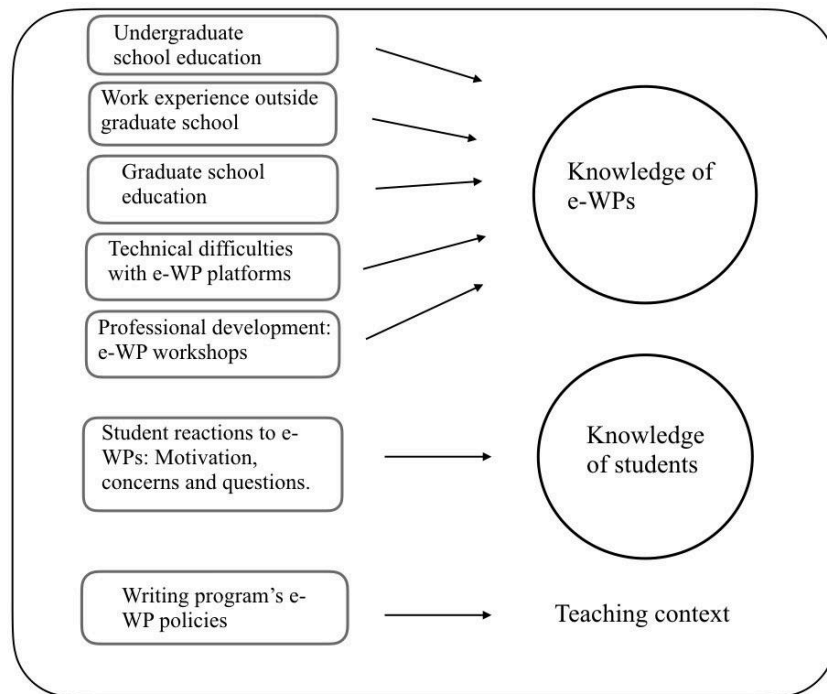
In addition to the aforementioned cases, the issue of ownership can be discussed from yet another perspective. During the process of guiding students to create e-WPs, some teachers expressed concern that they were not sure whether it was appropriate or necessary to have students create e-WPs by using the templates that writing program provided. For some teachers, using the template deprives students the creativity of designing their own e-WPs layouts, and ultimately does not help develop students' sense of ownership of e-WPs. For example, Wendy clearly indicated that she always has students create e-WPs in Digication from scratch because she hesitated using the template that writing program provided. For Wendy, even something as trivial as letting students select the font in each module, endows students' ownership of Digication e-WPs. "...if I put out the writing program's template, then they're just basically filling in the blocks and I don't want that" (Interview 16). In a similar vein, Iris and Oliver also questioned using writing program's template in Digication. Iris questioned the necessity of giving students an e-WP template in the first place because for her, the template delivered a message that "This is what students need to do" without giving enough flexibility for the teachers to integrate e-WPs with their own curriculum design. Oliver expressed his confusion about the "rationale" tab in the Digication template. For Oliver, it seemed weird that the writing program required e-WP submission, assign a template, and asked students to write about

a rationale of why they are creating an e-WP. "...rationale...I don't know how to explain it to students. It's a requirement that you guys need to create this Digication portfolio for yourself, and then you have to give a rationale as to why" (Interview 7).

From Wendy, Iris, and Oliver's descriptions, it can be inferred that the template did not seem to make the e-WP creation process easier for either the teachers or the students, but rather resulted in more confusion. Some required sections in the template, such as the rationale tab, disallowed both teachers and students to create e-WPs in a way they wanted, letting alone eliciting students' ownership of the tool. When teachers felt that they couldn't take control over the designs and outlines of the e-WPs, it was difficult for them to persuade students that, making e-WPs will one day endow them with the ability to control their own learning, with teachers' assistance alongside. Such phenomenon reflected earlier arguments, that a WP should be a "grass-root" pedagogical tool, allowing teachers to integrate their own curriculum and assess students' learning in classroom context (Yancey, 1992; Jordan & Purves, 1996). From these perspectives, I would argue that while WPs and e-WPs have long been recognized as an ideal tool to facilitate students' reflective abilities and sense of ownership, definitions of e-WPs should be slightly adjusted. While a WP is currently defined as "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibit the students' effort, progress and achievements in given area" (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, p. 60; Arter & Spandel, 1992, p. 36), it may be more comprehensive to say that an e-WP is a purposeful collection that demonstrates students' efforts, progress, and achievements only when it is appropriately integrated with curriculum. Such curriculum needs to allow enough space for teachers to assist students and for learners to be in charge of their learning to some extent.

Although teachers' practical experience found that not all e-WP features function as effectively as the literature claimed, sources that influence teachers' e-WP knowledge, according to the interview and syllabi analysis, seemed to fit into some parts of the framework of Elements of Teacher Knowledge (Racelis, 2016). The sources that seem to shape teachers' e-WP knowledge, as stated in earlier chapters, included six items: 1) undergraduate school education 2) graduate school education, including education received as graduate teaching associates 3) work experience outside of graduate schools 4) technical difficulties in the e-WP platform 5) writing programs' e-WP policies and 6) students' reactions to e-WPs. Professional development for both novice and experienced teachers is another potential source that may affect teachers' e-WP knowledge according to the data analysis results. Figure 8 shows how these sources are organized into different categories and form into teachers' e-WP knowledge.

Figure 8. Different Sources Forming into Teachers' e-WP Knowledge



*Figure 8.* Different sources forming into teachers' e-WP knowledge. Six sources formed teachers' understanding of e-WPs based on the results of data analysis. In addition to the six sources, "Professional development: e-WP workshops" was added as a potential source that may also shape teachers' e-WP knowledge in the near future, because many participants expressed the urgent need of attending e-WP workshops in the interviews.

Figure 8 depicts how different sources form into teachers' e-WP knowledge.

Among these six sources, undergraduate school education, graduate school education, work experience outside of graduate school, and technical difficulties with the e-WP platform, form into teachers' knowledge of e-WPs—including knowledge of portfolio assessment and knowledge of technology. In addition, I added one more box

"Professional development: e-WP workshops" in the diagram, to address teachers' needs of attending workshops and learning more information about e-WP in the future.

Professional development opportunities, according to the majority of the participants, will be an important source to advance teachers' e-WP knowledge. Students' reactions to e-WPs—including how motivated they are to engage in e-WP activities, the concerns and questions they have about e-WPs—form into teachers' knowledge of students. The writing program policies, referring to the e-WP creation and submission requirements, represent as an institutional factor situated in the teaching context.

Once the different sources of influence were identified and attributed into the categories of teachers' knowledge of e-WPs, knowledge of students, and contextual factors, the interactions among these three elements seemed to explain teachers' different e-WP practices. Figure 9 below illustrates the interactions among teachers' knowledge of e-WPs, knowledge of students, and different e-WP practices.



Figure 9. Conceptualization of L2 Teachers' Assessment Literacy in e-WPs

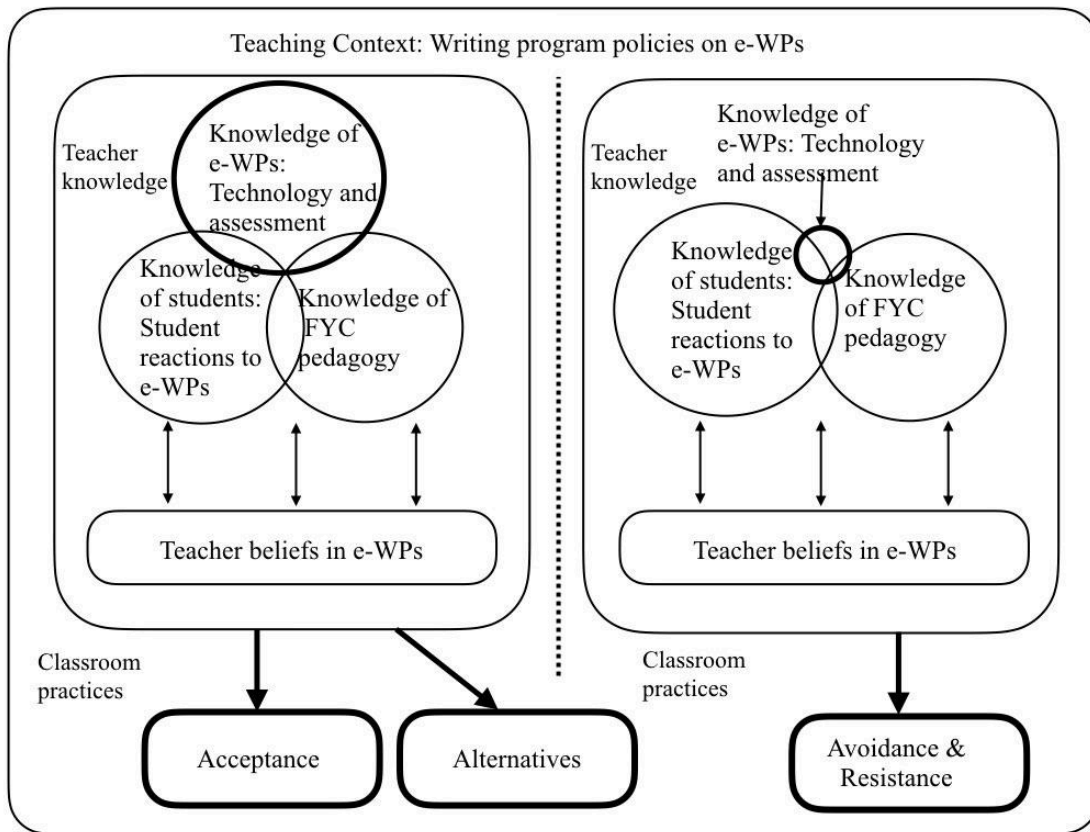


Figure 9. Conceptualization of L2 Teachers' Assessment Literacy in e-WPs. The diagram presents the interactions among teachers' knowledge of e-WPs, knowledge of students and practices of e-WPs, situated in the Elements of Teacher Knowledge framework. Such interactions are different, between those who use e-WPs actively, and those who do not use e-WPs actively. Adapted from "Exploring teacher knowledge in multilingual First-Year Composition," p. 15, by Racelis, J. V. (2016). Copyright 2016 by Racelis.

The diagram on the left-hand side in Figure 9 describes how teachers' e-WPs knowledge may affect their decisions on accepting e-WPs or choosing alternative e-WP platforms. For the 37.5% of the teachers who proactively use e-WPs on Digication, and the 18.7% of the teachers who choose alternative platforms other than Digication, the interview data indicated that these two groups of teachers hold relatively strong knowledge of WP/e-WPs, which enabled them to integrate WP pedagogy adequately in their teaching objectives—be it doing assignments in Digication, teaching learning

transfer skills, teaching audience awareness, developing student ownership, tracking students' process writing via Google Docs, protecting students' privacy via Weebly.com, or any others. During the interviews, almost every teacher in these two groups mentioned learning about WPs/e-WPs from educational and work experience. Their own portfolio experience as undergraduate students, the readings they did about portfolios at graduate schools, and the work experience they accumulated at other institutions before teaching at the current institute, taught them different important lessons about WPs and e-WPs. Lessons learned during these processes include the problems when WPs/e-WPs are used for large-scale and high-stakes testing purposes, how students may benefit from WPs/e-WPs in a classroom setting, and how WPs/e-WPs content can be modified to better adjust to teachers' own teaching objectives and different students' needs. Meanwhile, teachers in these two groups also figured out the technical features in Digication or on other platforms through self-learning or conversations with colleagues. All these aforementioned sources and learned information form into teachers' e-WP knowledge. The knowledge of how WPs/e-WPs can be embedded within a curriculum, how to guide students to create and maintain WPs/e-WPs, and the ability to solve basic technical issues in either digital or traditional paper-based platforms, convinced the students that e-WPs are manageable and helpful for learning, generating positive reactions from the students. Students' positive reactions then gave teachers a better sense of how the tool benefits students, which increases teachers' knowledge of students and reinforces their beliefs that WPs/e-WPs work effectively in FYC composition classrooms. Eventually, these teachers become more willing to accept Digication e-WPs or go for alternative WP/e-WP platforms, and continue their portfolio policies in subsequent semesters. Here, a balance

seems to be presented among teachers' knowledge of e-WPs, knowledge of students and practices of e-WPs. The writing program's e-WP submission policies, though being a contextual factor that Elbaz (1981) believed to shape teachers' practical knowledge, do not seem to affect these two groups too significantly in the current study.

On the contrary, the 43.7% of the participants who do not actively use e-WPs on a regular basis throughout the semester seem to have a different story. The diagram on the right-hand side in Figure 9 describes how teachers' limited e-WPs knowledge may inevitably magnify the degree to which teachers depend on knowledge of students, which lead teachers' decision of not using e-WPs so frequently. In this group, the majority of the teachers reported several challenges encountered when they implement e-WPs in class. It sounded as if they were uncertain about what e-WPs really meant, unsure of how to integrate e-WPs their curriculum, and most importantly, they reported not being motivated to use e-WPs because students were not interested. When students questioned teachers about the purposes of uploading written works to Digication, teachers responded by saying that Digication was a requirement from the writing program, and that students can share writings with peers on the same campus via Digication. However, according to the teachers, such answers did not seem to convince students that making e-WPs was important or necessary, and the teachers also seemed to be affected by students' uninterested attitude. In addition to describing their frustrations with students' reactions to e-WPs, teachers in this group also reported that they hope the writing program can provide more professional workshops on e-WPs—including the definitions of portfolio assessment, activities that can be designed with e-WP pedagogy, how to use e-WPs to best assess L2 students' writing, and how to deal with technology in the digital e-WP

platforms. The teachers' desire for e-WP professional workshops seems to suggest that although e-WP submission has been a requirement for two years, teachers do not seem to know what exactly an e-WP is and how to use it. When teachers lack enough knowledge of e-WPs but there is a submission requirement from the writing program, teachers inevitably rely more on knowledge of students, that is, students' reactions to the e-WPs, to decide how often and in what ways they are going to use the tool. Simultaneously, when teachers do not learn sufficient knowledge of e-WPs from their past and current educational and work experience, it may not be surprising that they are unable to give students convincing answers when students question the rationale of e-WPs. Teachers' inability to explain the purposes and benefits of e-WPs eventually result in students' indifference in e-WP, which lead to teachers' avoidance or even resistance to using e-WPs. Although the literature has confirmed that teachers' pedagogical decisions in the classroom were affected by student motivation (Breen 1991; Johnson 1992), the portion of teachers' knowledge of the subject matter—that is, teachers' knowledge of e-WPs in this study—seem to affect how much they would rely on knowledge of students to eventually decide their e-WP practices.

While Crusan, Plakans, and Gebiril (2016)'s survey seemed to reveal a more positive picture of teachers' knowledge of writing assessment, the results of the current study seemed to be contrast with what Crusan et al. found. Crusan et al. reported that 62% of their participants used portfolios in writing classes, but only 37.5% of the participants reported using WPs/e-WPs proactively in the current study. Though a sample in a large-scale survey may not be comparable with a small sample size in a qualitative study, it is possible that the standards of counting participants are different. The survey

may count all participants who self-reported using portfolios regardless of purposes, while the current study excluded those who used e-WPs only to meet the writing program's submission requirement and did not treat them as active e-WP users.

Another pattern emerged from the result is the role institutional factor plays and how possibly it affects teacher e-WPs practices. As described in Tsui (1996) and Ruecker, Shapiro, Johnson, and Tardy (2014), institutional policies on writing, sources available in the institutes that will help students with writing, and administrative decisions affect teachers' decisions of how to teach L2 writing in both ESL and EFL contexts. Ruecker et al. pointed out that one of the most common problems mentioned in their survey was "the top-down development of curriculum without any participation by instructors" and "a general lack of administrative support" (p. 408). This quotation is similar to what participant Tiffany reported in the current study, that every time she submits students' e-WPs to the writing program, she feels "confronted by the indifference of the administration to anything except token gestures that are really easy to quantify" (Interview 14). While instructors were not included in the administrative decision process, the current study reported that the writing program's e-WP policies were one of the sources that shape teachers' knowledge of e-WPs, particularly for those who have not learned enough theories about portfolio assessment. Combining all aforementioned discussions from Figure 9, I argue that situated in the context of classroom assessment, pressure from the institution plus teachers' insufficient knowledge of e-WPs limit the way teachers communicate with students, whose reactions eventually affect teachers' practices of e-WPs. Conversely, teachers' sufficient knowledge of e-WPs enables them to balance the pressure from the institutional factors, generating positive reactions from the

students. The students' positive reactions eventually encouraged teachers to continue to use e-WPs.

One thing to notice in Figure 9, was that the element of teacher beliefs from Racelis' (2016) framework, as well as the distinction between teacher' perceptions and beliefs of e-WPs, were not discussed. Since the purpose of the current study was to address the gap between what teachers thought they know about e-WPs and what they actually do with e-WPs, the subtle difference between perceptions and beliefs was not further elaborated in a study that mainly focused on e-WPs. The distinction between teacher perceptions and beliefs, however, will be important and worth investigating in future teacher cognition research.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Results from the current study reported participants' call for e-WP workshops, particularly those eight teachers who have less than three years of experience teaching L2 composition. Because of the still-limited experience these novice teachers have, they expect more resources, assistance, and support from the writing program administration before they are officially required to practice a task. Such opinions echoed previous argument, that classroom assessment training should be emphasized more in teachers' education (Stiggins, 1999, 2002; Weigle, 2007; White, 2009) and that novice teachers were affected more significantly by their preservice education in practicum courses (Faez & Valeo, 2012). Therefore, it is suggested that future teacher education, including TA education in writing programs, offers preservice teachers and new TAs comprehensive assessment practicum courses, to help them understand the uniqueness and importance of classroom assessment. For experienced teachers who are not required to take practicum

courses, regular professional trainings, including workshops for e-WP technology and how teachers may benefit from using e-WPs, should be promoted and offered by the writing program administration. The concept of WPs/e-WPs should be introduced as an example of classroom assessment. Definitions and usefulness of e-WPs should be clearly presented, accompanied by successful examples in order to give both novice and experienced teachers concrete ideas of what e-WPs exactly look like, and what benefit e-WPs may bring to teachers and students. For L2 composition teachers who come from a non-North American educational background and may be unfamiliar with portfolio pedagogy, providing definitions and examples will be extremely helpful. Concerns and shortcomings of e-WPs should be addressed with solutions provided, helping new teachers to understand the tool from a more objective perspective instead of only learning about its benefits. Available resources—including advice for portfolio implementation and technical support—should be provided by the writing program administration on a regular basis, so that teachers know whom to turn to when they encounter problems. Last, but not least, it is suggested that trainings on curriculum design in multilingual FYC should come hand in hand with e-WP practices. Teachers should be educated that e-WPs work most efficiently when integrated with course designs that are suitable for particular groups of students' needs.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Limitations existing in the current study included the small sample size, possible bias in the data collected, and the framework used. Because this is a qualitative and explorative study that focuses on a small number of participants, findings are based on my descriptions and interpretations of data. Therefore, I cannot generalize the results and

make any definitive claims that the teacher's e-WP practices and the sources influencing their e-WP knowledge are completely accurate. Since teacher belief is also a crucial element in the Element of Teacher Knowledge framework but was not explored in the current study, future research should study whether there is a connection between teachers' practices and beliefs in e-WPs, as well as how teachers' knowledge in e-WPs may affect their beliefs.

Another limitation is the possible bias in the data collected. Although the study reported that some teachers used e-WPs proactively and gained positive responses from students, students' e-WPs from these teachers' classes were not collected due to time constraints and accessibility. Since the interview contents were based on teachers' self-reports, students' e-WP websites may carry richer information and serve as more reliable sources to triangulate the interview data. It is suggested that future research collect data from both teachers' and students' end, so that a more realistic picture of how e-WPs are functioning in L2 composition classrooms can be revealed. Moreover, since the current study only conducted one-time interviews, there was not a second round or third round of interviews for me to double-confirm whether a participant stayed consistent with his/her answers, or how precisely I have understood his/her intended meaning. Future research should use longitudinal qualitative methods to increase validity and reliability of data, if time allows.

Lastly, the framework used to interpret data should also be treated with caution. In the current study, although I developed the interactions among teachers' knowledge of e-WPs, practices of e-WPs and contextual factors based on the Elements of Teacher Knowledge framework (Racelis, 2016), whether this framework is also appropriate to



describe L2 teachers' assessment knowledge, assessment beliefs, and assessment practices of a particular tool in the context of classroom remains questionable. Since e-WPs are not the only option for classroom assessment, the Elements of Teacher Knowledge framework cannot guarantee that teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices interact in the same way when other classroom assessment tools are chosen. Future research may investigate how teachers' knowledge, beliefs, practices, and contextual factors interact with each other when teachers use integrated writing tasks, self-assessment, teacher-made exams, in-class impromptu essay exams and other tools in L2 writing classrooms, which may generate a more comprehensive and reliable pattern of L2 teachers' writing assessment literacy.

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APPENDIX A  
IRB PROTOCOL

APPROVAL: MODIFICATION

Paul Matsuda  
 English  
 480/965-6356  
 pmatsuda@asu.edu

Dear Paul Matsuda:

On 2/28/2017 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Modification
Title:	L2 Writing Teachers' Perceptions and Uses of Writing Portfolios in First-Year Composition: An Explorative Qualitative Study
Investigator:	Paul Matsuda
IRB ID:	STUDY00005674
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IRB_Interview Questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• IRB_Short Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• HRP-503a-TEMPLATE_PROTOCOL_SocialBehavioralV02-10-15.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> <li>• HRP-503a-TEMPLATE_PROTOCOL_SocialBehavioralV02-10-15.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> <li>• IRB_Background Information Questionnaire_Teachers.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• IRB_Recruitment Letter.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• IRB_Early Stage Short Survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> </ul>

The IRB approved the modification.

When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the “Documents” tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Tai-Min Wu  
Paul Matsuda  
Tai-Min Wu

APPENDIX B

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

## Get Your Voice Heard and Earn \$20!

Dear Writing Program Teacher,

You are invited to participate in this study about L2 writing teachers' perceptions and uses of portfolio assessment. This research is conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation and will be conducted during the Spring 2017 semester in March, April and early May. If you agree to participate, I would invite you to complete a two-minute short survey and participate in an interview. I will also ask you to allow me to collect a copy of your course syllabus.

The purpose of the short survey is to see whether L2 writing teachers are implementing writing portfolios in their classroom(s), in the context of multilingual First-Year Composition. Teachers who use portfolios, including Digication e-portfolios, will also be asked questions about their opinions and experience with portfolios during the interview. The purpose of collecting course syllabi is to see how teachers integrate portfolios in their course design. By collecting your thoughts, we hope that the study would provide Writing Program some insights into how portfolios are really functioning in multilingual First-Year Composition classrooms.

Your participation is voluntary at all times and you can decide to discontinue your participation at any time. Discontinuing your participation will not have an effect on your status as an employee of the university. Your identity will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used to refer to anyone that participates in the study. At the end of the interview, you will receive a *20-dollar Starbucks gift card* as a thank-you gift, which shows my appreciation of your kind help.

If you have taught L2 student writers, or are currently teaching L2 student writers and you would like to participate, please check "YES" and write your name and best-of-reach email address below. Please send the information to Taimin Tammy Wu at [zhtammy2014@gmail.com](mailto:zhtammy2014@gmail.com). Also, please feel free to copy the following format and paste it in your email:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: email \_\_\_\_\_

May I contact you for the short survey and the interview?  YES  NO

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me by phone (480-678-2556) or email ([Tai-Min.Wu@asu.edu](mailto:Tai-Min.Wu@asu.edu); [zhtammy2014@gmail.com](mailto:zhtammy2014@gmail.com)). Thank you very much for your time!

Sincerely,  
Paul Kei Matsuda  
Taimin Tammy Wu



APPENDIX C  
EARLY STAGE SHORT SURVEY

Dear Writing Teacher,

Thank you very much for willing to participate in my dissertation study on L2 writing teachers' perceptions and uses of writing portfolios. The first stage of the study is a short survey, which takes about two minutes. I would greatly appreciate your kind help, if you could spend two minutes to complete this short survey. Your name and email here are used for tracking purposes only during the data collection stage. Pseudonyms will be assigned later so your personal identification is protected. For your conveniences, the survey questions have already been embedded in this email.

1. Do you use portfolios (including Digication e-portfolio) in your L2 writing composition classroom(s)?

Yes (Thank you, please continue)

No (Thank you. Please go to Question #3 and #4)

2. How long have you been using portfolios in your L2 writing classroom(s)?

Less than 3 years

3-5 years

6-10 years

11-20 years

More than 20 years

Please put your name and contact information here.

3. Please put your name here: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please put your best-of-reach email here: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for completing the survey. I will contact you shortly for the follow-up interview.

APPENDIX D  
CONSENT FORM

Study title: Exploring Teachers' Writing Assessment Literacy in Multilingual First-Year Composition: A Qualitative Study on e-Portfolios

Dear Writing Teacher,

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Paul Kei Matsuda in the English Department, College of Liberal Arts and Science at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore L2 writing teachers' practices of electronic writing portfolios, as well as sources shaping teachers' knowledge of e-portfolio assessment.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve one background information questionnaire, one interview and course syllabi collection. The background information questionnaire inquires about your area of specialization, terminal degree, years of teaching composition and years of teaching L2 writers. The background information questionnaire takes five minutes to complete. The interview inquires about your experience of assessing students' writing, the tools you have used for writing assessment, and your experience with writing portfolios. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. The interview lasts for thirty to forty minutes. The course syllabus serves as a supplemental document that goes along with our conversation in the interview, and will be collected by the end of the interview with your permission.

Your answers in response to the interview questions will be audio recorded with your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded. You also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know.

The recordings will be used by the researcher for transcriptions only and will not be used in any other public format. Your names and information from the background information questionnaire and the interviews will be organized on a master list for the purpose of tracking during the data analysis stage. A pseudonym will be assigned to each participant later when the analyzed data is presented in the result chapter of the dissertation.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Your withdrawal from the study at anytime will not affect your status as an employee of the university. At the end of the interview, you will receive a 20-dollar Starbucks gift card, which shows my appreciation of your kind help.

Your responses to both the background information questionnaire and the interview will help you reflect on your assessment process, and eventually may help you become more aware of the assessment tool used in your classroom. Your responses will help shed light on how teachers' understandings of portfolios are shaped and contribute to further research on teachers' perceptions of writing assessment. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your names and responses in both the Background Information Questionnaire and the interview will be confidential. All questionnaires and recordings will be locked in a cabinet in my apartment, and will only be seen and analyzed by me as a researcher. The results of this study may be used in conference presentations or publications, but your name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Paul Matsuda, [pmatsuda@asu.edu](mailto:pmatsuda@asu.edu); or Taimin Wu, [Tai-Min.Wu@asu.edu](mailto:Tai-Min.Wu@asu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

By signing below you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below you are agreeing to be audio recorded in the interview session.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E

BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE: TEACHERS

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

Area of specialization:

\_\_\_\_\_ TESOL

\_\_\_\_\_ English literature

\_\_\_\_\_ Creative writing

\_\_\_\_\_ Applied linguistics

\_\_\_\_\_ Linguistics

\_\_\_\_\_ Rhetoric/Composition

\_\_\_\_\_ Education

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Terminal degree:

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor

\_\_\_\_\_ Master

\_\_\_\_\_ Doctoral

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Past teaching experience: What kinds of program/institutes have you taught in your teaching career? (Please check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ Intensive English program

\_\_\_\_\_ Two-year college composition program

\_\_\_\_\_ Four-year college composition program

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

What course(s) are you teaching this semester in Spring 2017 at your current institute?

(Please check all that apply).

\_\_\_\_\_ ENG 107

\_\_\_\_\_ ENG 108

\_\_\_ WAC 107

\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

As an employee staffed by the writing program, you are currently a:

\_\_\_ Tenure-track faculty member

\_\_\_ Full-time Lecturer

\_\_\_ Full-time Instructor

\_\_\_ Part-time Adjunct Instructor

\_\_\_ Faculty Associate

\_\_\_ Graduate Teaching Assistant/Associate

\_\_\_ Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Experience of teaching multilingual sections (L2 writing) of First-Year Composition:

How long have you been teaching L2 writing in First-Year Composition?

\_\_\_ Less than 3 years

\_\_\_ 3-5 years

\_\_\_ 6-10 years

\_\_\_ 11-20 years

\_\_\_ More than 20 years



APPENDIX F  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your overall experience as an L2 composition teacher at ASU? (for example, the students' writing proficiency, assessment systems, course design, ...etc.)
2. What is your teaching goal/objective in your L2 composition classroom?
3. How would you assess your current students' English writing proficiency/skills?
4. What kinds of assessment tool are you currently using in your L2 composition classroom? Could you tell me about the experience?
5. How did you first learn about "portfolio assessment" in your teaching career? Where and when? Can you describe the process?
6. Where and when did you start to implement portfolios in your teaching career? Can you describe the process?
7. How do you use portfolios now in your L2 composition classroom? Could you tell me about the experience?
8. What are some of the most interesting experience you've had when using portfolios in your L2 composition classroom?
9. What are some of the most challenging experience you've had when using portfolios in your L2 composition classroom?
10. What are some of the most significant reasons that affect your decisions of using/not using portfolios in your L2 composition classroom?
11. Do your opinions of /beliefs in portfolios ever change/evolve throughout your teaching career? Why/why not?
12. How does your use of portfolios contribute to your teaching objective(s)?
13. What are your views of the writing program's policy on the digital portfolio submission requirement at your current institute?
14. Is there anything else you would like me to know about assessing L2 students' composition?

APPENDIX G

E-MAIL OF THE e-PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT

Subject: Uploading Student e-Portfolio Links for Spring 2017 Semester

2017/4/27

Dear Writing Programs Teachers,

We are fast approaching the end of the Spring 2017 semester. As you are wrapping up the semester, you will remember that all Writing Programs teachers teaching Fall and Spring classes are required to submit a link to **one** digital student portfolio from each of their classes. The **due date is May 8, 2017**, the day when final course grades are due. We have tried to make the submission of the links as easy as possible by providing a form to fill out. Please follow these instructions for the submission of your students' e-Portfolios:

1. On the Writing Programs Blackboard site at <http://tinyurl.com/WritingPrograms>, click on the link "Student e-Portfolio Submission."
2. Download the "Student e-Portfolio Instructions and Submission Form" included in this link.
3. Read the instructions on pages 2 and 3 and fill out page 1 of this form. (This form allows you to post the links to one student e-portfolio from each of the classes you teach in the Spring 2017 semester in a single document.)
4. Save your file and include your last name in the file name (e.g. Smith, Spring 2017).
5. Upload your file as an assignment to "Student e-Portfolio Submission" at <http://tinyurl.com/WritingPrograms>.

Most of you have linked your Blackboard courses with Digication; therefore, you will be able to easily access your students' digital portfolios via Blackboard. Detailed instructions for how to set up e-Portfolios for your courses have been available for several semesters on the Writing Programs Blackboard site at <http://tinyurl.com/WritingPrograms> in the "Content" area. These instructions are also accessible on the Writing Programs website at [https://asu.digication.com/asu\\_writing\\_programs\\_digication\\_resources/Planning](https://asu.digication.com/asu_writing_programs_digication_resources/Planning)

Alternatively, you can search for your students' e-Portfolios by going to <https://webapp4.asu.edu/myasu/>, selecting Digital Portfolios under "Teaching and Student Support Tools," clicking on "e-Portfolios" in the black taskbar at the top, and then doing a search "By Person." However, using this method, you will only be able to access portfolios set to "Public" or "Public to ASU."

If you have trouble uploading your links, please do not hesitate to see us in the Writing Program's office, email us, or give us a phone call.

Best regards,  
Writing Program staff

APPENDIX H

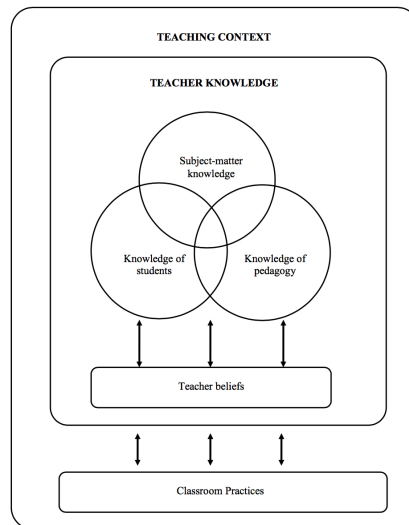
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Mar. 04, 2018  
Juval V. Racelis, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Wentworth Institute of Technology

Dear Dr. Juval Racelis,  
I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Arizona State University entitled “Exploring Teachers’ Writing Assessment Literacy in Multilingual First-Year Composition: A Qualitative Study on e-Portfolios.” I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from:

Racelis, J.V. (2016). *Exploring teacher knowledge in multilingual First-Year Composition*. (doctoral dissertation). Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

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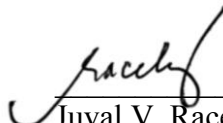
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Sincerely,

  
Tai-Min Wu

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Juval V. Racelis

Date: 03/04/2018

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tai-Min Wu, also known as Taimin Tammy Wu, earned her Ph.D degree in the Linguistics/Applied Linguistics program in English department at Arizona State University (ASU). Before journeying to Tempe, Arizona, Tammy holds an M.A. degree in foreign language education specializing in TEFL/TESL at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research interests are second language writing apprehension and writing portfolio assessment. Tammy presented her Master's thesis on writing apprehension at Texas Foreign Language Education Conference. In recent years, she participated in more diverse academic activities, such as giving a workshop talk to writing center tutors at ASU with her colleagues. She also volunteered and presented at professional conferences, including American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) and the Symposium of Second Language Writing (SSLW).

In addition to research, Tammy also loves teaching. She started her very first English classroom teaching by reading Big Books to twelfth-graders who attended English remedial project at SanXia Elementary School in Taiwan. Upon receiving her B.A. degree, she served as an intern teaching English in junior and senior high schools. When pursuing her M.A. in Austin, Tammy observed and interned classes at UT ESL Services, including iBT TOEFL Preparation, Academic Writing, Beginner Writing and Advanced Grammar & Idiom classes. During her one-year stay in Taiwan, she taught General English, Freshman English and English Writing courses in junior colleges and universities of technology as an adjunct instructor. At ASU, she taught ESL students in Global Launch (the former American English and Culture Program) from 2014-2015, and then taught ENG 101 and 102 from 2015-2016. From 2016-2017, she taught ENG 107 and ENG 108, courses that teach composition and argumentation to multilingual students.

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This dissertation was typed by the author.