

## EVALUATING WITH A PORTFOLIO IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION FRAMEWORK: AN EXAMPLE FROM ENGLISH STUDIES

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**ABSTRACT.** *The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) requests that universities introduce changes in the teaching-learning process. This paper is focused on evaluation as one of the key elements that the new educational model demands. This article offers a proposal of assessment in the core subject English Grammar in English Studies at the University of Alicante (Spain) as an illustrative example of how to evaluate large classes following the model proposed in Bologna. This study will concentrate specifically on the use of the portfolio as an element of evaluation in the said subject. In consequence, this paper will refer to practical issues that need to be taken into consideration when implementing this way of evaluating, and to the catalogue of different activities from which the portfolio will be evaluated. The results will show that the students evaluated with a portfolio obtained better grades than those students who were evaluated with a final exam. The paper will point out that the portfolio is a flexible way of evaluating that gives students autonomy in the organization of their learning process.*

**KEY WORDS.** *European Higher Education Area, evaluation, portfolio, teaching-learning process, English Studies.*

**RESUMEN.** *El Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior (EEES) requiere que las universidades introduzcan cambios en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Este artículo se centra en la evaluación como uno de los elementos claves en el nuevo modelo educativo. Se ofrece una propuesta de evaluación en la asignatura Gramática Inglesa en Filología Inglesa en la Universidad de Alicante como un ejemplo ilustrativo de cómo evaluar clases numerosas siguiendo el modelo que propone Bolonia. Este estudio se centrará específicamente en el uso del portafolio como elemento de evaluación en la asignatura mencionada. En consecuencia, este artículo se referirá a aspectos prácticos que es necesario considerar al implementar este modo de evaluación y al catálogo de las diferentes actividades con las que se evaluará el portafolio. Los resultados mostrarán que el alumnado evaluado con el portafolio obtuvo mejores notas que el evaluado con un examen final. Este artículo mostrará que el portafolio es un modo de evaluación flexible que concede al alumnado autonomía en la organización de su proceso de aprendizaje.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE.** *Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior (EEES), evaluación, portafolio, proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, Filología Inglesa.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The university has to be aware of the social, cultural and technological changes that have taken place in Europe in the last decade. Consequently, as a logical reaction to the historical period that frames us, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been changing in the last decade so that traditional models of teaching at the university based mainly on the figure of the teacher as a source of knowledge and of students as spectators and receivers of that knowledge. The creation of the EHEA, a concept defined by the European Ministers of Education in the Bologna Declaration (1999), implies an answer from the university to the changes that are basically shown in two aspects that give unity to the reform of Higher Education: firstly, it is the implementation of the *European Credits Transfer System* (ECTS) so that the different degrees are comparable at European level<sup>1</sup>; secondly, in the transformation of the university of teaching to the university of learning, which implies a change from the supply of information (*input*) to the results of learning (*output*). This new framework implies some changes in teaching at the University level, such as the following:

1. Creation of meaningful learning based on previous knowledge and not on unfounded expectations as regards students' level.
2. Use of techniques that allow autonomous ways of working, autonomous learning and the handling of different learning resources. In this way, there is a new organization of activities in which importance is given to students' production.
3. The teacher becomes a tutor, a facilitator of competences and not so much a source of knowledge, which implies, as Zabalza (2002: 110) points out, that the teacher should be in the background because of losing the privileged position he/she has had in traditional learning.
4. Definition of objectives based on competences (know how to do) and not just on contents (to know), which had been the only thing evaluated in many subjects.

One of the basic ideas is that any research into university teaching should have as a point of departure the students' necessities, and when dealing with evaluation, this becomes a very important aspect. Consequently, the classical written exam as the only way to measure students' progress makes no sense in the EHEA and, therefore, it is necessary to look for new and complementary ways of evaluation to replace written exams. In this sense, the presentation in the article of a new model of evaluation applied to a core subject can be useful not only as a reflection for the teaching community but also as a significant example of a method to be followed to evaluate large groups (around 75 students matriculated in the core subject English Grammar) in the EHEA, which is not an easy task.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The implementation of new ways of evaluation in which the students are the protagonists of their evaluation process and in which the exam is not the only evaluation

criterion is an essential requirement of the EHEA (Brown 2003: 23; Race 2003: 78). Evaluation is understood as a crucial component of the teaching-learning process in which students and teachers share the responsibility; in addition, evaluation must be a transparent process that allows to observe if students are progressing and acquiring competences. This paper will make it clear that the evaluation process becomes a crucial aspect for the development of the transformation that the EHEA requires. Moreover, this research also makes sense as a complement to other research not so closely linked to just one subject, regarding the evaluation process (Escobar 2001; López 2006; McWethy and Gradwell 1998; O'Malley and Valdez Pierce 1996) or to the specific use of the portfolio (Rico and Rico 2004; Salaberri Ramiro 2005; Colen *et al.* 2006; Barberà *et al.* 2006; Martínez Lirola 2012; Martínez Lirola and Rubio 2009), the method of evaluation in which the present article is based.

Evaluation is a very important part of the teaching-learning process in the EHEA because it affects the whole process, as Pérez-Paredes and Rubio (2005: 606-607) have pointed out: "Evaluation considers the teaching and learning program as a whole, and seeks to obtain feedback that can serve different purposes for the different agents in education, from teachers to curriculum designers".

As Lo (2010: 78) makes it clear, an extended collection of scholarly research and practitioners' reports has now documented the benefits of portfolios and supported their use in EFL classrooms (Padilla *et al.* 1996; Hamp-Lyons and Condon 2000; Delett *et al.* 2001; Rea 2001; Allen 2004; Nunes 2004).

The findings from the different studies on the use of a portfolio in Spanish contexts indicate the following needs for Spanish EFL students. First, Spanish EFL students may need more training in developing appropriate skills in order to produce portfolios successfully. These skills include managing time, selecting materials, finding resources, thinking critically and monitoring progress.

Second, it is necessary that Spanish EFL students understand better the concept of autonomous learning, which will make them able to learn to take their own initiatives. Promoting learner autonomy implies shifting the teachers' role from decision-makers to facilitators. As Lo (2010: 89-90) makes it clear the portfolio project helped students become aware of the concept of autonomous learning, the available resources, the learning process and to engage them in using the different skills.

A portfolio consists of a folder in which students keep several tasks to accomplish certain objectives and competencies selected by teachers; it may help students develop their written skills, as Celce Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 159) indicate: "The portfolio, which is usually an ongoing collection of different writing assignments kept by the student in a folder or workbook, has become an important concept in developing writing skills and in giving teachers a fairer and more perceptive way to evaluate".

The portfolio is a very effective tool to show students' progress and their achievements. Delett *et al.* (2001: 559) highlight that the main benefits of using portfolios are that they provide "a portrait of what students know and what they can do, offer a multidimensional perspective of student progress over time, encourage student self-

reflection and participation, and link instruction and assessment". Moreover, portfolios are a powerful tool to promote autonomous language learning. The concept of learner autonomy has been adopted in the field of language learning since the 1970s (Littlewood 1999) and it has been defined as the learner's ability to take charge of her/his own learning, which involves that she/he becomes an active part of the teaching-learning process (Holec 1981; Ekbatani 2000; Little 2005; Zeichner and Wray 2001).

In addition, Lo (2010: 79) points out that past research in foreign language learning has shown portfolios to be an effective means to integrate pedagogy, learning, and evaluation as well as to promote critical thinking and learner autonomy (Delett et al. 2001; Banfi 2003; Yang 2003; Allen 2004). Proponents of portfolio assessment claim that it "enables instruction to be linked to assessment, promotes reflection, helps learners to take responsibility for their own learning, enables learners to see gaps in their learning, and enables learners to take risks" (Ekbatani 2000: 6-7).

Following Brown (2001: 418), the portfolio can include essays, compositions, poems, book reports, video or tape recordings, and any other activity that teachers decide to include. Wright *et al.* (1999), Martínez Lirola and Crespo (2007) and Martínez Lirola (2008) make it clear that the portfolio is a useful tool in higher education because it is composed of materials which show students' progress, the degree of assimilation of the contents, and the ability to develop certain competencies previously established by the teachers. In this sense, the portfolio is an authentic form of evaluation because it establishes a link between theory and practice (Colen et al. 2006: 108).

Some studies take into consideration students' opinions through questionnaires designed by the university or through specific questionnaires designed by teachers in their pilot studies (see Apple and Shimo 2004; Martínez Lirola 2008; Lo 2010). Apple and Shimo (2004) also found that portfolios encourage learner autonomy and increase linguistic competence while assessing the learning process over an extended period of time in foreign language courses.

Portfolio evaluation has been used in many European countries and in North America for over a decade, and there has been a lot of research reporting its main characteristics and the advantages and disadvantages of portfolio evaluation. In Spain, the majority of the studies have concentrated on the analysis of the situation and on foreseeing the eventual effects of educational consolidation (Cruz de la 2003; Gata *et al.* 2003; Hernández 2003; Pereyra-García *et al.* 2006; Sánchez 2006; Sánchez and Zubillaga 2005; Teichler 2006; etc.). Much research is needed into the use of the portfolio and its relationship with the whole teaching-learning process, learners' opinions, the teacher's roles, etc. in some areas such as English Studies. It is also interesting to mention the European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe 2001; Cassany 2006), which has some points in common with the kind of portfolio already mentioned such as the following: students have to be active in the teaching-learning process and it is necessary to promote authentic communicative activities that have a relationship with real life.

After having offered the literature review, the theoretical framework of this paper and its justification, it is necessary to offer the main research questions of this study: to what

extent do students improve their grades when being evaluated with a portfolio? And is the portfolio an effective instrument of evaluation for subjects with many students? The following sections will answer these questions taking into consideration the research done using a portfolio to evaluate students at the University of Alicante (Spain).

### 3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This section will present the methodology and the objectives before the presentation of an evaluation proposal based on a portfolio. Once this is done, the study will concentrate specifically on the use of the portfolio as an element of evaluation in a core subject in the degree English Studies and on presenting the main phases followed to organise this research and the main practical aspects that need to be taken into consideration for its implementation. In consequence, this study will refer also to the catalogue of different activities from which the portfolio will be evaluated. Finally, the discussion, results and conclusions obtained with this research will be offered.

#### 3.1. *Participants and context*

English Grammar is a third-year core subject of the degree English Studies at the University of Alicante (Spain). It deals with the main aspects of lexicology and semantics in the first semester and with morphology in the second semester. Most students are 20 or 21 years old. The majority of them want to be English teachers at high school. There are also students who want to work as translators or interpreters. All of them have studied English in primary and secondary education and at the University in the two previous years of the degree. During the academic year 2009-2010 there were 75 students matriculated in this subject, all of whom were Spanish. 68 were female students and 7 were male. Students had a two-hour class every week for theory, and there was another one-hour class for practice.

Taking into consideration the importance of new ways of evaluating in the EHEA, this article proposes a new way of evaluation which follows the main teaching-learning principles designed in Bologna based on the use of a portfolio in the subject English Grammar. The portfolio has received different names such as student's folder or student's dossier. In this article the English term portfolio will be used for being well known all over the world. The main concrete objectives of this article are the following:

- To highlight the importance of the portfolio as a method of evaluation that promotes the main pillars of the educational framework proposed by the EHEA, such as students' autonomous learning, the new role of the teacher as a facilitator of competences, the active role of the student in his/her learning process, the continuous character of the process, etc.
- To consider different evaluation instruments together with the traditional written exam: the systematic observation of the student in the classroom, taking into consideration his/her attitude (participation, grade of involvement in the subject

- and also his/her oral production (expositions, debates, pair and group work, etc.) and written production as well as the attendance of individual or group tutorials.
- To present practical issues in the use of the portfolio (phases) and to give importance to tutorials as a very important part of the process of evaluation in the EHEA.
  - To offer a method of evaluation following the system ECTS in a core subject of the degree English Studies.

### 3.2. *Research design*

The methodological principles that are put into practice in the alternative proposal of evaluation offered in this paper are based on three fundamental aspects: observing the experience in the university classroom; the elaboration of the materials that create the portfolio and their organization, and the analysis of the validity of the instruments of evaluation proposed through the results obtained. The following paragraphs will illustrate the main steps followed in each of these phases:

- Observation and preparation phase. After having observed as teachers the students' reality and the high number of students who had failed in previous years, it was deduced that the instruments of evaluation that were used until that moment made it difficult to reach the proposed goal in the Bologna model of Higher Education in the core subject English Grammar. For this reason, it was decided to elaborate an evaluation proposal based on the use of the portfolio that could be an answer to the teachers' needs in the new educational paradigm and that in any way could suppose a new way of organising the teaching-learning process.
- Elaboration of materials in the portfolio phase. In this second phase the catalogue of products to be part of the portfolio was created and the main practical aspects for its implementation were established (see section 3.3). In order to do this, the following idea was considered essential: the activities, materials, index of evaluation, the time in which students should hand in the activities and any other practical issues should be adapted to the specific characteristics of the subject and to the students' characteristics in order to guarantee the validity of the method, which should be far removed from a theoretical abstraction with hardly any use in the teaching practice.
- Analysis of results phase. Finally, the results obtained after putting into practice the evaluation with a portfolio were analysed. In order to do so, different indicators, both subjective (personal impressions on the way students were acting and their predisposition for doing the different tasks), and objective (students' comments and the grades they obtained in June 2009 after the evaluation proposal following the EHEA principles was implemented, as explained below in table 1) were taken into consideration.

In a nutshell, the way of organization of the evaluation proposal presented in this paper can be considered eclectic; consequently, it has a passive-reflexive character (as

should happen in an observational method in which the direct experience of the classroom is taken into consideration together with the students needs), and at the same time it is also experimental because it supposes a practical and concrete application of the evaluation. To summarize, the evaluation proposed in this paper has a didactic purpose, which makes it different to theoretical models and is considered crucial in the new educational model: to offer models of evaluation that follow the principles of the EHEA taking into consideration the critical observation of what happens in the university classroom.

In addition, this evaluation proposal makes a contribution with respect to similar ones because it integrates the development of the four skills and it is applied in a subject with many students, which has been evaluated with a final exam for fifteen years.

### *3.3. Procedure: evaluation proposal based on the ECTS system. The portfolio*

In any model coming from the EHEA, the classic exam that is almost always 100% of the grade should be disregarded. In fact, evaluation should be a reflection of the activities that had been done and explained in the classroom and, therefore, the traditional exam is not able, by itself and without other instruments of evaluation, to be an answer to the needs of the new model of European Convergence. Consequently, a proposal of evaluation is offered in which exams lose importance in the final grade, in favour of other techniques more appropriate to evaluate students' competences.

One of the main aspects of this evaluation proposal is the portfolio. It is a folder in which the student keeps different tasks that had been designed to acquire the competences that the teacher has established in the subject. Students should keep in this folder all the drafts and the different versions of the tasks requested by the teachers. Moreover, the portfolio is also useful so that students improve their written skills, which makes the usefulness of this method even broader.

Therefore, in the following evaluation proposal, the portfolio gets importance. The written exams are 50% of the final grade and the rest of the grade is obtained in the following way: 40% consists of the evaluation of the portfolio and 10% consists of class attendance and active participation. These percentages are offered and explained in the following table:

Table 1. Evaluation model following the principles of the EHEA.

Aspects	Criteria	Instruments	Percentage
Concepts of the subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge of the main theoretical concepts.</li> <li>- Clarity in the description of the theoretical concepts.</li> <li>- Application of the theoretical concepts to texts written in English.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There will be a written exam at the end of the semester. The grade will be from 1 to 5.</li> </ul>	50% (25% for the exam of each semester).

Aspects	Criteria	Instruments	Percentage
Portfolio	Each portfolio will be evaluated taking into consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Originality.</li> <li>- Orthography and presentation.</li> <li>- Bibliography used.</li> <li>- Quality of the activities.</li> <li>- Structure of the exposition and conclusions presented.</li> <li>- Critical ideas and arguments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hand in the materials requested by the teacher on the dates established.</li> </ul> <p>The different activities will be handed in at the end of the first and second semester.</p>	40% (20% for each of the portfolios during the first and second semester).
Attendance and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation in the classroom.</li> <li>- Participation in the debates in the virtual campus.</li> <li>- Participation in the group practical sections in the classroom.</li> <li>- Preparation of the exercises proposed in the classroom and in the virtual campus.</li> </ul>	Systematic observation of the student in the classroom and in the intranet virtual university.	10% (5% each semester).

As the previous table shows, the exam based on concepts loses importance in the final grade because it is now only half of the grade. This favours giving importance to other areas that had traditionally been neglected when evaluating students: student's daily work based on the preparation of a portfolio (40%) and students' participation (10%). Needless to say that students' participation is joined to the activities to be included in the portfolio. The following section will show how the portfolio can be put into practice in a core subject of the degree in English Studies, which can be considered an example of what university professors and students should do to share the responsibility of the teaching-learning process.

The previous paragraphs have highlighted the importance of the portfolio as a valid instrument of evaluation. The next paragraphs will show, in a more practical way, how this evaluation proposal can be applied and the advantages it has. To do so, the core subject English Grammar has been taken as an example. Its choice for this paper has not been at random. The following characteristics show some difficulties to put the portfolio into practice: it is a subject with a high number of students (around 75); it requires the assimilation of concepts that do not have a direct practical application; and it is not directly related with the future professional activity of students. Although there are these disadvantages, the following sections will show how the portfolio can be put into



practice in this subject taking into consideration the principles of the EHEA and the main objectives of the subject, together with the reality of the classroom.

As regards the main practical aspects of the implementation of the portfolio, it is clear that the use of the portfolio requests a considerable change in the organization of periods. Firstly, the portfolio depends on the teachers' tutorial hours (office hours). Joining these hours to the portfolio gives a new sense to tutorials because they are normally just used by students during the days previous to the exam. In fact, compulsory tutorials will be established so that students can use them to ask doubts, comment on the different tasks done, explain the different activities of their portfolio, etc. These tutorials can be individual or in small groups. Moreover, these tutorials are essential for the teacher to guide students in their learning process through the proposed activities, to supervise students' work, to give students feedback after they have done each task and to observe their progress. Due to the fact that English Grammar is a subject with a high number of students, it is necessary to combine tasks that require more effort from the teacher and others that are more independent. It is almost impossible to follow all the different tasks of a portfolio for each student when the number of students is as high in a subject as happens with English Grammar.

The proposal of tasks to include in the portfolio is called the catalogue of products. The next paragraphs show the tasks selected for each of the topics of the second semester of the subject English Grammar, which corresponds to *word-formation processes*. A closed portfolio was chosen, in which the tasks are mainly marked by the teacher (cf. Barberà *et al.* 2006: 58). The fact that all the activities proposed deal with *word-formation processes* and that they have been chosen in order to help students to acquire the main competences of the degree give coherence and unity to this portfolio.

TOPIC 1 "COMPOUNDING". Once students have studied the bibliographical references presented in class and the different frameworks proposed by each author in relation to the composition of words in English, students have to prepare a complete and exhaustive classification of compounds in English in which they cover all the different aspects presented by the authors under study, i.e., orthographic, phonological and semantic criteria. Moreover, students have to write an essay that summarizes the main aspects covered by each author. The use of complementary bibliographical references and good use of the written language will be taken into consideration.

TOPIC 2 "DERIVATION". Students will be organized in small groups and they will work on the main characteristics of prefixes and suffixes in English, paying special attention to their meaning. After having organized them, they will prepare a 10-15 minute presentation per group. This will have a critical perspective and offer some examples of the main uses of each prefix and suffix. Each group will prepare an outline of the presentation to be given to the teacher together with the whole paper on which they have based their presentation. All this will be evaluated by the teacher and discussed with students in compulsory tutorials. The use of the appropriate terminology and of the different classifications will be considered essential. Moreover, fluency and pronunciation will be considered in the spoken English used in the oral presentations.

TOPIC 3 “CONVERSION”. Students will work with different practical activities on conversion (*worksheet*) facilitated by the teacher. Once they have been corrected in the classroom, students will prepare a *worksheet* in groups so that the different types of conversion are covered. These exercises will be corrected in the classroom and the group which has prepared each *worksheet* will act as leader in the correction process, answering the possible doubts and offering some correct alternative answers to the ones offered by their classmates. Each worksheet will be revised by the teacher afterwards.

TOPIC 4 “SHORTENINGS”. In groups, students will look for texts in the press in which they can observe *clippings*, *blends* and *acronyms*. They will point out the examples in the text and they will write an outline covering the main characteristics of each word they have found. Whenever possible, the texts will be presented in the classroom and a discussion will be held in order to comment the main characteristics of each text.

FINAL ACTIVITY. In groups, students will prepare an exam with ten words covering all the morphological processes to create words in English studied during the semester, i.e., compounding, derivation, clippings, blends and acronyms. The methodology will be similar to the one followed to do the activity of topic 3. The different exams will be exchanged with other groups and in a week, each group will be responsible for presenting in the classroom the analysis of each word using a power point presentation, some transparencies, etc. Students will also have to answer all the doubts that their classmates have using the main bibliographical references they have studied during the semester. This activity is very effective because it combines theoretical and practical aspects, and because it gives students the opportunity of acting as teachers.

Before this section is finished, it is necessary to provide a detailed description of the portfolio assessment method, e.g. how the portfolio was actually assessed. All the activities are given four points as the highest mark, as the following table makes clear; the portfolio of this semester is 20% of the final mark.

Table 2. Portfolio assessment method.

Activities	1 or 2 points	3 points	4 points
Topic 1: Compounding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic classification of compounds.</li> <li>- Some authors under analysis are taken into consideration.</li> <li>- Essay written with some basic mistakes in English and students do not use of any complementary bibliographical references.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete classification of compounds.</li> <li>- The main authors under analysis are taken into consideration.</li> <li>- Essay written in good English (there are some minor mistakes) and use of some complementary bibliographical references.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete and exhaustive classification of compounds.</li> <li>- All the authors under analysis are taken into consideration.</li> <li>- Essay written in perfect English and use of many complementary bibliographical references.</li> </ul>

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Activities	1 or 2 points	3 points	4 points
Topic 2: Derivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic presentation and outline.</li> <li>- Very few examples used and no critical perspective.</li> <li>-Problems with pronunciation and fluency in the oral presentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Well structured presentation and outline.</li> <li>- Some examples used and commented with critical perspective.</li> <li>- Good pronunciation and fluency in the oral presentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear and well structured presentation and outline.</li> <li>- Many examples used and commented with critical perspective.</li> <li>-Excellent pronunciation and fluency in the oral presentation.</li> </ul>
Topic 3: Conversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Worksheet with few exercises (less than five).</li> <li>- Students have problems to answer all the doubts of other students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Worksheet with some exercises (from 5 to 10).</li> <li>- Students answer some of the doubts of other students in good and clear English.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Worksheet with many exercises (more than 10).</li> <li>- Students answer all the doubts of other students in good and clear English.</li> </ul>
Topic 4 : Shortenings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students offer 1 or 2 texts with <i>clippings</i>, <i>blends</i> and <i>acronyms</i>.</li> <li>- Basic outline with an exhaustive classification of the words analysed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students offer some texts (at least 3) with <i>clippings</i>, <i>blends</i> and <i>acronyms</i>.</li> <li>- Clear outline with a classification of the words analysed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students offer several texts (al least 5) with <i>clippings</i>, <i>blends</i> and <i>acronyms</i>.</li> <li>- Very clear outline with an exhaustive classification of the words analysed.</li> </ul>
Topic 5: Final activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic exam covering some of the morphological processes explained.</li> <li>- Simple presentation of the examples in an oral presentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete exam covering most of the morphological processes explained.</li> <li>- Clear presentation of the examples in an oral presentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete and exhaustive exam covering all the morphological processes explained.</li> <li>- Very clear and exhaustive presentation of the examples in an oral presentation.</li> </ul>

#### 4. RESULTS

Paying attention to the grades that the students matriculated in English Grammar had in June during the academic year 2009/2010, the portfolio was considered a fair and objective way of evaluating students' work. At the beginning of the semester the evaluation with a portfolio was offered to the 75 students registered in English Grammar. 50 of them decided to be evaluated with a portfolio. The rest were evaluated in a traditional way, i.e., having just one exam at the end of the semester. The academic results are very significant: the 50 students evaluated with a portfolio following the tasks presented in the previous sections, passed the subject and around 60% got B or A, which is very significant if we take into consideration the grades of the subject during the previous years.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, among those students who were evaluated with a final exam, 15% failed and only 30% got a B. These data clearly show that using a portfolio students get better grades, although this implies a considerable amount of extra work (cf. Martínez Lirola 2008; Martínez and Rubio 2009). However, the number of students that decided to be evaluated

with a portfolio is still low; it is probable that now that the new degrees have started, many students will decide to be evaluated in this way, although the exam will always have to be offered as a way of evaluating those students who cannot attend classes or tutorials.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Although the portfolio has many advantages in the framework of the EHEA, it has certain drawbacks. To organize teaching and, consequently, evaluation with a portfolio implies a different division and understanding of teachers' and students' roles. They should be: teacher as monitor, motivator, guide, etc., and student as the protagonist of the teaching-learning process. If these roles are not well understood, the portfolio can provoke disorientation in students who have never worked autonomously and who are not keen on working on a daily basis and who are comfortable with the organization of the teaching in the traditional way.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, it should be remembered that this evaluation proposal requires students to learn progressively, to attend tutorials often, to participate actively in the classroom, to be committed with the teacher and the other students; in fact, it requires more responsibility, perseverance and being able to cope with the work load.

However, the portfolio has many advantages and it is a great instrument to reinforce the principles proposed by the EHEA. Specifically, using a portfolio, the teacher becomes a witness of students acquiring progressively different competences such as the following:

- To put into practice the main concepts studied during the academic year.
- To reflect critically on their own work and to value critically other students' work.
- To use different sources of information and to contrast them, which supposes the use of different research resources autonomously and to summarize or to increase information.
- To transfer, extrapolate or apply knowledge to new situations.
- To show commitment and responsibility for group work.
- To face new situations requiring them to speak in public in English, such as oral presentations and the participation in debates.
- To write a good academic paper, showing rigour in the use of language and using the right register.

The positive results obtained with the model of evaluation proposed by the EHEA already presented seem to be confirmed if we consider students' opinions. Students were asked about the main positive and negative aspects they have observed in the portfolio proposed at the end of the academic year. Most of the students evaluated with a portfolio coincide in that they have been able to see clearly the relationship between theory and practice. Moreover, they are convinced of having learned progressively and they value the advantages of working on a daily basis and not only a few days before the exam. All this

makes them feel an active part of the teaching-learning process, leaving aside the passive role that is normally connected with the traditional evaluation (Corominas 2001). On the contrary, students state that the main disadvantage of the portfolio has to do with the amount of time that it takes them to accomplish the different tasks that are part of the portfolio. In any case, since they have seen their effort compensated with their grade, they feel satisfied, which makes teachers optimistic about continuing to work in this way.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation proposal presented does not intend to lay the foundations of the use of the portfolio in the evaluation in the EHEA. Needless to say, this is a flexible way of evaluation that needs to take into consideration the characteristics of each degree, of each subject, and of students, that should be, after all, those who make it possible and successful. For all these reasons, the proposal here presented should be understood as open to all those changes considered necessary by the teacher.

The present article has just concentrated on evaluation with a portfolio only in one subject. However, as mentioned above in the introduction, this model of evaluation can be an example to evaluate subjects with a high number of students in the framework of the EHEA. Moreover, this article offers some tasks and practical ideas for the implementation of a method of work and evaluation such as the portfolio. To observe how the portfolio has been applied in other subjects of the degree English Studies and to have a broader view of its way of organization, see Martínez Lirola (2007, 2008, 2012).

In summary, the collection of students' work that make up the portfolio shows not only their theoretical knowledge but also their skills, so that we know what students are able to do; moreover, the portfolio gives them autonomy, reflexive capacity and organization of their own learning process. Taking all this into consideration, evaluating with a portfolio is much more than evaluating concepts because it shows the development and learning of students broadly. In fact, it is expected that a model of evaluation in which the portfolio is considered the central element as the one proposed in this article can be a significant example of the method to follow to evaluate subjects with a high number of students in the EHEA.

## NOTES

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1. As regards the European credits, known as ECTS, see the guide published by the European Commission (1998). Other works on this respect are the ones of Pagani (2002), Bueno *et al.* (2004) and Martínez and Sauleda (2005). Specifically, Gómez (2004) deals with the new European credits in Philology.
2. In June 2008/2009, 47.6% students failed the subject whereas 29% got a C and only 23% got a B (here we have included the only A that a student got). In June 2007/2008 the percentage of people who failed decreased to 37.8%, students who got a C increased to 35% and 27% got a B. The number of B and C is very inferior to those students got when being evaluated with a portfolio.

3. In this sense Esteban and Madrid (2007) consider that the routines acquired with the traditional University teaching, the convenience and students' culture of being passive in the classroom can make the new teaching-learning model difficult.

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