

# INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE, AND BEHAVIORAL ATTITUDES TOWARD PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN A VIETNAMESE VOCATIONAL EFL CONTEXT

Nguyen Le Anh Khoa<sup>1,2</sup> ✉; Tran Quang Bao Phuc<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages - Information Technology

<sup>2</sup>Cao Thang Technical College

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✉ MES24116@ms.hufilit.edu.vn

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**Abstract:** This study examined the relationships among cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes toward portfolio assessment among non-English-major students in a Vietnamese vocational EFL context. A mixed-methods correlational design was employed to explore the perceived attitudes of 57 A2-level students enrolled in a General English course at a vocational college in Southern Vietnam. Quantitative data were collected through a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire, while qualitative data came from open-ended responses, interviews, and classroom self-observations. Descriptive statistics generally suggested positive attitudes across the three dimensions. Pearson correlation analysis indicated significant positive associations between cognitive and affective attitudes ( $r = .809, p < .01$ ), cognitive and behavioral attitudes ( $r = .855, p < .01$ ), and affective and behavioral attitudes ( $r = .877, p < .01$ ). Qualitative findings further demonstrate that students who reported more positive beliefs about portfolio assessment also tended to have greater emotional engagement and more enthusiastic learning behaviors. However, examination-oriented learning habits and limited learner autonomy may have constrained the consistency of reflective and self-directed engagement with portfolio-based learning.

**Keywords:** Portfolio assessment; cognitive attitude; affective attitude; behavioral attitude; vocational education

## MỐI LIÊN HỆ GIỮA NHẬN THỨC, CẢM XÚC VÀ HÀNH VI CỦA SINH VIÊN CAO ĐẲNG NGHỀ ĐỐI VỚI ĐÁNH GIÁ BẰNG HỒ SƠ HỌC TẬP

**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu này tập trung xem xét mối quan hệ giữa ba thành tố thái độ gồm nhận thức, cảm xúc và hành vi đối với hình thức đánh giá bằng hồ sơ học tập (portfolio assessment) của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh trong bối cảnh đào tạo tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ tại các cơ sở giáo dục nghề nghiệp ở Việt Nam. Với thiết kế tương quan theo phương pháp hỗn hợp, nghiên cứu đã khảo sát cảm nhận và đánh giá của 57 sinh viên trình độ A2 đang theo học môn Tiếng Anh Tổng quát tại một trường cao đẳng nghề ở miền Nam Việt Nam. Dữ liệu định lượng được thu thập thông qua bảng hỏi thang đo Likert 5 mức độ, kết hợp với dữ liệu định tính từ các câu hỏi mở, phỏng vấn và hoạt động tự quan sát lớp học. Kết quả thống kê mô tả cho thấy sinh viên nhìn chung có xu hướng thể hiện thái độ tích cực trên cả ba phương diện nhận thức, cảm xúc và hành vi. Phân tích tương quan Pearson cũng chỉ ra các mối liên hệ thuận chiều và có ý nghĩa thống kê giữa nhận thức và cảm xúc ( $r = .809, p < .01$ ), giữa nhận thức và hành vi ( $r = .855, p < .01$ ), cũng như giữa cảm xúc và hành vi ( $r = .877, p < .01$ ). Bên cạnh đó, kết quả định tính cho thấy nhận thức tích cực về giá trị của hồ sơ học tập thường đi kèm với sự hứng thú trong học tập và tinh thần tham gia học tập tích cực, năng nổ hơn. Tuy nhiên, chính ảnh hưởng của thói quen học tập thiên về thi cử cùng với mức độ tự chủ học tập còn hạn chế có thể đã làm giảm tính nhất quán trong việc thực hiện các hoạt động phản tư và tự định hướng của người học.

**Từ khóa:** Đánh giá bằng hồ sơ học tập; thái độ nhận thức; thái độ cảm xúc; thái độ hành vi;

giáo dục nghề nghiệp

## 1. Introduction

Assessment is widely recognized as an important component of English language education because it shapes students' engagement, participation, and responses to instructional expectations (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Beyond evaluating learning outcomes, assessment may influence motivation, classroom behaviors, and perceptions of meaningful learning. However, traditional assessment approaches, particularly paper-based examinations and standardized tests, have often been criticized for emphasizing memorization, short-term performance, and score achievement rather than continuous development and meaningful language use (Cheng & Fox, 2017; Zaabalawi & Zaabalawi, 2024). In Vietnamese vocational English education, assessment remains strongly examination-oriented. Consequently, students may focus on meeting assessment requirements and obtaining acceptable scores rather than reflecting on learning progress and engaging with practical language use (Hoang, 2013; Nguyen, 2011).

To address these limitations, portfolio assessment has received increasing attention as an alternative approach. Portfolio assessment refers to the systematic collection of students' work that demonstrates effort, development, reflection, and achievement over time (Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Paulson et al., 1991). Compared with one-time examinations, portfolio assessment emphasizes participation, revision, reflection, and learner involvement throughout the learning process. Previous studies have suggested that portfolio assessment may encourage reflection, strengthen engagement, promote learner responsibility, and provide greater opportunities for feedback and self-evaluation (Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Zaabalawi & Zaabalawi, 2024). Portfolio-based learning environments have also been associated with stronger emotional involvement and more meaningful classroom experiences (Ngo, 2020; Rezadoust Siah Khaleh Sar et al., 2024).

Despite these contributions, existing studies often focus on broad educational outcomes or classroom effectiveness rather than learners' internal responses to portfolio experiences (Birgin & Baki, 2007; Demirel & Duman, 2015; Zaabalawi & Zaabalawi, 2024). Furthermore, studies on learner attitudes frequently examine perceptions, motivation, confidence, or engagement separately without exploring their interrelationships (Ngo, 2020; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; BaniYounes et al., 2024). To address this gap, the present study adopts the tri-component attitude model proposed by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), which conceptualizes attitudes as cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. This study explores vocational college students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes toward portfolio assessment and investigates the relationships among these dimensions in General English learning experiences.

Accordingly, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- (1) How do vocational college students perceive portfolio assessment in terms of cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes in General English courses?
- (2) What relationships exist among the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of vocational college students' attitudes toward portfolio assessment?

This study contributes to the literature in both theoretical and practical ways. Theoretically, it extends existing discussions on portfolio assessment by shifting attention from educational

outcomes to the internal relationships among attitudinal dimensions. Practically, the findings may offer additional insights for teachers and curriculum designers seeking to implement more reflective and learner-oriented assessment practices in vocational English classrooms. The study does not aim to determine whether portfolio assessment leads to better performance outcomes; instead, it provides exploratory evidence of how students think, feel, and behave toward portfolio-based assessment experiences within one vocational educational context.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Theoretical framework**

#### ***2.1.1 Alternative assessment theory***

Alternative assessment theory serves as the primary assessment perspective for this study. In contrast to traditional assessment, which emphasizes memorization and final scores, it views assessment as a process that supports meaningful learning and continuous development (Cheng & Fox, 2017; Gipps, 1994). Assessment is therefore integrated into learning through participation, reflection, revision, and learner involvement (Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Paulson et al., 1991). Portfolio assessment reflects these principles by allowing students to document progress, respond to feedback, and engage actively in their own learning. Previous studies have primarily examined how portfolio assessment influences learning performance, achievement outcomes, and participation in English learning (Ngo, 2020; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023). However, less attention has been given to students' attitudinal responses. Therefore, this study applies alternative assessment theory to examine vocational EFL students' attitudes toward portfolio-based assessment experiences.

#### ***2.1.2 Tri-component attitude model (ABC Model)***

The Tri-component attitude model proposed by Rosenberg and Hovland (1960) serves as the primary attitudinal framework for this study. The model conceptualizes attitudes as three interconnected dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral, representing learners' beliefs, emotions, and actions. Rather than treating attitudes as a single response, it explains how learners may think, feel, and behave differently while experiencing these dimensions simultaneously. Although the model does not specify causal relationships among the dimensions and may be influenced by contextual factors such as assessment traditions and institutional expectations, it remains appropriate for the present study. Its multidimensional perspective provides a useful framework for examining vocational students' responses to portfolio assessment and exploring how cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes develop together during English learning experiences.

### **2.2 EFL Students' learning attitudes toward portfolio assessment**

#### ***2.2.1 Cognitive aspect***

The cognitive dimension refers to learners' beliefs, perceptions, and evaluations of portfolio assessment. In portfolio-based classrooms, these attitudes may involve students' understanding of learning goals, perceptions of usefulness, awareness of progress, and interpretations of teacher feedback. Previous studies have suggested that learners often view

portfolio assessment as more informative and reflective than traditional examinations because it allows them to monitor development and revise work based on feedback (Andrade & Du, 2007; Birgin & Baki, 2007; Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Ren, 2023). However, positive perceptions do not always ensure smooth learning experiences. Students may experience uncertainty when assessment criteria are unclear or when reflective tasks require greater responsibility (Klenowski, 2002; Ying & Yusof, 2025). Despite existing research, little is known about how Vietnamese vocational students perceive these aspects in General English courses.

### **2.2.2 Affective aspect**

The affective dimension concerns learners' emotional responses toward portfolio assessment, including confidence, motivation, comfort, enjoyment, and engagement. Previous studies have suggested that portfolio assessment may create more supportive learning environments by allowing students to revise work, monitor progress, and receive ongoing feedback (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009; Demirel & Duman, 2015). As a result, learners often report stronger engagement and more positive feelings toward classroom activities (Kusuma & Waluyo, 2023; Rezadoust Siah Khaleh Sar et al., 2024). However, emotional responses are not always positive. Some students experience fatigue, uncertainty, and pressure due to continuous task requirements and unclear expectations (BaniYounes et al., 2024; Kaphle, 2025). These findings suggest that emotional experiences are influenced not only by portfolio assessment itself but also by how it is implemented. Nevertheless, limited research has examined Vietnamese vocational students' emotional responses to portfolio assessment in General English courses.

### **2.2.3 Behavioral aspect**

Behavioral attitudes refer to learners' actions and participation during portfolio-based learning, including revision practices, effort investment, classroom engagement, and learning responsibility. Previous studies have suggested that portfolio assessment may encourage students to revise work more frequently, monitor progress, and participate more actively in classroom tasks (Andrade & Du, 2007; Ngo, 2020). However, active participation does not necessarily indicate sustained learner autonomy. Some students may engage in portfolio activities mainly because they are required rather than because they have developed long-term reflective habits. Klenowski (2002) and Kaphle (2025) argued that behavioral change may remain limited when learners continue to depend on external guidance. This issue may be particularly relevant in vocational classrooms, where teacher direction often shapes learning behaviors. Nevertheless, limited research has examined how such behavioral responses emerge among Vietnamese vocational students experiencing portfolio assessment.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research design**

This study employed a mixed-methods correlational design with qualitative support to investigate vocational college students' attitudes toward portfolio assessment in General English courses. Guided by the Tri-component attitude model of Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), the study examined the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of students' attitudes and the relationships among these constructs within a Vietnamese vocational EFL context. Rather than focusing on academic performance or language achievement, the study explored students'

perceptions, emotional responses, and behavioral tendencies toward portfolio-based learning experiences. A mixed-methods approach was considered appropriate because attitudes are multidimensional and cannot be fully understood through quantitative data alone. Quantitative data were used to identify overall attitudinal tendencies and examine relationships among cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes through descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Since the study aimed to explore associations rather than establish causal relationships, a correlational design was adopted. Qualitative data from open-ended questionnaire responses, semi-structured interviews, and classroom self-observations provided additional insights into how students interpreted portfolio experiences and developed particular learning behaviors. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence offered a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes toward portfolio assessment.

### **3.2 Participants**

The study was conducted at a vocational college in Southern Vietnam where General English courses are compulsory for students across various vocational majors. Participants were 57 non-English-major students enrolled in a CEFR-based General English A2 course. All had successfully completed the prerequisite General English A1 course. While most participants had prior experience with English learning and traditional assessment methods, they had limited exposure to portfolio assessment and reflective learning activities.

Convenience sampling was used because the researcher had direct access to the selected class. Although this method limits generalizability, it was appropriate for exploring attitudinal relationships within an authentic classroom context rather than representing a broader population. Ethical standards were maintained throughout the study, including voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, and the removal of identifying information.

### **3.3 Instruments**

Three instruments were employed: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom self-observations.

The questionnaire served as the primary quantitative instrument and was developed based on the Tri-Component Attitude Model (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960) and previous studies on portfolio assessment and learner attitudes (Andrade & Du, 2007; Duong & Seepho, 2017). It consisted of 18 five-point Likert-scale items distributed equally across cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes, along with several open-ended questions. The items addressed learning value, feedback usefulness, emotional engagement, confidence, revision practices, participation, and self-monitoring. Two experienced English lecturers reviewed the questionnaire and interview protocol for construct alignment, clarity, contextual appropriateness, and distinction among attitudinal dimensions. Their feedback improved item interpretability. Reliability analysis indicated acceptable to excellent internal consistency (cognitive = .845, affective = .876, behavioral = .910). However, validity evidence should be interpreted cautiously because exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were not conducted due to the relatively small sample size. A supplementary appendix presents all questionnaire items to enhance transparency.

Semi-structured interviews provided deeper insights into students' beliefs, emotions, and

participation experiences. Classroom self-observations documented engagement, interaction patterns, revision practices, and responses to portfolio activities. Observation data were triangulated with questionnaire, interview, and portfolio evidence to support interpretation and reduce researcher bias.

### **3.4 Data collection procedure**

Portfolio assessment was implemented throughout the General English course through activities such as paragraph and email writing, spoken responses, vocabulary records, listening tasks, and grammar practice. Students received teacher feedback, opportunities for revision, and peer feedback to support reflection and participation. Classroom observations and reflective notes documented participation patterns, responses to feedback, and revision practices during implementation. At the end of the course, 57 students voluntarily completed the questionnaire after experiencing the portfolio process. Twelve participants were subsequently invited to participate in semi-structured interviews to provide deeper explanations of their learning experiences and attitudinal responses toward portfolio assessment. Selection was based on voluntary consent and the completeness and quality of questionnaire responses. This sample size was considered appropriate because Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggested that approximately 12 interviews are often sufficient to achieve data saturation. Before data collection, participants received information about the study's objectives, confidentiality procedures, and voluntary participation. All data were anonymized prior to analysis.

### **3.5 Data analysis procedure**

Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately before integrated interpretation. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and Pearson correlation analysis to examine attitudes across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions and investigate relationships among these constructs. Since the study focused on associations rather than causality, correlation results were interpreted cautiously because self-report measures may involve conceptual overlap and simultaneous attitudinal experiences during portfolio activities. Qualitative data from open-ended questionnaire responses, interviews, and observation notes were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis framework through repeated reading, coding, theme development, and refinement. The qualitative findings were used to clarify and contextualize quantitative results rather than provide evidence of effectiveness or performance improvement.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1 Quantitative data**

#### **4.1.1 Cognitive aspect of students' attitudes toward portfolio assessment**

To examine students' cognitive attitudes toward portfolio assessment, descriptive statistics and reliability analysis were conducted for six questionnaire items. Table 1 presents the findings.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis of the Cognitive Aspect ( $\alpha = .845$ )*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q1*	0.0%	0.0%	19.3%	50.9%	29.8%	4.11	.699
Q2*	0.0%	0.0%	21.1%	49.1%	29.8%	4.09	.714
Q3*	0.0%	0.0%	17.5%	57.9%	24.6%	4.07	.651
Q4*	0.0%	14.0%	57.9%	21.1%	7.0%	3.21	.773
Q5*	1.8%	10.5%	57.9%	24.6%	5.3%	3.21	.773
Q6*	0.0%	0.0%	21.1%	49.1%	29.8%	4.09	.714

\*Full statements are presented in the Appendix

In general, students demonstrated favorable cognitive attitudes toward portfolio assessment, with most mean scores exceeding 4.00. The highest levels of agreement were found for Q1 ( $M = 4.11$ ), Q2 ( $M = 4.09$ ), Q3 ( $M = 4.07$ ), and Q6 ( $M = 4.09$ ), suggesting that students perceived portfolio assessment as useful for monitoring progress through feedback and accumulated learning evidence. However, Q4 and Q5 received noticeably lower mean scores (both  $M = 3.21$ ). This finding indicates that positive perceptions of portfolio assessment did not necessarily correspond with stronger learner autonomy or independent strategy use, as many students continued to rely on teacher guidance despite recognizing the value of reflective assessment practices.

#### 4.1.2 Affective aspect of students' attitudes toward portfolio assessment

To examine students' emotional responses toward portfolio assessment, descriptive statistics and reliability analysis were conducted, and the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2***Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis of the Affective Aspect ( $\alpha = .876$ )*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q1*	0.0%	12.3%	59.6%	28.1%	0.0%	3.16	.621
Q2*	0.0%	0.0%	12.3%	50.9%	36.8%	4.25	.662
Q3*	0.0%	0.0%	56.1%	33.3%	10.5%	3.54	.683
Q4*	0.0%	0.0%	7.0%	61.4%	31.6%	4.25	.576
Q5*	0.0%	0.0%	15.8%	50.9%	33.3%	4.18	.685
Q6*	0.0%	3.5%	49.1%	35.1%	12.3%	3.56	.756

\*Full statements are presented in the Appendix

As can be clearly seen, students expressed positive affective attitudes toward portfolio assessment. The highest levels of agreement were found for Q2 and Q4 (both  $M = 4.25$ ), followed by Q5 ( $M = 4.18$ ), indicating that students valued opportunities to monitor progress, receive continuous feedback, and engage in ongoing learning. However, Q1 ( $M = 3.16$ ), Q3 ( $M = 3.54$ ), and Q6 ( $M = 3.56$ ) received more moderate ratings. This pattern suggests that although students generally appreciated portfolio assessment, emotional adaptation was not uniform, and continuous tasks and unfamiliar assessment practices may still have created pressure for some learners.

### 4.1.3 Behavioral aspect of students' attitudes toward portfolio assessment

To investigate students' behavioral engagement toward portfolio assessment, descriptive statistics and reliability analysis were conducted, and the results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis of the Behavioral Aspect ( $\alpha = .910$ )*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q1*	0.0%	10.5%	56.1%	22.8%	10.5%	3.33	.809
Q2*	0.0%	0.0%	19.3%	42.1%	38.6%	4.19	.743
Q3*	0.0%	5.3%	57.9%	24.6%	12.3%	3.44	.780
Q4*	0.0%	0.0%	17.5%	38.6%	43.9%	4.26	.745
Q5*	0.0%	0.0%	12.3%	47.4%	40.4%	4.28	.675
Q6*	0.0%	5.3%	38.6%	42.1%	14.0%	3.65	.790

\*Full statements are presented in the Appendix

The findings indicate that students reported relatively positive behavioral attitudes throughout portfolio implementation. Most notably, Q2 ( $M = 4.19$ ), Q4 ( $M = 4.26$ ), and Q5 ( $M = 4.28$ ) received the strongest agreement. These responses suggest that students invested effort in revising assignments, monitoring progress, and maintaining participation beyond immediate classroom requirements. By comparison, Q1 ( $M = 3.33$ ) and Q3 ( $M = 3.44$ ) remained less positive. This difference implies that active participation did not necessarily develop into sustained self-regulation. Although students seemed willing to engage when expectations and feedback were clearly structured, fewer students demonstrated long-term independent learning behaviors.

### 4.1.4 Correlations among cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships among cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes toward portfolio assessment. Table 4 shows positive and statistically significant relationships across all three dimensions at the .01 level.

**Table 4**

*Pearson Correlations Among the Three Attitudinal Dimensions*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Affective</b>	<b>Behavioral</b>
Cognitive			
Affective	.809**		
Behavioral	.855**	.877**	

\*Note:  $p < .01$

More specifically, strong correlations emerged between cognitive and affective attitudes ( $r = .809$ ), cognitive and behavioral attitudes ( $r = .855$ ), and affective and behavioral attitudes ( $r = .877$ ). These results indicate that beliefs, emotions, and participation were closely connected during portfolio implementation. Nevertheless, these relationships should be interpreted cautiously. The high coefficients may reflect not only genuine associations among attitudinal dimensions but also overlap in self-reported responses. Since students completed a single instrument and reflected on the same portfolio experience, some distinctions among cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions may have become less clear. In addition, the correlations may have been inflated to some extent by shared-method variance (i.e., common-method bias), as all attitudinal data were collected through the same self-report questionnaire administered at a single point in time. Moreover, advanced construct validation procedures such as EFA and CFA were

not conducted because of the limited sample size. For this reason, the findings provide preliminary scale-based evidence that the three dimensions were strongly interconnected rather than fully independent constructs.

## **4.2 Results from qualitative data**

### ***4.2.1 Developing cognitive understanding of learning through portfolios***

The first theme concerns students' cognitive understanding of learning, which was shaped by opportunities to monitor progress, use feedback, and develop self-regulated learning skills. These findings complement the quantitative results that showed high levels of agreement regarding the learning benefits of portfolio assessment.

A prominent sub-theme was students' increased awareness of learning progress. Many participants reported that portfolios helped them observe development across drafts and revisions. One respondent noted, "*Before, I only looked at my test scores and forgot my mistakes quickly. With the portfolio, I can see exactly how my writing changes after each correction.*" Interview data indicated that students viewed improvement as a continuous process rather than a single examination outcome. Classroom observations supported this finding, as students often compared previous feedback with revised versions before submission.

Another sub-theme involved the cognitive value of teacher feedback. Students frequently described feedback as more useful than scores because it provided clear guidance for improvement. As one interviewee explained, "*When the teacher explained my mistakes carefully, I understood what I needed to improve. In normal tests, I usually only see the score and move on.*" Observations also showed students revisiting teacher comments during revision activities. These findings help explain the strong positive perceptions of portfolio assessment reported in the quantitative results.

The data also revealed a more nuanced picture of learner autonomy. Although some students showed greater understanding of assessment criteria and revised work independently, others still relied heavily on teacher guidance. One participant remarked, "*I know the portfolio helps me learn better, but sometimes I still wait for the teacher to tell me exactly what to do.*" Classroom observations confirmed differences in students' ability to set learning goals. This finding extends the quantitative results by suggesting that positive cognitive perceptions did not always lead to fully developed self-directed learning behaviors.

### ***4.2.2 Emotional responses shaped by iterative assessment experiences***

The second theme captures students' emotional responses to portfolio assessment. These findings support the quantitative evidence of favorable affective attitudes while also revealing factors that influenced students' emotional experiences.

A frequently reported sub-theme was increased confidence through visible improvement. Students explained that observing gradual progress strengthened their belief in their ability to learn English. One student stated, "*I was surprised because I could actually see myself improving little by little. That made me feel more confident when using English.*" Interview and observational data consistently showed that positive feedback and evidence of improvement encouraged greater

participation and willingness to use English in class.

Students also described lower anxiety than in traditional examinations. Many participants appreciated opportunities to revise and improve their work over time rather than being evaluated through a single high-stakes test. As one interviewee explained, *“In traditional tests, I feel nervous because one mistake can affect everything. In the portfolio, I feel safer because I have chances to revise and improve my work.”* Classroom observations also indicated a more relaxed atmosphere during drafting and revision activities. These findings help explain the strong positive affective responses reported in the survey.

However, qualitative evidence also highlighted a challenge that was less visible in the quantitative findings: workload-related pressure. Although students generally valued portfolio assessment, some reported fatigue when multiple tasks accumulated. One participant commented, *“Sometimes there were too many tasks at the same time, so I felt tired even though the portfolio was helpful.”* Observational data also revealed occasional declines in engagement during intensive workload periods. This finding suggests that the emotional benefits of portfolio assessment may depend on how assessment tasks are organized and managed.

#### **4.2.3 Learning behaviors influenced by continuous portfolio engagement**

The third theme concerns behavioral changes associated with continuous portfolio participation. These findings provide qualitative support for the positive behavioral attitudes identified in the quantitative analysis.

One sub-theme was increased learning responsibility and study regularity. Students reported engaging with English more consistently because portfolio requirements encouraged continuous participation rather than short-term exam preparation. As one respondent explained, *“I studied English more often because I did not want to submit incomplete portfolio tasks.”* Interview and observational data also suggested greater accountability for maintaining learning progress.

A second sub-theme involved stronger revision and self-monitoring practices. Students frequently described reviewing and improving their work several times before submission. One participant noted, *“In the past, I rarely looked at my homework again after finishing it. With the portfolio, however, I reviewed and improved it multiple times before submitting the final version.”* Classroom observations confirmed that students incorporated teacher and peer feedback into later drafts. These findings expand the quantitative results by illustrating how portfolio assessment supported engagement through specific learning behaviors.

Despite this, the qualitative data also revealed inconsistencies in behavioral persistence. Although generally positive engagement was observed, some learners delayed task completion and depended on external reminders. One interviewee admitted, *“I tried harder with the portfolio, but sometimes I still waited until the deadline before starting my work.”* Observational data likewise showed varying levels of commitment. This finding suggests that although portfolio assessment encouraged productive learning behaviors, their sustainability remained dependent on individual self-regulation skills.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Cognitive attitudes and the meaning of learning beyond examination practices**

The findings indicate that vocational college students generally developed positive cognitive attitudes toward portfolio assessment and perceived it as useful, informative, and relevant to their English learning experiences. Students particularly valued opportunities to monitor learning progress and receive detailed feedback rather than relying solely on examination scores. These findings are consistent with Andrade and Du (2007), Birgin and Baki (2007), Kusuma and Waluyo (2023), and Ren (2023), who reported that portfolio assessment may increase learners' awareness of their learning process through revision and reflection. However, the present study suggests that positive perceptions were linked not only to the assessment format but also to how portfolio activities helped students understand learning objectives and task purposes.

Despite these positive perceptions, responses related to learner autonomy and independent strategy use remained only moderate. This pattern may reflect the characteristics of Vietnamese vocational EFL learners, whose learning is often influenced by examination-oriented practices and teacher-directed instruction that emphasize clear procedures and continuous guidance (Hoang, 2013; Nguyen, 2011). As a result, students may recognize the benefits of portfolio assessment while still relying on teachers to direct learning and monitor progress.

Students' previous educational experiences may further explain this finding. Since portfolio assessment requires learners to evaluate progress, revise work, and make decisions about improvement, those with limited experience in reflective learning may view such activities as additional requirements rather than opportunities for independent growth. Classroom observations partly support this interpretation. Overall, the findings suggest that cognitive acceptance of portfolio assessment may develop earlier than actual learner autonomy, indicating that positive perceptions do not necessarily lead to self-directed learning.

### **5.2 Emotional responses and students' adjustment to continuous assessment**

The affective findings suggest that portfolio assessment was generally associated with positive emotional responses, particularly in terms of motivation, encouragement, confidence, and engagement. Many students appeared to appreciate opportunities to revise work, receive feedback, and observe gradual improvement throughout the learning process. These findings are consistent with Andrade and Valtcheva (2009), Demirel and Duman (2015), Kusuma and Waluyo (2023), and Rezadoust Siah Khaleh Sar et al. (2024), who argued that portfolio assessment may create a more supportive learning environment than one-time examinations.

However, positive emotions should not be interpreted as evidence that students have fully adapted to portfolio-based learning. Emotional responses remained uneven across questionnaire items, and qualitative findings revealed that some learners still experienced pressure and uncertainty despite appreciating the overall approach. This finding may reflect the realities of vocational students' experiences. In educational contexts where assessment has traditionally focused on scores and immediate evaluation, continuous assessment can provide both emotional support and emotional burden. Students may value opportunities to revise and improve, yet still

feel uncomfortable with repeated submissions and ongoing responsibility for learning.

This tension may explain why confidence increased only moderately despite generally positive attitudes toward feedback and participation. Emotional engagement appears to develop gradually rather than automatically. For students accustomed to examination-focused learning, repeated feedback and visible mistakes may not immediately strengthen confidence. Therefore, emotional adaptation to portfolio assessment requires not only supportive assessment practices but also changes in how students understand learning and evaluation.

### **5.3 Behavioral participation and the limits of emerging learner autonomy**

The behavioral findings indicate that portfolio assessment was associated with stronger engagement in revision, learning effort, and classroom participation. Students reported paying greater attention to assignments, spending more time reviewing their work, and maintaining active involvement throughout the course. These findings are broadly consistent with Andrade and Du (2007) and Ngo (2020), who suggested that portfolio-based assessment may encourage more active participation in learning.

Nevertheless, stronger behavioral engagement did not fully translate into autonomous learning practices. Although students became more willing to revise work and complete portfolio tasks, responses related to persistence and long-term self-regulation remained comparatively less positive. This finding suggests that vocational students may respond to learner-centered assessment differently from expectations often described in the literature.

A possible explanation is that students' engagement remained closely connected to external structures such as teacher feedback, deadlines, revision requirements, and classroom monitoring. These factors may successfully promote participation but may not automatically develop independent learning habits when support becomes less visible. This interpretation aligns with Klenowski (2002) and Kaphle (2025), who argued that portfolio participation may continue to depend on teacher guidance while reflective learning habits are still emerging.

More broadly, this pattern may reflect educational traditions in Vietnam, where teachers typically organize learning and students follow established directions. Therefore, the moderate level of autonomy observed should not be interpreted as resistance to portfolio assessment. Instead, it may represent a transitional stage in which reflective learning practices are becoming accepted but have not yet become fully internalized. These findings suggest that portfolio assessment alone may be insufficient to foster learner autonomy and should be complemented by reflection training, self-assessment procedures, scaffolded goal setting, and opportunities for independent decision making.

### **5.4 Interconnected attitudes and what they reveal about vocational EFL learners**

One important contribution of the present study is the demonstration of close relationships among cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes toward portfolio assessment. The strong positive correlations across the three dimensions generally support the Tri-Component Attitude Model of Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), which proposes that beliefs, emotions, and behaviors are interconnected rather than independent.

The findings also suggest a characteristic of vocational English learners. Students did not appear to separate perceptions of learning, emotional experiences, and classroom participation into distinct categories. Instead, these dimensions seemed to develop together as part of a broader assessment experience. Students who perceived portfolio activities as meaningful often reported higher motivation and greater willingness to participate. Similarly, those who felt emotionally supported tended to demonstrate stronger behavioral engagement.

Nonetheless, the strong correlations should not be interpreted as evidence that the three constructs are fully interchangeable. Since attitudes were measured through self-reported responses and advanced construct validation procedures were not conducted, some overlap among dimensions may exist. Students may have responded according to their overall impressions of portfolio assessment rather than clearly distinguishing beliefs, emotions, and behaviors.

Despite this limitation, the findings provide an important implication for vocational education. Efforts to improve engagement through assessment may be less effective when focusing solely on behavior or motivation. In vocational classrooms, participation appears closely linked to students' understanding of learning and their emotional experiences. Therefore, meaningful engagement may require assessment practices that simultaneously support understanding, emotional safety, and active participation rather than treating these dimensions as separate outcomes.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study examined Vietnamese vocational college students' attitudes toward portfolio assessment in General English courses using the Tri-Component Attitude Model. The findings revealed generally positive cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes. Students viewed portfolio assessment as beneficial for monitoring progress, reflection, and participation, while emotional responses were largely favorable. However, behavioral attitudes were comparatively weaker, as many students continued to rely on teacher guidance and demonstrated limited learner autonomy. The study also found strong positive relationships among the three attitude dimensions, indicating that students' beliefs, emotions, and behaviors were closely interconnected throughout their portfolio-based learning experiences.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the portfolio assessment literature by shifting attention from educational outcomes to the relationships among attitudinal dimensions within a vocational EFL context. Practically, the findings suggest that portfolio assessment should not be expected to develop learner autonomy automatically. Teachers may strengthen portfolio implementation through clearer reflective guidance, structured self-evaluation, and gradual support for independent learning, while curriculum designers may consider assessment practices that balance continuous feedback with increasing learner responsibility.

Several limitations should be considered. The study involved a relatively small sample from one vocational institution and relied mainly on self-reported data supported by interviews and classroom observations. In addition, EFA and CFA were not conducted because of sample size limitations; therefore, the findings provide preliminary scale-based evidence rather than full confirmation of the instrument structure. Future research may extend the sample across vocational

contexts and employ larger, longitudinal, or mixed-methods designs to examine more rigorously how cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes develop and interact over time under portfolio-based assessment. Further studies may also investigate how digital portfolios and AI-supported feedback tools influence students' attitudes, reflective learning processes, and the extent to which learners engage in autonomous learning practices in vocational EFL classrooms.

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## Appendix: Closed-ended items in the questionnaire

### Cognitive

- Q1. Portfolio assessment gives me more useful information about my English learning progress than traditional tests.
- Q2. Portfolio assessment helps me understand my English proficiency and learning progress more clearly.
- Q3. Feedback in portfolio assessment helps me understand my strengths and weaknesses better.
- Q4. Portfolio tasks help me discover effective learning strategies and learning goals.
- Q5. Portfolio assessment encourages me to become more responsible and autonomous in learning English.
- Q6. Portfolio tasks help me connect English learning with real-life experiences.

### Affective

- Q1. I enjoy learning English more when completing portfolio tasks.
- Q2. I feel proud when I see my progress in portfolio tasks.
- Q3. Portfolio assessment makes learning English less stressful.
- Q4. I feel encouraged when receiving teacher feedback through portfolio assessment.

Q5. I feel more comfortable expressing myself in English through portfolio tasks.

Q6. Portfolio assessment helps me become more confident in learning English.

**Behavioral**

Q1. I make greater efforts and persist in completing portfolio tasks.

Q2. I revise my work more carefully and spend more time preparing portfolio tasks.

Q3. I set personal learning goals during portfolio assessment.

Q4. I actively study outside the classroom to improve my portfolio tasks.

Q5. I regularly monitor my portfolio progress and complete tasks on time.

Q6. I seek help from teachers or classmates and participate in peer feedback activities.