Preparing our students for professional success while teaching them English begins in kindergarten

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ABSTRACT

To make our students ready for a competitive future work environment, with new forms of working and, consequently, new forms of communication we should develop their awareness of who they are, what their strengths are and what makes them successful and unique, from the very beginning of language education. The article analyses two tools we should make our students acquainted with: a personal/professional profile and a personal/professional portfolio; their main characteristics, and how they are developed: from kindergarten to university.

Outline:

1. Introductory remarks – the main assumption
2. Personal/professional profile & personal/professional portfolio
   a. Defining both terms
   b. Specifying their main elements
3. Professional versus personal – how they are related and how do they differ
4. Developing profile/portfolio – from kindergarten to university and professional career
5. Traditional and digital profiles and portfolios

1. The main assumption:

The main assumption of this article is that the sooner we make our English learners acquainted with personal/professional profiles and personal/professional portfolios, the easier it will be for them to present themselves successfully and become recognizable, stressing their uniqueness from the very beginning of their language skills' development.

While presenting themselves our learners can use a range of different tools, such as a cover letter, an auto presentation, self-introduction, an elevator speech, and many others. Personal/professional profiles and portfolios are just two tools that enable our students to specify who they are and what makes them unique.

2. Personal/professional profile

https://coverpagetemplates.com/career-portfolio-cover-page/

a. **Definitions of a personal/professional profile** vary. Some ~~of them~~ define it more narrowly:

"A personal profile serves as a way of introducing yourself to job recruiters."
https://ca.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/what-is-personal-profile

Others present a broader notion:
"A professional profile, also known as a personal statement, is a brief summary of who you are, your skills, experience and career goals."
https://jobs.icaew.com/article/how-to-write-a-professional-profile

In this article this is understood more broadly, as a way of presenting yourself, both orally and in a written form in different contexts, not only while applying for a job but in all those situations, in which we need to specify who we are and what makes us exceptional, e.g., while applying for a course at a university.

b. **Elements of a personal/professional profile**

There is a wide range of elements which should be included in a personal profile. What is more, some of them refer to specific situations, e.g., applying for a particular position in a company.

Below I am presenting a very general checklist of the main elements. More detailed lists referring to various professional situations can easily be found on the Internet (see: bibliography).

- Name & brief description of yourself
- Education
- Experience
- Skills (different categories here, e.g., language, computer skills, etc.; a good checklist: 21st century skills, at: https://www.oecd.org/site/educeri21st/40756908.pdf)
- Abilities
- Hobbies
- Interests

• Certifications
Compare: https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/what-is-a-personal-profile

Elements	
Image	
Picture	
Descriptive	
Demographics	Name
	Age
	Location
	Salary
	Relationship Status
Other Basic Information	Quotes
	Bio
	Job Title
	Education
	Years of Experience
User Story	
Psychographics	Goals
	Motivation
	Influencers
	Pain Points
	Personal Values
	Personality
	Defining Traits
	Archetype
Skills	Specific Skills
	Areas of Expertise
	Technology
Personal	Fav App/ Preferred Channels
	Preferred Brands
	Trusted Resources
Other Attributes	Work Experience
	Relationship with Company
	Collaborators
	Time Management
	Current Tools
	Event Attendance Attributes
	Misc.

https://persona.qcri.org/blog/elements-of-a-persona-profile/

3. Professional versus personal – how they are related and how they differ

Personal profile versus professional profile – how do they differ? (goal/s, elements)

A Professional profile is usually understood as a way of presenting yourself, both or orally or in a written form, in a professional context to attain some professional goal/s, whereas a **personal profile** is also a way of presenting yourself in any context, not

only a professional context, in order to attain some goal/s (personal or professional) and thus is a broader category.

There is a clear distinction between personal and professional goals:

"Professional goals are related to what you want to accomplish with your education and your career. While personal goals are generally more connected with your health, happiness, relationships, and well-being."

https://purehealthyliving.com/blog/personal-and-professional-goals-whats-the-difference-and-how-to-set-them

Thus, we may wonder where the borderline between the two categories is. Different interpretations are possible here. We may view the professional profile as a subcategory of the personal profile or we may assume that these two categories have a common part, consisting of goals which are the same, such as, e.g., positive atmosphere and good relations, and that is the perspective of this article.
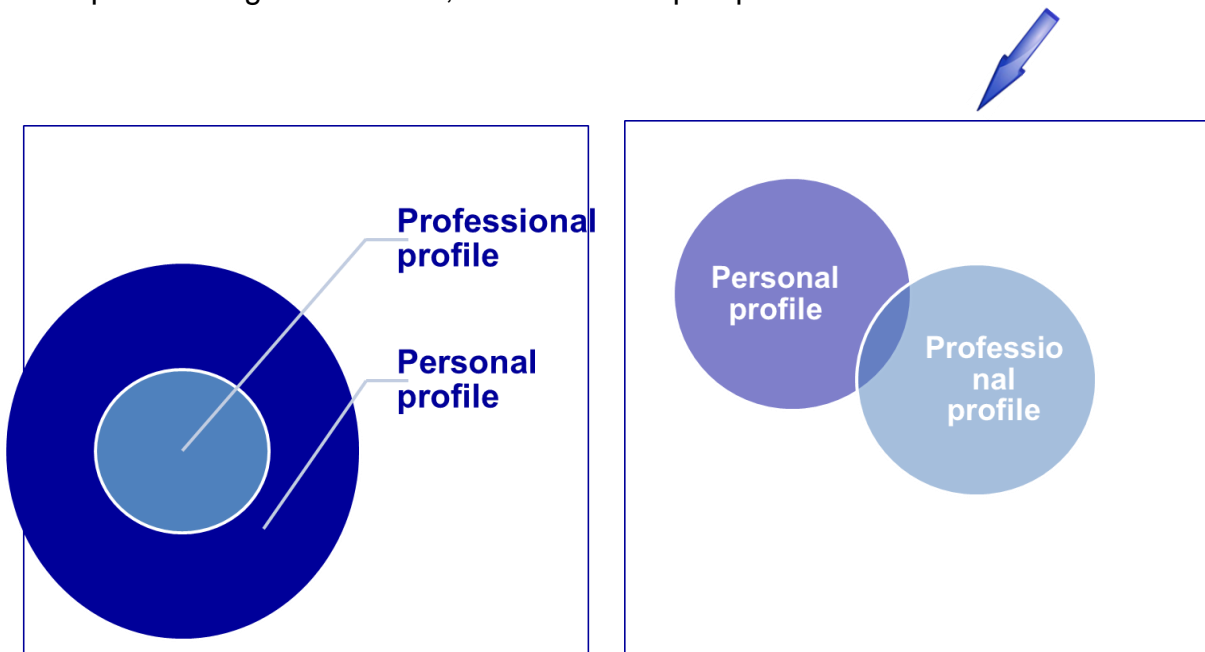
As far as language levels are concerned, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) specifies six language levels:
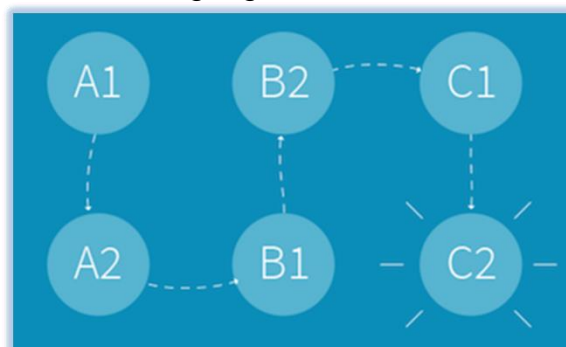
"It is recommended to use CEFR levels in job resumes (curriculum vitae, CV, Europass CV) and other English level references."

4. Developing profile/portfolio – from kindergarten to university and professional career

a. Personal/professional profile – some examples:

Kindergarten level A1- oral and/or written	Primary school A2 - oral and/or written
FO2/1 **Self Introduction** What's your name? Hello! My name is _____. How old are you? I am _____ years old. How are you? I'm _____. Where are you from? I'm from _____. Where do you live? I live in _____. What school do you go to? I go to _____ school. What subject do you like? I like _____. What subject don't you like? I don't like _____. That's me! © David Lisgo 2009	**Let me introduce myself** 1. Hi, my name is _____. 2. I am _____ years old. 3. My birthday is on _____. 4. I am from _____.(country) 5. I live in _____.(city) 6. There are _____ people in my family. 7. They are _____. 8. My father is a/an _____. 9. My mother is a/an _____. 10. I am a student at _____. 11. My favorite subject is _____. 12. My favorite sport is _____. 13. I want to become a _____. 14. My hobby is _____. 15. My favorite food is _____. 16. My favorite drink is _____. 17. My favorite day of the week is _____. 18. I like _____ movies. 19. My favorite month is _____. 20. The most beautiful place in my country is _____.
https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/88284633317272 4830	https://whatistheurl.com/let-me-introduce-myself-worksheet-for-kids/

Secondary school

A2 - oral and/or written vs CV

My profile

About me
By day I'm a regular guy and by night a superhero … How tiring is that?!
Just joking! I'm a regular guy all the time, good job, close to my family, just bought my own flat with a cat. Actually, my cat thinks I'm a hero because I saved her from the street. I'm a talkative person and I believe communication is the most important thing in a relationship.

Likes and dislikes
I love pizza if it's Italian, wine if it's white, and football if it's the World Cup. I read a lot, especially true-life stories, but most of my books live on my phone.

Hobbies
I love to travel and I'm always planning my next trip. I prefer an active holiday like hiking, skiing or watersports and I get bored lying on the beach. I post lots of photos on Instagram as I'm a good photographer, but I'd really love to share the holiday with someone. Maybe you'll take the photos on the next trip.

Personal (?) profile – tertiary education

B2/C1 - oral and/or written UBC https://you.ubc.ca/applying-ubc/how-to-apply/personal-profile/	Write your personal profile The personal profile is a crucial section in your **UBC application**. This is your chance to tell us about the things that are important to you, your significant achievements, what you've learned from your experiences, and the challenges you've overcome. It's our chance to determine whether you're a good fit for UBC and if you'll receive an entrance scholarship.

Exams: General English and Business English

Personal profile
MOCK EXAMINATION 1, ENGLISH JUNIOR – A1
Speaking, part 1: Talking about yourself

telc_english_a1_junior
https://www.telc.net/fileadmin/user_upload/telc_english_a1_junior.pdf
[…] „The examiner leading through the examination demonstrates an example by introducing him/
herself according to the prompts. Then it's the children's turn.
My name is ...
I'm ... years old.
I live in ...
I like ...
I don't like ...
My favourite ..”

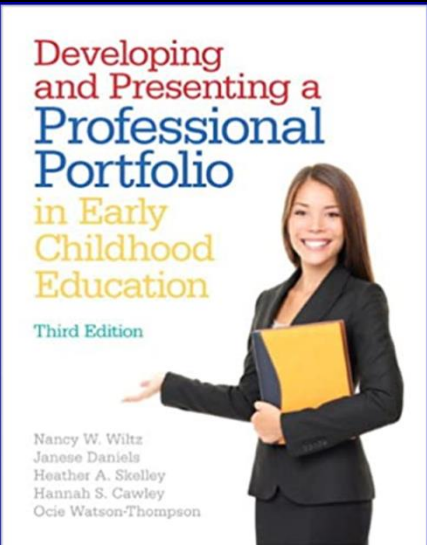| **Personal/professional profile** **MOCK EXAMINATION B1 ENGLISH** Speaking, part 1: Part 1: Getting to know each other - Talk to your partner about the following topics: Name Where she/he comes from	**Personal/professional profile** **MOCK EXAMINATION B1 ENGLISH BUSINESS** Speaking, part 1: Part 1: Getting to know each other - Talk to your partner about the following topics: Name The area where she/he lives

How long she/he has lived in the area Details of her/his house/flat Details of her/his family If she/he has ever been to other countries What she/he does for a living https://www.telc.net/fileadmin/user_upload/telc_english_b1_uebungstest_1_01.pdf	Details of her/his house/flat Details of her/his family Her/his work experience Her/his training experience Her/his workplace https://www.telc.net/fileadmin/user_upload/telc_english_b1_business_uebungstest_1.pdf

b. Personal/professional portfolio

The first question to ask here is **when** our students should begin thinking about their portfolios. My answer to this question is: the sooner the better. Thanks to developing our learners' awareness of who they are and what is unique about them since the very beginning of the educational process, it will be much easier for them to present themselves in continually changing contexts.

Developing and Presenting a Professional Portfolio in Early Childhood Education, Third Edition, is must-have handbook for all early childhood education major preparing their professional portfolio for scholarly review and job placement.

The next question is **how** to do it. While developing a portfolio we have a choice between different categories. The first distinction is between the so-called traditional portfolio and the digital portfolio. In my opinion both categories should be developed by our students as this will enable them to have access to their files wherever they go, and for global citizens, and this is what we would like them to be, it is of key importance. Being digital natives, they will have no problem compiling a digital version of their portfolios, using the whole range of materials available on the Internet.

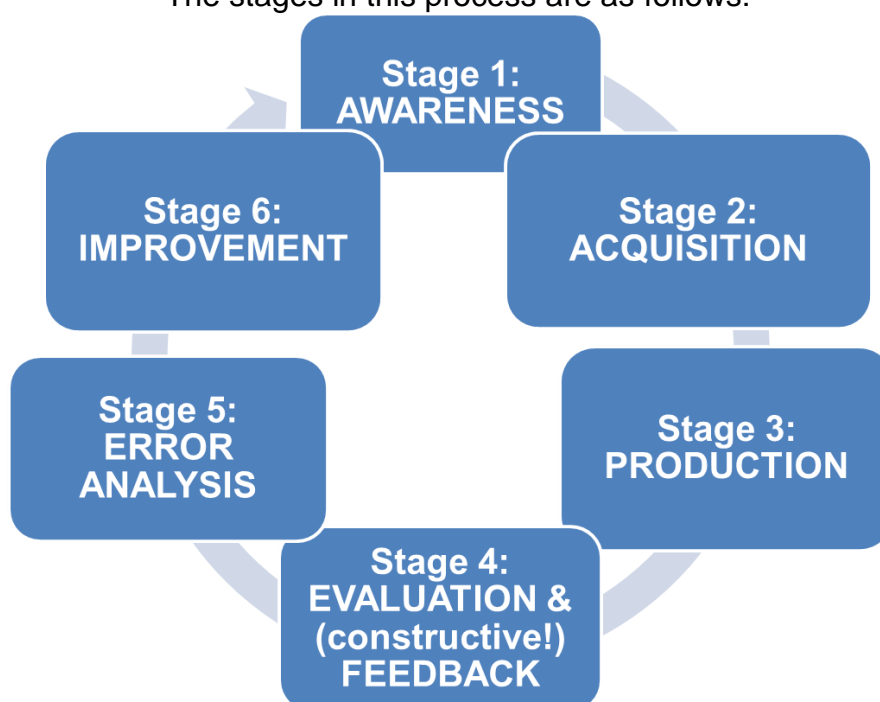**Elements of personal/professional portfolio - example:**
1. Career summary
2. Mission statement
3. Brief biography
4. Resume
5. Marketable skills
6. Professional accomplishments

7. Work samples
8. Awards
9. Transcripts, degrees, licenses, and certifications
10. Professional Development
11. Volunteer experience
12. Professional references and testimonials

https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/career-portfolio

Creating, updating, and developing profile/portfolio is an ongoing (and never ending?) process

The stages in this process are as follows:

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                    Stage 1:
                    AWARENESS

   Stage 6:                      Stage 2:
   IMPROVEMENT                   ACQUISITION


   Stage 5:                      Stage 3:
   ERROR                         PRODUCTION
   ANALYSIS

                Stage 4:
                EVALUATION &
                (constructive!)
                FEEDBACK
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Stage 1: AWARENESS	We should begin by making our students aware of
	→ who they are
	→ what their own characteristics are
	→ what their strengths/weaknesses are
	→ what makes them successful and unique, from the very beginning of language education.
Stage 2: ACQUISITION USE TEMPLATES	CONTENT - In this stage students should
	Firstly: learn about the nature, characteristics, and types of:
	→ personal/professional profiles
	→ personal/professional portfolios
	as the tools to be used by them while describing themselves.
	FORM:
	Secondly: learn about the possible forms which can be used while constructing their profiles/portfolios
	CRITERIA OF EVALUATION:
	These criteria of must be specified clearly before the production stage
	They refer to:

	Form: Are our students ready to write/talk about themselves clearly, convincingly, interestingly, etc. Is the content relevant, sufficient, interesting, etc. Is the language used appropriate and correct, etc. Important - before production stage: prepare students by: making them acquainted with possible/model versions drawing their attention to (brainstorming session?): the variety of forms which can be used the content (headings, subheadings, elements) the language (useful expressions, cohesive devices – conjunctions and connectives, etc.)
Stage 3: PRODUCTION	Students present what they have prepared (orally or/and in a written form) while the teacher makes notes concerning feedback
Stage 4: EVALUATION & (constructive!) FEEDBACK	→ Is the content interesting/sufficient/relevant, etc. → Form: is the form appropriate for the content presented, etc. → Language: Is the language used appropriate and correct Finally: what can be improved and how
Stage 5: ERROR ANALYSIS	Based on teacher's constructive feedback, students analyze their presentation or written task and…
Stage 6: IMPROVEMENT	… prepare its improved version, which is then presented and thus the next cycle begins.

Conclusions:

1. Knowledge about and the ability to create a personal profile/portfolio is a vital element of the educational process
2. This should be included in English lessons from the very beginning and developed according to the language level (vocabulary range, syntax, etc.), from primary to tertiary education
3. All of us, teachers, have a formidable task: we should prepare our students for a competitive future work/life environment and for jobs which do not even exist yet.
4. There is a need to design and continuously update our own personal/professional profile and portfolio

Follow-up - some guidelines:

→ Start with an introduction
→ Then: provide your students with examples
→ Prepare (together?) a checklist of ideas – categories which have to/can be included in a professional profile/portfolio
→ Make them aware of the fact that they are the ones to make the choice of categories from (exhaustive) checklists, but some categories are required and others are optional
→ Compile good practice files: "model" profiles and portfolios

Good luck!

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Lucyna Wilinkiewicz-Górniak is a senior lecturer at the Foreign Languages Department at Cracow University of Economics and a lecturer of business communication at the same university. She is a graduate of the English Philology Department of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and a graduate of Cracow University of Economics (International Relations, Foreign Trade specialization). Her method of teaching business English and business communication is based on the project approach, where students are expected to implement theoretical knowledge in a project they prepare. She has been with IATEFL PL for more than a decade, first as Review Committee member, then Secretary and now - Kraków Region Representative and Webinar Coordinator together with Anna Rogalewicz-Gałucka.