




Effects of writing portfolio assessment at tertiary level intensive English program: An action research

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ABSTRACT

Evaluation is essential to any learning and teaching process. Writing portfolio assessment has become increasingly used for evaluating learners' writing processes. Several scholars have proved that portfolio assessments have a positive impact on learners' learning process, especially on enhancing students' involvement and providing learners opportunities to learn from their own errors in writing. This study determined students' attitudes toward the use of writing portfolio assessment and examined the effects of writing portfolio in a module course. Students' opinions of portfolio assessment in the School of Foreign Languages of a south-eastern state university in Turkey were also studied to determine whether the portfolio assessment model was successful in helping learners to improve their writing abilities. The results revealed that most students generally possessed positive attitudes toward the use of portfolio. They claimed that portfolio assessments were very useful in assisting them in developing their writing skills, as well as positively affected their writing performances in quizzes and exams. In addition, a positive correlation was also identified among the scores of the portfolio, quizzes, and exams. This suggested that students with high scores on portfolio tended to achieve higher or similar scores on their writing quizzes and exams, and vice versa. This also indicated that performances on writing portfolio assessments may be predictive of students' writing performance on writing exams.

Keywords:

evaluation
writing portfolio
assessment
writing performance

Introduction

Assessment is significant for the learning and teaching process, and there are different types of assessments for evaluating the knowledge and skills acquired by learners, for example formative assessments and summative assessments (Dixson & Worrel, 2016). Among all skills, writing is regarded as the most difficult one to assess since it involves subjectivity (Nezakatgoo, 2011). Traditional ways such as large-scale standardized tests, impromptu writing samples and multiple-choice tests are not effective, as they do not match with the objectives and purposes of writing assessment (Nezakatgoo, 2011). Therefore, a new alternative is needed for evaluating writing.

It is a well-known fact that writing is a time-consuming process which involves much drafting and editing before possessing a final product. Portfolio assessment, an alternative assessment method for evaluating learners' writing processes is viable method of evaluation. Indeed, it has become increasingly used in assessing writing. It is 'a selection

of assignments' that a student has consciously assembled from a number of pieces produced over a certain period of time (Crouch & Fontaine, 1994). Portfolio have been suggested by many researchers to be a more authentic way of viewing learners' writing capabilities and improvement over time.

While examining portfolio, teachers consider various language contexts and skills over a certain period of time rather than relying on one or two pieces of writing (Chung, 2012). On the other hand, learners have to complete drafts of portfolio and keep records of their writing processes. It has been claimed that portfolio are valid and reliable testing tools, as they utilize a combination of assessment instruments (Chung, 2012). Portfolio also provide learners opportunities to learn from their own errors in writing. Learners are involved in the revision process, which facilitates their thinking and organizational skills. Reflection is very crucial here as it contributes to students' 'real' learning. Learners can reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their writing with the use of portfolio assessments. In this respect, portfolio assessments serve as a learning tool as well as an assessment tool.

Many scholars have proven that portfolio assessments have a positive impact on students' learning processes. Genesse and Upshur (1996) state that the revision process of portfolio can enhance students' involvement in their assessment and learning and as well as assist them in becoming autonomous learners. Many learners have expressed favourable attitudes towards the use of portfolio assessments. They believe that portfolio are more effective than traditional assessment methods in terms of reducing their anxiety and enhancing their performance.

In this study, the primary goal is to determine students' attitudes toward the use of writing portfolio assessment and to examine the effects of writing portfolio assessment in a module course. Students' opinions of portfolio assessment in the School of Foreign Languages were also studied in order to determine whether the portfolio assessment model was successful in helping learners to improve their writing abilities.

Literature Review

Portfolio Assessment

According to Genesee and Upshur (1996, p.99), a portfolio is 'a collection of students' work' from a course which is useful for demonstrating their development. In other words, portfolio involve the consciously assembly of a selection of assignments from a number of pieces produced over a semester or some other period of time (Crouch & Fontaine, 1994). Using portfolio as a tool in performance-based assessment is not a new concept (Goctu, 2016, p.10). Portfolio are most commonly associated with writing, but can be used to assess speaking as well (Carr, 2008, p.42). Compared to traditional evaluation, writing portfolio assessments provide a more comprehensive portrait of a student's writing ability. Writing portfolio usually consist of three stages: pre-writing (outline), first draft and final draft. Whereas traditional evaluation limits the performance of learners to single timed occasions, portfolio assessments offer learners more time to engage in their drafting and editing processes. As a consequence, the development of a student's writing ability, strength and depth can be represented gradually through the collection of his or her work.

As indicated above, several researches have examined the effects of writing portfolio. Moreover, many benefits as well as drawbacks have been found. Regarding the advantages of writing portfolio use, it has been concluded that portfolio accomplish the following:

1. facilitate critical thinking, self-assessment, and revision (Goctu, 2016, p.109),

2. promote learners to act and learn autonomously (Elango, Jutti & Lee, 2005, p.1),
3. allows learners to assess their strengths and weaknesses (Elango, et al., 2005, p.1),
4. enable learners to avoid plagiarism (Nezakatgoo, 2011),
5. reduce learners' anxiety levels, and (Öztürk & Çeçen, 2007)
6. provide more tangible evidence of a student's work (Goctu, 2016, p.109).

On the other hand, the following disadvantages have been determined:

1. evaluating writing portfolio can be time-consuming, and (Elango, et al, 2005, p.1)
2. writing portfolio do not reveal anything about how well a student performs within a limited time (Carr, 2008, p.42).

To understand the effectiveness of portfolio assessment, it is important to take students' attitude towards the use of portfolio assessment into consideration. For instance, Elango et al.'s (2005) study concerning students' perceptions of portfolio as a learning tool, a great number of students expressed favourable attitudes towards the use of portfolio and believed them to be a good learning tool.

Several other studies have also examined the effects of portfolio assessment (Goctu, 2016; Nezakatgoo, 2011; and Taki & Heidari, 2011). Goctu's study (2016) involving a group of prep-school students at International Black Sea University evaluated students' perceptions of writing portfolio assessment. The results revealed that students were more favourable to portfolio assessment than traditional forms of assessment. Students tended to be less anxious and were able to perform better on their writing portfolio assessments. The participants concluded that portfolio helped them improve their writing skills gradually.

Nezakatgoo (2011) conducted a study to determine whether portfolio-based writing assessment had any impact on the final writing examination scores of EFL students. Two conditions were established in this study to assess students' work: (1) a traditional evaluation system and (2) a portfolio system. The findings suggested that portfolio had improved students' writing, who were able to gain higher scores on final exams following portfolio assessment than on exams within a traditional evaluation system. Taki & Heidari (2011) investigated the effectiveness of writing portfolio assessment in an Iranian EFL context. They found that portfolio-based writing assessment had positively affected language learning and self-assessment. Moreover, it facilitates students' self-assessment, and the majority of the students stated their preferences toward portfolio assessment.

The above studies have proven that portfolio assessment has a positive effect on learners. Researchers have found that portfolio improve students' writing skills, yet few of them have dealt with the preparatory school level. Hence, it is necessary for further research at this level. This necessity motivated the action research of the present study, which investigated the writing portfolio assessments in a Turkish context as well as students' attitudes and opinions regarding the use of portfolio assessment in School of Foreign Languages of a South-eastern state university. More specifically, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are students' attitudes towards the use of writing portfolio assessment at the School of Foreign Languages?

2. Does portfolio assessment have an impact on students' writing performance and the means of the first and second drafts of first, second and third writing portfolio?
3. Is there any correlation between the scores on portfolio assessment, writing quiz and writing exam?

Method

For this study action research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for data collection. The data were gathered over a two-month period and accompanied by three writing portfolio assessments as well as one writing quiz. This process was followed by the administration of variety of quizzes and a final writing exam.

Context

The School of Foreign Languages where this study was conducted employ portfolio as a means for assessing students' writing abilities. Students learn to write in different styles of writing. In each module, students are required to complete three writing tasks for their portfolio together with a writing quiz and a writing exam. The use of portfolio and a writing quiz aim to assess students' writing ability over a period of time. Students are required to write a paragraph or an essay in accordance with the relevant objectives in each level. At the end of each module, students earn a grade equivalent to one quiz grade when they submit all three writing portfolio tasks. In addition, portfolio assessment does not abruptly end after each writing piece, as progress is continuously monitored and final assessment involves a writing quiz and an exit writing exam based on what students have learnt throughout each level of writing.

Participants and Sampling

This study was conducted among a total of fifteen students at the School of Foreign Languages of a state university in the south-eastern part of Turkey. Five participants (33.3%) were male and ten (66.7%) were female. The ages of the participants ranged between 18-24 years. The English proficiency level of the sample group was B2 (Upper Intermediate). The participants were enrolled in a mandatory preparatory course offered by the School of Foreign Languages prior to beginning their respective undergraduate programs at the university. A convenience sampling method was used because B2-level students were more sufficient in writing abilities and could better demonstrate writing texts. The participants had an intensive English program (5 days a week, 4 hours a day, so a total of 20 hours). The hours of instruction were distributed as follows: eleven hours as a main course, four hours as a reading course, three hours as a writing course and two hours as speaking. The duration of the module was almost 2 months (from 9th April to 1st June).

Data Collection Tools

- 1) A student portfolio was employed. The content of the portfolio included 5 items. The items consisted of 3 writing portfolio tasks, together with one writing quiz and a writing exam. Each writing portfolio task consisted of two drafts (first and final drafts) of 3 writing portfolio tasks, so 6 portfolio writings in total. Both drafts were scored. The types of text were cause and effect essay, compare and contrast essay, and problem solution essay.

- 2) An analytical scoring rubric used by the School of Foreign Languages of the university for assessing essays was employed (see Appendix 1). It consisted of descriptions along an ordinal scale consisting of five individual criteria: task achievement (30 pts), organization (20 pts), use of English (20 pts), vocabulary (20 pts) and punctuation, and spelling and mechanics (10 pts). For each category, score bands and a set of descriptors of student performance were listed and could be used to assign scores to an individual student's performance in a systematic way. All writing portfolio and portfolio quizzes were scored by using the same rubric and results were recorded.
- 3) Survey on the Effect of Writing Portfolio Assessment (SEWPA): The SEWPA consisted of three parts. The first part was adopted from Huang (2012). It aimed to assess students' attitudes toward the use of portfolio assessment. There were six items rated on a five-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The second part of the survey was adapted from Aydin (2010). The reliability of was calculated as .77 in this study. This part considered the effects of writing portfolio assessments on the students. In this part, there were a total of 28 items rated on a four-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The last part of the survey was adapted from an action research by Goctu (2016). This part consisted of seven open-ended questions determine students' opinions of writing portfolio assessments and to determine whether the implementation of writing portfolio assessments had benefitted them (see Appendix 2).

Procedure

The study was conducted for approximately 8 weeks during the last module of 2017-2018 Spring Semester. Before the action research, the consent of the administration and students were obtained. The purposes of the study, how to prepare the writing portfolio, how the portfolio were structured and their duration were all explained to the students. Meanwhile, a writing process checklist was also used in observing the students' processes and improvement in the writing tasks.

The following six steps were involved in data collection:

Step 1: The Implementation of the First Writing Portfolio

Students were taught how to construct cause-and-effect essay during first and second weeks of the module. Then, on April 17th, participants created their first drafts of a cause and effect essay on one of the following topics: a) "What are the effects of unemployment?" and b) "What are the reasons of sharing a flat with a roommate?". Then, the participants received their first marked drafts with correction codes. Having received the oral feedback of their instructors, they independently had to correct all the mistakes they had made by themselves. They write their second drafts on April 20th.

Step 2: The Implementation of the Second Writing Portfolio

A compare-and-contrast essay was taught to students during the third and fourth weeks. Then, on April 30th, participants had to create their first drafts on one of the following topics: a) "Compare or contrast two cities," and b) "Compare or contrast two sports". After that, the participants received their first marked drafts with

correction codes. They needed to correct the mistakes and write their second drafts on May 4th after receiving their teachers' oral feedback.

Step 3: The Implementation of the Third Writing Portfolio

Students were taught a problem-solution essay during the fifth and sixth weeks. Then, on May 15th, they wrote their first drafts on one of the following topics: a) "What solutions can you think of reducing crime in big cities?" and b) "What are the solutions to the world energy crisis?". First marked drafts with correction codes were given to the participants, who corrected their errors and completed their second drafts on May 18th after receiving oral feedback from teachers.

Step 4: The Implementation of a Writing Quiz

A writing quiz took place on May 17th. Participants had to write an essay based on the essay types they had learned. For the quiz, students were required to write either a) a comparison and/ or contrast essay on two social networking sites or b) an essay giving the causes of living in a big city.

Step 5: The administration of the SEWPA

The SEWPA was conducted on May 21st to determine students' attitudes toward writing portfolio, the effectiveness of writing portfolio, and their opinions on writing portfolio at the School of Foreign Languages.

Step 6: The facilitation of a Writing Exam

Via a module writing exam administered on May 28th, participants performed a writing task based on one of the essay types they had learned. They had to write one of the following topics: a) a compare and contrast essay on two countries or b) a problem-solution essay giving the solutions to the problem of overpopulation in the big cities. The scores of the writing exam were recorded in order to check the inter-rater reliability and to determine whether there had been steady improvement in students' writing performance.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative method in data analysis were employed, and the data were collected from three portfolio tasks, writing quizzes, writing exams, and the SEWPA then subsequently analyzed in terms of descriptive and inferential statistics. The statistics were computed via SPSS Version 21.0 software, and means as well as standard deviation were calculated from the data. A bivariate Pearson Correlation was then conducted among the scores of the portfolio tasks, writing quizzes and writing exams. While for the qualitative data, content analysis was employed to analyze the quantitative data obtained from the third part of the SEWPA. In this research, themes and codes were achieved via content analysis. Furthermore, participants' statements or explanations were coded by highlighting the statements with similar topics. And then while coding the researchers chose some representational phrases among those highlighted sentences. Then, they clustered these codes for the purpose of identifying the relevant information effectively.

Research Findings

Results for Research Question #1 What are students' attitudes, opinion and the effectiveness on the use of writing portfolio assessments at the School of Foreign Language?

Research question 1 intends to examine students' attitudes and opinion toward portfolio assessment and the effects on writing performance. The first and third part of the SEWPA (see Appendix 2) were analyzed to determine students' attitude and opinion toward portfolio assessment. Table 1. below displays the mean and standard deviation of the data collected from the SEWPA. The mean was found to be 22.0667 ($SD=2.89005$). Moreover, findings indicated that 66.7 % of the participants considered that portfolio to be a more effective type of assessment compared to traditional assessment methods. A vast majority (86.6%) of the participants perceived portfolio creation as very beneficial to their learning experience, and 60% claimed that portfolio was very important. Only 40% wanted to continue with portfolio assessment in the future, while 60% regarded portfolio as a significant part of their learning experience. Finally, 60 % of students expressed that they were confident while completing the portfolio tasks.

Table 1. Students' Attitudes Toward Portfolio Assessment (A-total) & The Effectiveness of Portfolio Assessment (E-total)

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
A-total	22,0667	2,89005	15
E-total	86,3333	10,01903	15

The results indicated that students generally possessed positive attitudes toward the use of portfolio. Nevertheless, this was not an overwhelming rate, and still some students expressed their concerns and indecisiveness regarding portfolio assessment. The results also showed that students generally favored writing portfolio and found them to be beneficial. However, it should be noted that portfolio assessment was a mandatory component of these students' learning programs, which might have influenced negative attitudes toward it. Compared to traditional forms of assessment, portfolio writing enabled students to feel more free and more confident. They regarded portfolio as an important part of their learning experience.

In addition, the findings of the third part of the SEWPA (see Appendix 2) was also analyzed to examine participants' opinions of the portfolio assessment at the School of Foreign Languages and to determine whether they felt the implementation of writing portfolio assessments had benefitted them.

Findings to the first question indicated that less than half of the students (46.67%) liked keeping portfolio and found them useful. Slightly over half of the students (53.33%) expressed their negative feelings about keeping portfolio. They claimed that portfolio assessments were very difficult but mandatory at the School of Foreign Languages.

The second question revealed that a majority (80%) of the students thought that portfolio had achieved these objectives. They also felt that the high number and frequency of

portfolio writings and quizzes improved their writing ability. About 13.33% of the students expressed their uncertainty about the writing portfolio, while only 6.67% stated that portfolio was not beneficial.

Various opinions were expressed in response to the question investigating what students like most about portfolio. Of the fifteen participants, seven (46.67%) claimed that they learned new words and bolstered their English writing skills, five (33.33%) did not like anything from the portfolio, two (13.33%) said that they gained more information about topics and one (6.67%) enjoyed receiving teacher feedback.

Again, various opinions were expressed to the fourth question. Of the fifteen participants, five (33.33%) stated that they could learn more vocabularies terms via portfolio than with other traditional assessment methods. Two participants pointed out that organizational skills were required in portfolio and another two participants expressed that they could see their mistakes as well as improvement during the process of writing portfolio. Two claimed that the format of portfolio is quite different than those of other traditional assessments like multiple-choice tests, while one claimed that she could receive feedback from portfolio and another stated that writing portfolio increased her creativity. An interesting fact is that two participants did not perceive any difference between portfolio assessment and other traditional assessment methods.

The fifth question assessed the difficulties participants encountered when writing portfolio. 26.67% of the students found that organization was the most challenging part for them, while 20% found the most difficult part to be the use of suitable words for the writing topic context. Another 20% claimed that writing long paragraphs was the most difficult part, 20% stated that portfolio was very time-consuming, and 6.67% expressed that forming new ideas and writing in the suitable style of writing (e.g. compare/ contrast, problem-solution, cause/ effect, etc.) challenged them throughout the portfolio process. Did portfolio help you to take more responsibility for your study? Interestingly, responses to the sixth question were overwhelmingly in agreeance that portfolio had, indeed, encouraged them to become more responsible for their learning.

For the last question, most participants (N=12) felt prepared to present their portfolio to their parents, friends, and other teachers even though their writing performances were not the best. Only two participants were not ready and one remained indecisive. These findings were surprising because it was assumed that students would not feel confident in sharing writings that had received low mark.

Apart from students' attitudes, the second part of the SEWPA (see Appendix 2) was analyzed to examine the effects of portfolio assessments. Table 1 displays the mean and standard deviation of the collected data. The mean was found to be 86.3333 ($SD=10.01903$).

The findings revealed that the majority of students agreed that portfolio assessment had contributed to their improvement in vocabulary and grammar knowledge, reading and research skills, organization of paragraphs and compositions, and punctuation and capitalization. Portfolio also assisted the participants in giving and receiving feedback.

Based on these findings, the effectiveness of writing portfolios can be summarized in the following six ways:

Vocabulary: Participants improved their vocabulary knowledge (93.3%) as a result of portfolio writing. They could utilize suitable words in context (100%) and

employ a dictionary to find appropriate words for their writings (93.3%) . They were also able to use a wider range of words in correct form and usage (93.4%).

Grammar: Participants' grammar knowledge improved (80%) as a result of portfolio assessment. They were able to use grammar structures accurately in terms of forming more complex and compound sentences (93.3%) and in terms of using conjunctions as well as signal words when necessary (93.3%).

Reading skills: Portfolio writing promoted learners' reading skills. Participants had to read some texts in English given by their teachers in order to glean the main ideas and details of content which they subsequently utilized in their writings. They also gained information about the writing topics (93.3%).

Research skills: Portfolio also improved participants' research skills. As students needed to gather information about their writing topics, portfolio required them to discover reading texts related to their portfolio topics. Most participants were able to present a variety of ideas and related to their writing topics, and as a result, they were able to compose more coherent sentences (86.6%) and improve their writing skills (93.4%).

Organization of paragraphs and compositions: Portfolio assisted participants in organizing a paragraph and composition (86.7%). Before starting to write, portfolio helped students acquire information about paragraphs and compositions and some pre-writing strategies such as brainstorming, clustering, outlining, and planning (86.7%) (Aydın, 2010). Portfolio also helped participants to use punctuation and capitalization in correct usage (93.4%) via reading teacher feedback regarding correct or incorrect punctuation. Portfolio writing contributed to learners' understanding of paragraph and essay development methods (93.3%) such as organizing and outlining. They also learned the components of a paragraph and essay (100%). In addition, portfolio were an effective way for students to learn the features of a paragraph and essay (86.7%). Participants learned how to produce coherent paragraphs and essays (93.3%) as well as how to write a paragraph and essay in unity (100%). Participants also learned how to produce original papers (86.6%) and began to write creatively (80%). They also began to write in English without translating from Turkish (53.4%) and reflected their ideas, feelings and thoughts in their papers (86.7%).

Giving and receiving feedback: As a result of portfolio assessment, participants learned how to give feedbacks to their peers via identifying correction codes given by their teachers (80%). Yet, they encountered some difficulties in finding errors in a paper (60%). Most participants were able to classify mistakes in a paper (73.3%) after their mistakes had been identified by their teachers. They also learned how to use a scoring rubric when examining a paper (73.3%). In addition, they agreed that peer and teacher feedback helped them to notice and correct their errors (100%) as well as revise their papers (100%).

Results for Research Question #2. Does portfolio assessment have an impact on students' writing performance and the means of the first and second drafts of first, second and third writing portfolio tasks?

Based on the scores of participants in portfolio, findings revealed that an overwhelming number of students demonstrated steady improvement in the second drafts of portfolio after receiving teachers' oral feedback. Students were able to identify the errors they made in portfolio. Since students' performances were evaluated in an analytical way based on a scoring rubric for assessing essay, examining their scores was sufficient in rather than looking at other components such as types of mistakes, frequencies of mistakes, and frequencies of repeated mistakes. This suggested that when the scores improved, students' performance also improved.

Table 2. Results of Three Writing Portfolio Tasks

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
p11	77,3333	4,05615	15
p12	88,9333	3,45309	15
p21	85,8333	3,99851	15
p22	92,8333	3,21640	15
p31	85,4667	7,83642	15
p32	90,9333	6,09996	15

Meanwhile, the mean scores of students on the second portfolio were significantly higher than those on the first portfolio (see Table 2). For the first portfolio, the mean score of the first draft was 77.3333 ($SD= 4.05615$) and the mean for the second draft was 88.9333 ($SD= 3.45309$). For the second portfolio, the mean of the first draft was 85.8333 ($SD= 3.99851$), while the mean of the second draft was 92.83333 ($SD=3.21640$). For the third portfolio, the mean of the first draft was 85.4667 ($SD=7.83642$) and that of the second draft was 90.9333 ($SD= 6.09996$).

The above findings suggested that students were able to continually improve their writing skills and performances throughout the portfolio process. However, while there was an increase in the mean scores of first and second drafts between the first and second writing portfolio, the means of first and second drafts between the second and third writing portfolio were not maintained. Of fifteen participants, only seven students were able to maintain their improvement. Another seven students actually regressed in terms of improvement during the third writing portfolio, while one participant did not experience any improvement between the second and third writing portfolio.

Results for Research Question #3. Is there any correlation between the scores on portfolio, writing quiz and writing exam?

As indicated by Table 3, Pearson product-moment correlation of the collected data revealed a positive correlation among the scores of portfolio, portfolio quizzes, and writing exam ($.102 < |r| < .969$, $p > .001$). The correlation between portfolio tasks (p1.1, p1.2, p2.1, p2.2, p3.1 and p3.2) and portfolio quiz (PQ) ($.506 < |r| < .730$) was stronger than that between portfolio and writing exam (WE) ($.347 < |r| < .606$). These results imply that students performed better on writing quiz following portfolio completion, receiving higher

or similar scores on the quiz. The correlation between writing quiz and writing exam was found to be the strongest ($r = .826$), which implies that performance on writing quiz may be a predictor of performances on writing exam.

Table 3. Correlations Among Scores on Three Portfolio Tasks, Writing Quiz and a Final Writing Exam

		p1.1	p1.2	p2.1	p2.2	p3.1	p3.2	WQ	WE
p1.1	Pearson Correlation	1	,603*	,102	,347	,544*	,525*	,506	,347
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,017	,718	,205	,036	,045	,054	,205
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
p1.2	Pearson Correlation	,603*	1	,328	,652**	,434	,468	,633*	,546*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,017		,233	,008	,106	,079	,011	,035
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
p2.1	Pearson Correlation	,102	,328	1	,856**	,236	,278	,541*	,423
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,718	,233		,000	,396	,316	,037	,116
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
p2.2	Pearson Correlation	,347	,652**	,856**	1	,460	,516*	,727**	,606*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,205	,008	,000		,085	,049	,002	,017
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
p3.1	Pearson Correlation	,544*	,434	,236	,460	1	,969**	,730**	,369
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,036	,106	,396	,085		,000	,002	,176
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
p3.2	Pearson Correlation	,525*	,468	,278	,516*	,969**	1	,701**	,324
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,045	,079	,316	,049	,000		,004	,239
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
PQ	Pearson Correlation	,506	,633*	,541*	,727**	,730**	,701**	1	,826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,054	,011	,037	,002	,002	,004		,000
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
WE	Pearson Correlation	,347	,546*	,423	,606*	,369	,324	,826**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,205	,035	,116	,017	,176	,239	,000	
	N	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was the exploration of students' attitudes, and opinions toward the use of portfolio assessment as well as the effectiveness of portfolio on students' language improvement. The findings for the first research question have disclosed that portfolio assessment is essential to foreign-language teaching and learning. The analysis revealed that students at the School of Foreign Languages generally demonstrated favorable attitudes toward the use of portfolio assessment, perceiving it to be a useful

learning and assessment tool. This further gave support to Goctu's study (2016) involving a group of prep-school students at International Black Sea University, which also revealed that students were more favourable to portfolio assessment and concluded that portfolio helped them improve their writing skills gradually.

Moreover, the findings of this study are also consistent to the study conducted by Yurdabakan & Erdogan (2009). The results of this study indicated that portfolio assessment had a significant effect on writing skills. Meanwhile, this study is similar to the results as that of Fahed Al-Serhani (2007), demonstrating that portfolio assessment had a significant positive impact on students' writing performance in general and subskills of purpose, content, organization, vocabulary, sentence structures and mechanics.

The second research question in this study aimed to determine whether portfolio assessments have an impact on students' writing performance and the means of the first and second drafts of first, second and third writing portfolio. The results of this analysis suggested that there was a significant increase in their writing performances, and the analyses confirmed that there was a significant improvement in students' writing performances. Findings of this study corroborated those of Nezakatgoo (2011) and Ruetten (1994), which found that portfolio assessment was, indeed, very useful for EFL students and assisted them in developing their writing skills. Students were also aware of the differences between portfolio assessment and other traditional forms of assessment. Lucas (2007) and Nezakatgoo (2011) similarly claimed that portfolio assessment benefitted EFL students' writing skills. In the current study, it was determined that writing portfolio had positively affected students' performance on writing quizzes and exams and had benefitted them in numerous ways. For example, portfolio improved students' grammar and vocabulary knowledge, developed their writing skills, and encouraged a sense of responsibility for their learning. They also provided an accurate means of assessing improvement over a period of time, and enabled students to engage with their knowledge via identifying and self-correcting their mistakes. What is more, portfolio enhanced their independent research skills and improved their skills in other language domains such as reading. These findings are also echoed by those of Karatas, Alci, Yurtseven and Yuksel (2005), who observed that providing feedback helped students to identify their mistakes and become more autonomous in their learning. Nevertheless, despite these benefits, some students still encountered some difficulties in finding their own mistakes and correcting them accordingly.

In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of portfolio assessment on students' language-learning, the third research question of this study investigated whether there was a correlation among students' performance on portfolio, portfolio quizzes and writing exams. A Pearson Bivariate correlation was employed to determine the existence of such a relationship. According to the results, most students demonstrated gradual improvement in their portfolio on their second drafts. Based on the results of portfolio quizzes and writing exams, a positive correlation was identified among the scores of the portfolio, quizzes, and exams. The correlation between portfolio-quiz scores and writing-exam scores was found to be the strongest. This demonstrates that performances on portfolio quizzes may be predictive of performance on writing exams. This means that students with high scores on portfolio quizzes tend to achieve higher or similar scores on their writing exams, and *vice versa*.

In short, this study underlines several pedagogical important implications. First, this study suggests that portfolio may be an effective learning tool among EFL students, as many

benefits have been observed. The implementation of portfolio assessment within the School of Foreign Languages has proven quite effective, and most participants have expressed positive opinions towards its use as a learning tool; and a positive correlation was also found in this regard. Hence, instructors in EFL classes can utilize writing portfolios in order to promote overall writing performance as well as sub skills of writing. Second, the fact that students at the School of Foreign Languages favoured portfolio assessments may suggest that portfolio can be used as a model for other types of more interactive assessment such as ePortfolio and speaking portfolio, which give students greater responsibility for their learning. In addition, other opportunities for students to self-correct and give self as well as peer-feedback via the use of the Mahara ePortfolio System can be employed.

Yet, the present study has a number of limitations. First, the time of the study was short as the length of this study was approximately eight weeks. This might have affected the learners' writing performances though it was impressive to observe students' improvement within such a short period of time. Had the study extended a longer period of time, more statistically significant results might have been obtained regarding the improvements in students' writing performances. Also, students can be more aware of their types of errors they had made in order to avoid repeating them on future portfolio and, thus, improve their writing scores. This may also suggest that a higher number and frequency of portfolio may be able to improve students' writing performances within a shorter period of time.

Second, in this study, the participants were chosen on the basis of convenience sampling at only one proficiency level, which might have affected the results. In future studies, a random sampling method consisting of different proficiency groups could be employed. Moreover, the sample size was small, with only fifteen participants; hence cannot be a generalization for the School of Foreign Languages. Future studies might employ a larger scale of sample consisting of preparatory schools in different parts of Turkey for more accurate results.

In the light of research findings, the following recommendations and suggestions could be considered. Though the current study has proven portfolio to be an effective assessment method among EFL learners, future studies might examine the precise differences between portfolio and other types of writing assessment to determine if one is more effective than the other in enhancing students' writing skills. Moreover, future studies might need to be experimental in nature in order to examine more closely the type of improvement in student performance among portfolio, quizzes, writing exams.

In order to improve students' writing performance and to sustain this improvement throughout their language learning, more efforts should be made to encourage both students and teachers to take advantage of the portfolio, as well as other types of more interactive assessment such as ePortfolio and speaking portfolio.

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Appendix 1. Scoring Rubrics for Assessing Essay



**GAZIANTEP UNIVERSITY HIGHER SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
ESSAY RATING SCALE**

TASK ACHIEVEMENT (30PTS)		ORGANIZATION (20PTS)		USE OF ENGLISH (20PTS)		VOCABULARY (20PTS)		PUNC./SPELL./MECHANICS (10 PTS)	
23-30 pts.	-task fully achieved -great variety of ideas -very good knowledge of subject -entirely relevant to topic -appropriate format, length and register	16-20 pts.	Appropriate thesis statement; effective introductory paragraph; topic is stated; suitable transitional expressions; conclusion logical and complete	16-20 pts.	Accurate use of grammar and structures; hardly any errors of agreement, tense, word order articles, etc.; meaning clear; being able to use complex structures; great variety of ideas	16-20 pts.	-wide range of vocabulary and very good choice of words -accurate form and usage -meaning clear	16-20 pts.	-hardly any spelling mistakes -left and right margins, all needed capitals, paragraph indented and punctuation; very neat
16-22 pts.	-task adequately achieved -adequate variety of ideas -adequate knowledge of subject -some gaps or redundant information -acceptable length and register -a few irrelevant ideas	11-15 pts.	This statement Body paragraph and Concluding paragraph are acceptable but some ideas aren't fully developed; Body paragraph may not fully support the thesis statement and problems of organization occur	11-15 pts.	Adequate use of grammar and structures; some errors of agreement, etc.; meaning almost clear; some mistakes in use of complex structures	11-15 pts.	-adequate range of vocabulary and choice of words -some errors of form and usage -meaning sometimes not clear	11-15 pts.	-few spelling mistakes -some problems with margins, capitals and punctuation -paper is legible
8-15 pts.	-task achieved only in a limited sense -limited variety of ideas (development of ideas not complete) -limited knowledge of subject - frequent gaps - often inadequate length and register -some irrelevant ideas	6-10 pts.	Poor introduction; too many problems with ordering of ideas; poor supporting ideas and conclusion	6-10 pts.	Limited use of grammar and structures; numerous errors of agreement, etc. Which has a negative effect of communication -limited use of structures	6-10 pts.	-limited range of vocabulary and choice of words -frequent errors of form and usage -meaning often not clear	6-10 pts.	-frequent spelling mistakes -serious problems with margins, capitals and punctuation -parts of essay not legible
0-7 pts.	-task poorly achieved -poor variety of ideas -major gaps and pointless repetition -no apparent effort to consider the topic carefully -too many irrelevant ideas	0-5 pts.	Absence of introduction; or conclusion; no apparent organization of body meaningful paragraphing; nearly impossible to read	0-5 pts.	- poor use of grammar & structures -meaning very often not clear -reader can't understand what the writer was trying to say -poor variety of structures	0-5 pts.	-poor range of vocabulary and choice of words; -repetitive -too many errors of form and usage -meaning not clear -mainly translation from mother tongue	0-5 pts.	-severe spelling mistakes -poor usage of capitals and punctuation -no essay format (margins)

Appendix 2. Survey on the Effect of Writing Portfolio Assessment at School of Foreign Languages

Part 1 Background

1. Name: _____
2. Student No.: _____
3. Gender : Male/ Female
4. Age : _____

Part 2 Student's attitude toward portfolio assessment

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Portfolio as a more effective assessment compared to traditional assessment					
2. Creating portfolio is very helpful beneficial learning experience					
3. Creating portfolio is very important to me					
4. I like to keep portfolio in the future					
5. I like to regard portfolio as a part of my learning experience					
6. I have confidence in completing the portfolio tasks					

*Taken from Huang, J. (2012). The implementation of portfolio assessment in integrated English course. Canadian Center of Science and Education. *English Language and Literature Studies*, 2 (4), 18.

Part 3. The effect of writing portfolio assessment

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I improved my vocabulary knowledge.				
2. I learned to use words in context.				
3. I learned how to use a dictionary to find appropriate words.				
4. I learned to use a variety of words.				
5. I improved my grammar knowledge.				
6. I learned to produce complex and compound sentences.				
7. I learned to use linking and signal words when I combine the sentences.				
8. I learned to write more fluent sentences.				
9. I improved my reading skills.				
10. I gained information about the topics I wrote about.				
11. I learned how to organize a paragraph and composition.				
12. I learned brainstorming and clustering before starting to write.				

13. I learned how to use punctuation and capitalization.				
14. I learned how to give feedback.				
15. I learned to find the mistakes in a paper.				
16. I learned to classify mistakes in a paper.				
17. I learned to use a checklist when I examine a paper.				
18. Peer and teacher feedback helped me to notice and correct my mistakes.				
19. Peer and teacher feedback helped me to revise my papers.				
20. I had information about paragraph and essay development methods and techniques.				
21. I learned the parts of a paragraph and essay.				
22. I learned the characteristics of a paragraph and essay.				
23. I learned how to produce coherent paragraphs and essay.				
24. I learned how to write a paragraph and essay in unity.				
25. I learned how to produce original papers.				
26. I began to write creatively.				
27. I began to write in English without translating from Turkish.				
28. I learned to reflect my ideas' feelings and thoughts in my papers.				

*Taken from Aydin, S. (2010). A qualitative research on portfolio keeping in English as a foreign language writing. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 483.

Part C. Students' opinion towards the use of portfolio at School of Foreign Languages

1. What do you think about keeping portfolio? Do you like it or not?
2. Did the portfolio application help you to write better and get better organized?
3. What do you like most about portfolio?
4. How is portfolio assessment different from other traditional assessments (e.g. tests and exams)?
5. What challenged you during the portfolio study?
6. Did portfolio help you to take more responsibility for your study?
7. Are you ready to present your portfolio other than teacher? Why (not)?

Taken from Goctu, R. (2016). Action research of portfolio assessment in writing in English as a foreign language while teaching preparatory school in Georgia. *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region*, 2(1), 111-112.

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